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NUMBER 26

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW

Interviews: **GORDON R. DICKSON**
LARRY NIVEN

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FEE-DOM ROAD *By Richard Henry Klump*

ROBERT BLOCH - DAMON KNIGHT - ALAN DEAN FOSTER - GORDON R. DICKSON - ROBERT A.W. LOWNDES - IAN WATSON



ONE IMMORTAL MAN

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW

Formerly THE ALIEN CRITIC

P.O. Box 11408
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97211

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From an idea by Richard E. Geis

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RICHARD E. GEIS, EDITOR & PUBLISHER

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6-15-78 I find myself with some last-minute space, here. So...

Two rumors: I hear that after his brain surgery to clear clogged arteries, Robert Heinlein is so much improved that he seems the Heinlein of old, and has thrown out as "garbage" the novel he had been writing and is now at work on two new books.

I hear that *sigh* GALAXY is in the same old boat of financial difficulties and that there may be a change in editors.

In the mid-sixties I wrote a sf/sex novel titled RAW MEAT. (I have only one copy--don't ask to buy a copy from me.) It was published by Essex House which had as its editor the legendary Brian Kirby. RAW MEAT was an anti-hero tragedy novel. Subsequently I revised it a bit, cut most of the sex, and asked an agent to see if it could be sold as a straight sf novel. It couldn't, as of a year or so ago.

I've been unhappy with the ending of the book and with the central character... So I have revised yet again and put back a lot of sex and changed the ending to cohabit with my present writing philosophy.

The book, now titled CANNED MEAT, will be self-published, will have three full-page interior illustrations plus a heavy cover.

It will be offered, when published, to you at \$5. per copy. I offer it now at the pre-publication price of \$4. per copy.

Publication date: October 30.
First edition: 500 copies.

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*The tapes are in hand.

**Anticipated.

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ALIEN THOUGHTS



BY THE EDITOR

4-26-78 The suing of NBC and its San Francisco affiliate by a local couple because their 10 year old daughter was assaulted in a roughly similar manner as was a girl in a TV movie, by a small gang of girls, brings all this anti-violence on TV furor to a head.

The parents and like-thinking people feel that kids (and dim-witted and dim-moralized adults, presumably) will see crime on TV and be inspired to go and do it, too.

They are suing for 11 million.

The Supreme Court has refused to stop the trial.

Given that a few individuals of imperfect upbringing who have deep emotional problems will seize upon TV scenes which appeal to their self-and other-destructive needs, the big question is, and always has been, do we have to censor all media output to keep these few from being triggered?

It has to be all media, of course. Logically. If NBC is legally responsible for the possible effect of its programming on every one of its viewers (and it cannot restrict its viewers to those emotionally stable 99% of the citizenry) then so is DAW Books responsible for what may inspire any one of its readers.

And so is every newspaper responsible...

And every painter...

And every writer...

Could our armed forces survive? If an ex-soldier who has been taught to kill in certain ways subsequently kills, is the government liable for teaching him?

Remarkable can of worms, isn't it?

And when you consider that only a bizarre physical assault is at issue in the San Francisco lawsuit (an attempted defloration by means of a stick of wood--in the TV movie it was a bottle) it is obvious that almost any crime could be used to sue.

This is a similar situation to the Florida case in which the young defendant tried to argue that watching KOJAK on TV caused his subsequent anti-social behavior. The jury didn't buy it.

With any luck the San Francisco jury will save us from unending litigation, constitutional crisis, and an insane civilization. (Can you imagine a thriving black market in uncensored books, magazines, newspapers, films, poems, drawings...)

I note with some cynicism that the offended San Francisco parents have not included the parents of the girls who assaulted their child in the suit. No, they aimed for those with big money.

Those girls' parents must be kicking themselves: they could have sued NBC for corrupting their girls' minds.

In the meantime...it might be instructive to watch the character of TV movies change to bland, and TV programming veer even more to suet and mush. It wouldn't surprise me if variety shows came back in a big way, and doctor shows (without gore and pain) and lawyer shows...and crime shows vanish.

So on TV will of course be on the level of QUARK and THE MAN FROM ATLANTIS.

Stay tuned---if you have the stomach for it.

RECENT MOVIES-----

THE MEDUSA TOUCH. Richard Burton with dyed hair, too much makeup to mask his ruined face, walked and layed through this so-so story of a man with telekinesis power. Most of the time on-camera he spent swathed in bandages while his mind built its power and caused the collapse of Westminster Abbey while it (the Abbey) was crowded with England's upper class, including the Queen.

Lee Remick played a psychiatrist who twice attempted to kill him because she was convinced of his power and his evil.

The film is disaster-prone: Burton proves his power to Remick by causing a fully loaded jet to crash into an apartment building. As a child he killed his mother and father. As the movie ends his pow-

erful, mad mind is able to conquer the death of his body and to promise to cause a blowup at England's biggest atomic power plant.

Worth seeing for the special effects and horrors. Burton looks like a corpse when not bandaged, and Remick isn't credible as a psychiatrist. They just did it for the money, folks.

ISLAND OF THE DAMNED. An unbelievable horror film shot in a South American or Central American country. Afflicted with a hero with terminal stupidity and a plot that puts rigid plot needs over credibility. The children of an island go "crazy" and kill almost all adults. Two tourists (man and his pregnant wife) boat over the next morning. Discover silence, bodies, witness killing of few surviving adults. Do not arm themselves, do not try escape until too late. Psi powers intimated as kid leaders stare at innocent, uninvolvement children and "convert" them without a word, and as girl puts hands and face against pregnant woman's belly for moment. Later, the unborn attacks its mother/host and causes internal damage, bleeding which kills woman.

Dumb movie. Avoid.

THE FURY. Brian de Palma's attempt to match his CARRIE. A failure. Not credible as an unnamed secret govt. agency steals a former agent's psi-talented (telekinetics) son and causes the father (Kirk Douglas) to embark on a no-holds-barred search for his son.

A girl with mind-reading ability (and a side-effect which causes uncontrolled bleeding in those she touches when in one of her "spells") is also involved and taken by this agency. John Cassavettes plays the evil agency head or man-in-charge. The boy goes crazy and levitates after learning to use his power and killing those he hates and his agency-operative lover/keeper.

Father finds son. Son, insane, tries to kill father. Scene occurs with son dangling over edge of high roof, held by father's grip. Son drops, is killed. Father, in agony of grief at death of son, rolls off roof and falls to death, too. (Why didn't son save himself with power to levitate? No answer.) Girl, present when boy is dying, absorbs his power or there is a transfer of mind to her. (Her eyes glow like his.)

In final scene, Cassavettes is trying to win confidence of girl. She hates him, tells him to go to hell, and sends him there by causing his body to literally explode.

Film ends with no real resolution. It just stopped. Ran out

of characters to kill.

Worth seeing for special effects and is gripping during father's attempts to find his son.

CLONES. Low-budget story of "The Man With My Face" theme. Lots of running and action. Hack, formula plot. Irrational, unbelievable. Clones of a man couldn't be grown in months and "programed" perfectly with his personality, character, habits, etc.

Avoid this.

CARD FROM ROBERT A. BLOCH

April 29, 1978

'#25 may well be your best issue yet--thanks in no small part to your own extended contributions therein. As always, I find myself nodding as I read; not in drowsiness but in accord with your opinions. What made me shake my head was Ray Palmer's piece. Ray is gone now and there's no way of determining the possible juxtaposition of his tongue in cheek when he wrote this; I think he enjoyed stirring up controversy and over the years he became quite a master.

The death of Leigh Brackett affected me too; she was one of those rare people whose life and work both inspired affection, and deservedly so. No one could ask for a better epitaph.'

(True. As age creeps up on me apace (and passes me by) I dimly come to perceive of my writings and publications as a great tombstone. Maybe my epitaph should be: AND THEN I WROTE--But these are morbid thoughts. Maybe middle-age does this to one?)

LETTER FROM DAMON KNIGHT

April 26, 1978

I must say I think it is too bad that so many s.f. reviewers have severe reading difficulties. Darrell Schweitzer says about Stephen Robinett's story "Tomus" in ORBIT 19 that he doesn't see how the uninitiated will make sense out of it because the relationship of Tomus and the other personality is never stated; Richard Delap says something quite similar in his F&SF REVIEW: "These two persons are related but Robinett does not tell us exactly how, except that the mathematician, Tomus, is dominant". My gosh. It is true that Robinett does not say, as Darrell would have him do, "There was another person sharing my head

with 'me'", but he does tell us repeatedly that Tomus and the other "Longevites" have had their life-spans extended by transferring their personalities into other bodies (p. 100 et seq.), that the second personality is in the "unused portions" of Tomus's brain (p. 101), and that it is the original personality belonging to the body Tomus now inhabits (p. 103). Similarly Delap says about Kevin O'Donnell's "Night Shift" in the same volume that "we never discover (the protagonist's) original crime", although it is spelled out in detail on pp. 207-208. A surprising number of s.f. readers (and writers) seem to have great difficulty in accepting anything that is not absolutely explicit--see Larry Niven's remarks about SOMERSET DREAMS in SFR 25--but this does not seem to be Schweitzer's or Delap's problem. Is it simply carelessness? Inattention? Should they have their glasses checked?

(Maybe too much time was allowed to pass between reading and reviewing, resulting in loss of a true memory of the story. On the other hand, perhaps Richard and Darrell have other explanations.)

5-11-78 The initial response to SFR #25 has been extremely favorable, and 99% of those who mention ONE IMMORTAL MAN like it very much and are impatiently waiting for the next part of the novel.

And, they puzzle: "This is clearly professional-level science fiction. I don't agree with the reasons-for-rejection given by the editor you quoted...and who WAS that editor, by the way?"

I won't tell. An editor is often bound by taboos imposed by the publisher, for good and sufficient reasons. Or an editor is overbought or... There are dozens of reasons an editor will return a ms. that is publishable.

I won't tell his name because it would not be fair to him. (And he may not want his name given, and I may want to try to sell him a different book sometime.)

There has been no harm done. I've received an offer from a different NY editor, and that offer may be accepted. Larry Shaw is now representing me as agent.

SFR readers also ask, "Why did you send it to only one or two publishers before publishing it in SFR?"

I'm an impulsive, egoistic personality. I've been passing judgments on sf in these pages for

years, and I felt, too, that it was time I proved I could write the stuff with some skill, and had something besides hot air underlying my opinions.

I probably should have kept sending the partial out to the other maj-or sf publishers...but...I love ego-bo, and I'm getting a million dollars' worth this way.

You know, it's positively shameful the way our emotions rule us.



"HER NIPPLES WERE SPECTACULAR
LITTLE PURPLE FINGERS."

--R.D.G., THE IMMORTAL MAN

BACK TO THE DRAWINGBOARD, GRS!

LETTER FROM NANCY K. ZINSERLING

Feb. 20, 1978

Thank you for a fair and promising review regarding TESSERACT SCIENCE FICTION which appeared in your 24th issue. We appreciated your comments.

However, there were a few errors stated in the review, and I am hoping that you would find it agreeable to correct them. The first issue of TESSERACT actually contained four, not three, stories, although your point is well taken. Our rate for accepted stories is 1/2¢, not 1/4¢, as appeared in the review. Finally, Mr. Robert Garcia is the Managing Editor, the Editors of TESSERACT are myself and Mr. Kevin MacAnn.

We hope that you consider these mistakes serious enough to warrant correction. Our second issue should be coming out in late summer, and we are sure that you will find it a marked improvement over the first.'

((Editorial office for TESSERACT is: 134 Windward Dr., Schaumburg, IL 60194.))

CONTINUED ON P.12

AN INTERVIEW WITH GORDON R. DICKSON

SFR: Mr. Dickson, in your essay in SCIENCE FICTION, TODAY AND TOMORROW you say that sf writing is much like writing historical fiction, in certain senses--in the kind of background research done, for example. Can you give us an example of this from your own work?

DICKSON: The one that comes most readily to mind is *SLEEPWALKER'S WORLD*, where what I wanted to do was a novel dealing with a future state in the research into sleep states. This cropped up a few years ago and I got very interested in it. I accumulated a stack of notes about as thick as the novel itself, and then essentially threw most of them away, or thought I had. But when the novel came out I got letters from several people working in the field who were amazed to see that I knew so much about it.

This is a common phenomenon. If the writer knows all about something he will instinctively use those elements which are particularly appropo to the fictional situation and convey the reality of that situation. These details will be picked up very sharply by experts in the field. For example, if you know bridges, and in a book you come to talk about a bridge, just a line or two in which you allude to the bridge may be completely convincing to a bridge architect. Because of that, he will assume equal competence in areas he doesn't know about. Most experienced writers use this technique consciously, because it's how you render a future or an unreal world as real.

SFR: Do you think this is a distinguishing feature of science fiction writers?

DICKSON: In part. Some writers, primarily mainstream writers, ignore research. Science fiction writers in general enjoy researching and substantiating their dreams. By and large, this is true of the fans as well--witness the fact that they'll sit around when not talking stories and compare notes on everything under the sun. All kinds of people attend the CONs, from cave crawlers to heads of research laboratories, from galloping pacifists to died-in-the-wool war story buffs.

Of course, it's possible to go to the other extreme in writing, as with the writer who falls so in love with the history that he bores his readers to tears with unnecessary details like how many wain-



Illustration by Rick Jansen

loads of grain came into Carthage in a given year. This is as bad as the writer who doesn't want to go to the trouble of researching and guesses at things, which sends someone who knows what really happened in Carthage up the wall.

SFR: There's certainly an enthusiasm among sf fans that isn't present elsewhere. Is it this enthusiasm itself that causes sf to be referred to as a literary ghetto?

DICKSON: Not exactly. As a ghetto it's pretty much wide open now, for one thing. There's a certain amount of public acceptance even among people who don't know anything about it and don't want to, on the basis of technological advances and the NASA work, etc.

I think the distinguishing feature of sf fans (as I've said from the platform on several occasions and used to say more often when sf was much smaller) is that they're all essentially writers, whether they're writing or not. Basically what happens when a book is written--and this is somewhat of an oversimplification, but it serves the purpose--the author lives the story. You might say he creates his own movie in his head, and reduces its elements to a very restrictive code of black marks on white paper. These are passed over to the reader, who recreates the same movie, but does it with his own elements.

The cat I write about, for example, is a cat I know or made up out of bits and pieces of cats I've had experience with. But the reader

Conducted By Clifford McMurray

will take this very limited and restrictive set of symbols and re-create a cat out of his own experience. It's impossible to imagine anything you haven't experienced either by direct action or by reading about, as witness the fact that it's impossible to imagine an alien critter that you can't dissect and find it has the tentacles of a squid, the head of a buffalo, the teeth of a sabre-toothed tiger, etc. All such critters are made up of experience, and experience is the bread and butter of writing. So the whole business of transferring my dream to you requires a creative act on both our parts.

Science fiction fans are very strong in this area--they recreate with a vividness that many readers lose at an early age. They're still doing it in their late teens and into their adult lives.

SFR: Part of this is training from reading the literature itself, is it not?

DICKSON: No, I think an sf fan is born and not made. In sf he finds a congenial arena. He finds people with whom he can exercise his creativity simply by discussing the stories.

SFR: And this is one reason it will be a minority form of literature as long as it lives.

DICKSON: As far as hard core sf goes, I think so, yes. To do this sort of thing is sort of like wanting to play chess on the tournament level. Millions of people play chess, but tournament level players are a kind of a breed apart. I think the inner group of sf fans are a breed apart. You may have what I would think of as a casual player who is almost of tournament level skill. But the point is he's not consistently at this level, whereas the tournament level player cannot fall below it without losing himself as a tournament player.

Now, it's impossible to pick them out in a crowd. But the great thing about sf is because of this diversity it has a very catholic taste and a great element of tolerance. It's possible to write on unpopular subjects in the sf area, and have your reader read it (if he likes you, and would normally buy your books) essentially uncritically, saying, "All right, what's he got to offer? I don't believe this, but let's take a look at it anyway." In any other area of writing, if you push one of your reader's prejudice buttons you may lose him. I don't mean he will immediately swear, "I'll never buy another book of

yours", but it's enough to get between him and the process of living the story, recreating.

SFR: It's not so much the case now, but you used to attend more CONs than almost any other writer. Do you consider yourself a fan?

DICKSON: Oh, yes. I was a member of the Minneapolis Fantasy Society in 1940. I'm a member of First Fandom, have been a fan all my life. I am as much a fan as I am a writer.

SFR: This means that you get more interaction with your fans than many other sf writers. How does this affect your writing...or does it?

DICKSON: Oh, it's tremendously valuable. One of the great and unique blessings of the sf field is that the authors, if they want to, can go out and talk directly to their readers. I've met mainstream writers who can sell a quarter of a million copies in paperback and only get four or five letters. Outside of that they know nothing of how their book went, except what they hear from their publishers. It's marvelous, the feedback we get in this field and it's one of the things I value highly.

SFR: Fans are also loyal to sf...

DICKSON: Well, actually, I think if you look under the skin of it you will find that, while they profess to be loyal to sf, they're really loyal to those particular sf authors they like. If I like the Hornblower series of historical novels by Forrester--as I do--and I read one or two that I like very much, I'll be willing to put up with two or three bad books from that author before I'll write him off. I'll keep hoping he'll give me what made my ears wiggle the first time. This is the phenomenon that's at work, essentially.

SFR: And people are drawn into sf by just one or two authors that turn them on?

DICKSON: Generally, in my experience, sf readers come by one of two routes. Either they start very early getting interested in imaginative fiction in general, or else they read something I think of as very soft core sf--the STAR TREK reruns or books, or the Perry Rhodan thing, which is pretty much a machine-made science fiction--and eventually, not finding enough of what they want (since the physics of the matter is it takes a writer--working by him-

self, at any rate--usually about half a year at minimum to write a book, and a reader about two hours to read it) they adventure into other sf titles and covers and their tastes develop. This is why a lot of them will say, "When I first came in, all I liked was--" whatever. Edgar Rice Burroughs, in the case of the older ones.

SFR: Or Heinlein.

DICKSON: Or Heinlein, right. And later on found other people they liked.

SFR: This helps to explain why sf readers and writers are a minority, but I don't think it explains why sf is looked down upon so by writers and critics of the literary mainstream.

DICKSON: I don't think the mainstream people look down on sf as much as they used to. Originally, the reason was that sf was a part of pulp literature. It was thought that pulp fiction was ground out by "hacks", which is a word that ought to be buried because it's impossible to define. But pulp writers had to write thin because of the low rates they were paid. The top slick writers (back when there was a good market in the slicks, too) were getting up to \$2,000 per short story, flat fee. So the slicks could skim the cream off the short story area.

It was in the pulp area that science fiction grew like a flower among weeds and came up with what Campbell called the idea story. Even in the 30s there were beautiful stories written. Stories like "Old Faithful" and Campbell's own "Forgetfulness".

True, they weren't all that common; there was a lot of standard pulp fare. But the very fact that the climate was such that you could do something like this...In the Western, Detective and other pulp fields you weren't allowed to indulge yourself in this unless you naturally moved head and shoulders above it. But as time went on, sf got more and more freedom this way, because it created its own editors as well as its own writers. Eventually, publishers got the notion through their heads that they did not know what made an sf magazine work, but if they could get an editor from within the field and this editor could evoke stories from the writers that he liked, you had a magazine that was bought.

There was also a freedom not found in the slicks. Since they catered to a very specified audience they were very restrictive in what



they would buy. They had a very long list of taboos and there was a reaction against this when paperbacks began to take over as the main market for authors, and both the slicks and the pulps began to die.

SFR: How much influence does the mainstream have on sf? In other words, how much of what you do as a writer is taken from ideas and techniques that you get outside the field?

DICKSON: A great deal. But not from the contemporary mainstream, from the earlier mainstream. For example, one of the strongest influences on many of us writers (this is not quite so true as it used to be, but still applies to about half the crop of new writers, I would say) is Kipling, who by any slice of the word is a mainstream writer, but you see how far back he is.

In my case, I'm strongly influenced by a number of writers, primarily from the 30s on back, since that's just before I entered the University of Minnesota in 1939. By others since, too, of course.

SFR: Are there any advantages to being somewhat removed from the mainstream?

DICKSON: Yes. One of the things we've seen since the 1940s is that mainstream fiction has become extremely self-conscious. This is a trap that sf couldn't fall into, simply because there was no glory in writing it. Because of this, sf remained healthy; it was an unpolluted stream, right up until the present time.

Now, unfortunately, it has become possible in the 70s for an sf writer to become self-conscious. There's still ghettoization, but it's not bad enough that you can't watch yourself working, so to speak

On the other hand, the thing that's kept sf alive from the beginning has been the constant input of fresh, new minds. Believe it or not, I remember hearing people in the 40s saying that in ten years sf would be dead, because all of the old writers would be retired. The assumption was that there were no

new people coming along. But, heck, every five years you can see a new crop. You see people like Joe Haldeman, whose FOREVER WAR is a sort of dark horse surprise in the market, and I think personally could run up to at least minor best seller status if it was given push...

SFR: George R.R. Martin?

DICKSON: Yes, and behind these are a number of people trying to break into the field right now, people with tremendous capabilities. And each one is going to redefine the field because he or she will do a type of sf that hasn't been touched, hasn't been invented yet.

SFR: Where do you think sf is going, both from a literary and a thematic standpoint?

DICKSON: I think it's becoming the type of field in which you can do so-called literary work per se; you can sit down saying, "I want to write a piece of literature" and feel free to do so without worrying that because it deals with the future it will be automatically sub-classed. Also, I think it's trending more and more toward the exploration of the inner world rather than the outer world—a trend already well advanced. I'm thinking of the kind of thing Ursula LeGuin (the strongest of the recent writers) writes. Her themes deal with philosophic statements and arguments. Essentially, mine do too, although we've two totally different approaches. She's a very musical, a very poetic, a very excellent writer.

I think this trend shouldn't be allowed to obscure the fact that, by the turn of the century—if not before—we're going to have a revival of technological sf such as we thought we'd left behind in the 40s. However, it will have an entirely different basis—the kind of technology that's only possible in the kind of hard vacuum you get out in space, or the kind of high temperatures you can only get within the corona of the sun, etc.

SFR: You've mentioned LeGuin. Who are some of the other new talents we should be looking for, in your opinion?

DICKSON: It's impossible to give a complete list, because there are so many. But Joe Haldeman is certainly one. George R.R. Martin is very good. Vonda McIntyre is very good. Charlie Gaspar has the potential to be very good indeed. Gardner Dozois, as almost anyone in the field

will tell you, has all the necessary equipment, as does Phyllis Eisenstein; all they have to do is keep writing. And there are many others which aren't really into the field yet, so we don't know enough about them.

SFR: Why are sf writers still producing short stories, when the short story is almost dead in the mainstream?

DICKSON: I think we have to give a great deal of credit to the magazines that managed to hang on, particularly to ANALOG and to John Campbell for providing a profitable market for short fiction. John convinced his publishers to pay a special rate for short stories—5¢ a word up to 7,500 words, instead of the usual 3¢. Because of this, a number of writers have been writing short stories instead of longer fiction and ANALOG has stayed alive.

Another reason is that, with the magazines dying off, the original anthology market has turned up—offering about the same rates, plus the attention of the peers of the writers who are writing for them. The paperback book gets more exposure for an author than a single issue of a magazine. This field has been growing stronger all the time. Unfortunately it's been blunted right now because we've got a lot of people who jumped in and started editing anthologies without knowing what they were doing.

SFR: Probably your best known work is the Childe cycle, or Dorsai stories. Let's talk about that for a bit.

DICKSON: All right. The Childe cycle consists of three historical novels, three contemporary novels, and six sf novels, spanning a thousand year period beginning with the 13th century and ending with the 23rd. The original plan was for three books in the future leg of the cycle but when I first started it was impractical to get sf novels of that length published—they were the equivalent of thick historical novels—so I split each book in two. The first four have already been published (DORSAI!; NECROMANCER; SOLDIER, ASK NOT; and TACTICS OF MISTAKE). The last two (THE FINAL ENCYCLOPEDIA and CHILDE) are yet to be done...Once that's done, I hope to go back and eventually trim them up, add things that have been left out, maybe cut out some duplication, although there isn't much—and wind up with the equivalent of three pretty thick books for the future section. Each book, even divided, is set up to be read as a sep-

arate story. It's just that together they fit into holes in the major pattern.

The idea is to tell with these twelve novels what is essentially a science fiction story, by pointing to a base of fact and extrapolating from it in the same rigorous fashion with which hard science has always been extrapolated, to a possible future solution. You could say that the whole twelve-volume thing is one large sf story in technique and handling. In this case, the base of fact is the life and times of the three characters in the three historical novels. They are Hawkwood in the 14th century, Milton about 200 years later (but not as a poet, as a propagandist), and Robert Browning in the 19th century (again, not as a poet but as a philosopher).

SFR: And what is the thesis of the cycle?

DICKSON: I'm making the argument that a type of characteral, moral--spiritual, if you like--evolution began with the Renaissance, is presently continuing unnoticed, and will culminate 500 years from now in what I call the Responsible Man. By that time the technological power of the average human being should be such that by our standards he'd be like a god; he could smash worlds or make them.

There is a school of thought that treats an anthill as a single creature, each ant being like a single cell of an aggregate organism whose goal is to feed itself, protect itself, etc. The individual ants--the cells--live and die but are replaced. Treating the anthill this way explains a lot of the automatic behavior of the ants inside. In the later novels of the cycle, in fact throughout the cycle, I treat with the human race in the same way.

If you think of the human race as a single organism, you have a creature which started out from nothing and grew to fairly good size here on earth, where it's safe. Now, it has become aware of the fact that it can get beyond the gravity and air envelope of its world, and is faced with going out where it's cold, dark, and possibly dangerous. Now, the urge to go out and explore is something it can't stop. In fact, one of the basic theses of the cycle is that it's torn between the instinctive desire to stay home where it's warm and safe, and the equally instinctive desire to explore and grow. However, the part that goes out to explore and grow is fearful of running into a situation that will

smash it, so it unconsciously exposes various facets of itself to the alien environment, to see which survive and which don't. To use the example of a protoplasmic creature, it pours along those lines which are successful and abandons those where the universe has killed it off.

The three successful lines, which I call Splinter Cultures, are the warrior (*Dorsai*), the philosopher (*The Exotics of Mara and Kultis*) and the faith-holder--both as a man or woman of true faith and as a fanatic (*The Friendlies of Harmony and Association*). The future leg of the cycle revolves around these three major survival types. There are others not central to the plot, such as the pure scientist type on Newton or the entrepreneur type on Ceta.

SFR: It's been said that you're working with characters that are larger than life.

DICKSON: I have to. My assumption is that the Splinter Cultures have only one character-facet, instead of being full spectrum in character like you and me and the people of old Earth. Concentrated in this way, they are nonviable. If all the rest of the human race was killed off and they were left alone they would eventually die off, too, because they don't have the full spectrum of humanity in them--yet. They are mainly unconscious genetic experiments by the encompassing race-animal.

On the other hand, within their area they are essentially superhuman. But you can't write about superhumans for the same reason you can't imagine an alien life form that is not bits and pieces of life forms you've experienced here on Earth, as I mentioned before. Therefore they have to become es-

sentially allegorical figures.

This is one of the reasons why people will say, "What about their laws?" These readers may like the structure set up in the Cycle, but would like to see it rounded out and made whole. I can't do it simply because I must show archetypes--even if they're merely refinements of one facet. And also because I would get bogged down in such a fully picture, and never get the Cycle done.

These readers should remember that all imaginative fiction is a shadow play and is by definition two-dimensional. It may give the illusion of three dimensions, but if you could go beyond two dimensions you'd be creating real living things, rather than characters in a story, on a stage or on film.

SFR: It's been several years since we've seen anything new in the Cycle. Do you think that the fears of some that it will never be completed will be justified?

DICKSON: (laughs) No, it's a life-time project--1957 to now. It'd be kind of a shame to let that go down the drain. But it is going to take me at least another twenty years to do it.

SFR: About how soon can we expect to see some new work in it from you?

DICKSON: Well, THE FINAL ENCYCLOPEDIA is now about...oh, it's impossible to say what proportion of it is done. I mean, I could say it's about a quarter written or something like that, but it really doesn't mean anything, because I may go back and rewrite it completely. So I'm actually working on THE FINAL ENCYCLOPEDIA right now. The trouble is, I've got to do this and all the other Cycle books without a con-



tract, which means they are essentially something I do in my spare time. It gets picked up and worked on for awhile and then set aside for several months, then picked up again.

SRF: Why is that the case?

DICKSON: Well, simply because I'm essentially paying for the book myself. If I could sit down and do nothing but work on THE FINAL ENCYCLOPEDIA it would take me at least a year to do it. That means that I would be spending one year's support expense on it. Now, since I haven't got that kind of money in the bank and I can't afford to set everything else aside, I have to steal time from my regular work to work on it.

SRF: That's not quite what I meant. I mean why can't you get a contract for it?

DICKSON: I can. I don't want one. If I sign a contract, then I have to accept a deadline and I don't want to do that. I just turned in FAR CALL, which is roughly a 150,000-word book last January, after having rewritten it completely three or four times. I chewed my fingernails for about two months and then pulled it back from the publisher and re-wrote the thing completely again. A book isn't finished until it tells you it's finished, and I'm sick and tired of turning in books that do not fully satisfy me.

SRF: Would you care to name a few that have failed to satisfy you in the past?

DICKSON: None of them have really pleased me in the way that I want. I've never had a chance to sit down and do a book the way that I want to do it, with unlimited time to work with it until I'm completely satisfied...

I'm sorry, I take that back. THE FAR CALL is very close to being finished the way I wanted it. When I turned it back in the second time after taking it back for a final rewrite I knew there was no hauling it back one more time after that, so I essentially shoved it off to the side. I haven't looked at it since then. But if I did, the thing to do would be to wait for six months or a year and then look at it again to see if I wanted to redo it. If I didn't then I would consider it finished.

SRF: Do you think that may be dangerous for you--that you may be polishing to the point where it doesn't do any good any more?

DICKSON: No. I'm someone who has devoted my whole life to the craft of writing. Nothing is ever completely finished, I don't mean that. For example, if you were a sculptor you could theoretically work down to the point where you were removing individual molecules, to get just exactly the surface you wanted. In that sense there is no end, but there is a point at which, bearing in mind the overall work that has to be done on the Cycle, I wouldn't want to put any more time into any individual novel. The point is, I've never been able to approach that before.

What I've been trying to do, which has been the reason for the upset of the past three years, is to get control of a lot of my older books and get them on more practical contracts--licensed out to publishers under better terms, so that I can essentially live off my back rights, which a writer with forty books to his credit ought to be able to do. Then I wouldn't have to write for money, but for the book itself. Now, unfortunately, I still have old contracts that will take me another year or two to pay off, which is why THE FINAL ENCYCLOPEDIA is being done in bits and pieces. But probably by the time I get THE FINAL ENCYCLOPEDIA done and out, I will be in the situation where I can sit down and actually take the year to do the next book.

SRF: The Dorsai material has become more popular over the years. I'll ask you a two-part question: why was it not more popular when it first appeared and do you think there's any chance of it becoming a cult item?

DICKSON: Well, DORSAI! itself first appeared under the title THE GENETIC GENERAL as an Ace paperback. It sold out very quickly, and simply no more was done with it. The next book in the Cycle, NECROMANCER, was done by Doubleday as a hardcover. Doubleday's practice with sf hardcovers was the same pattern they had developed for their mysteries, that if anything wasn't sold at the end of three or six months, you simply pulped what was left and took that off the market. In other words, the darn things simply weren't available to readers, since paperbacks weren't winding up in libraries at that time.

Secondly, NECROMANCER was published in paperback--again according to publishing practices of that time--under a totally different title. It still is under a different title. I still get letters from

people asking me whereto find NECROMANCER. The answer is that you do not find it under NECROMANCER but under NO ROOM FOR MAN. Now Doubleday has taken it away from the people who had it and relicensed it to Daw, and Don Wollheim, who knows something about science fiction, is going to be releasing it under NECROMANCER.

Another reason for its lack of popularity was that people began to be aware of it as more than one book in the 60s, and of course the 60s was a time in which people were very strongly antiwar and antimilitaristic. The books we assumed to be prowar and pro-military simply because one of the archetypes was that of the warrior.

SRF: In my reviews^{*} of the books I said that they are not prowar but pro-warrior. Would you agree with that?

DICKSON: Yes! I'm grinding an axe all through the Cycle that there are three strong character threads which are my three archetypes. I think the warrior element, from the survival point of view--I don't mean somebody who wants war or wants to fight, but the ability to protect what has been gained or to go out after whatever new gains are required in the evolutionary process--is a necessary element, just like the philosophical attitude or the faith attitude. The point is that none of these things are either good or bad of themselves, and each one is capable of being very bad. The warrior can be a ravening wolf, the man of faith can be a narrow-minded Torquemada-type fanatic--with the best of self-justification. The philosopher, as I pointed out in TACTICS OF MISTAKE, is not necessarily a kindly fellow at all. He is out to change not merely the individual but the human race, and he wastes no tears over the human race as it might have been otherwise. On the other hand, they all have good things to them, too, you see. The warrior can bring us courage, the man of faith can bring us the business of holding to an ideal beyond the simple sustenance of reason, and of course the philosopher...

SRF: To return to the original line of questioning, do you think there is any chance of the Cycle becoming a cult item--and would you be disappointed if it did?

DICKSON: I think that to a certain extent it has, but the word 'cult' does it a disservice. These books are aimed at people who are inter-

* "Delap's F&SF Review", March 1976.

ested in where the human race is going. Essentially they're philosophical treatises in fiction form and they appeal to people who are interested in such things. In this sense, they are cult books.

On the superficial level...I'm making a philosophical argument in terms of what could be called an entertainment and the superficial level of the entertainment appeals to readers who read them superficially, simply because the characters that've been thrown up are active and interesting. You can dress up as a Dorsai, as an Exotic--as a Friendly, for that matter.

SFR: Then it wouldn't disturb you if people started showing up at CONs with T-shirts that said "Shai Dorsai" instead of "May the Force be With You"?

DICKSON: Oh, no. This will happen with any storytelling. The readers, having read everything they can in an area where they find the literary characters interesting, have gone ahead and started to play with it on their own. This is something that already outdoes the people who come up with lovely ideas--as they see them--for Hoka stories. Poul Anderson gets the same thing. Most of them come up with Hoka ideas about already comic characters, and of course this doesn't work. The Hokas are burlesques of situations, which means that they operate most nicely when you're taking off on something that is a piece of straight drama. You could have a Hoka Captain Blood or a Hoka Beau Geste, but you could not very well have a Hoka Laurel and Hardy, because you're trying to make humorous something that is humorous already.

SFR: That brings up another interesting point. You do more collaborative work than most other writers...

DICKSON: Not if I can help it. I started out writing saying that I would never collaborate, the single exception being the Hoka stories because I had begun to collaborate on them before I started full-time writing. Our pattern was always that I would write the first draft and Poul would write the second.

Since then I've collaborated three times, all under very special circumstances. The collaboration with Ben Bova on GREMLINS, GO HOME was really a three-way collaboration between Ben and myself and Kelley Freas--we got to talking the thing one time and it was a romp that came together. The collaboration with Harry Harrison was strictly brought about by John Campbell's death. Jim Gunn was filming people in sf and we said that John should be filmed. It was a good thing that we did because he died very shortly thereafter. And since the film showed us talking about this novel, in order to give the film as much life as possible Harry and I decided to go ahead and write the novel--get it serialized in ANALOG if we could, and it turned out that we could--so that students would have not merely the film but the novel to study. The result was THE LIFESHIP. I've no intention of collaborating with anybody in the future, except there are enough Hoka readers that I feel an obligation to do some more Hoka novelettes with Poul somewhere along the line.

SFR: Let me get your reaction to the topic of the year, STAR WARS. Do you share Ben Bova's objections to it?

DICKSON: No, I see it a little bit differently than Ben. It's got a number of things wrong with it. (laughs) You could drive a truck through some of the holes in the narrative. It's very simple-minded in some respects, but what's the difference? It's marvelous entertainment. It's the old "Planet Stories" come to life again, and that's a very legitimate and very good form of science fiction.

SFR: You class it as science fiction rather than fantasy then?

DICKSON: No, it's science fiction. It's impossible to draw a straight and hard line between the two of 'em. But I generally regard as sf anything that intends to be sf and that works up some sort of a structure of logic. In other words the

attempt is made not to have the people translated to the Death Star by magic, but to get them there by mechanical means.

SFR: Do you think that the success of STAR WARS will mean that there will be more serious and decently-made sf films in the future?

DICKSON: Well, I think that curiously enough there may be, but I don't think it will be an obvious result. STAR WARS made money, therefore moviemakers all over are hopping on the doggone bandwagon, hoping to make more films that will make money with the same kind of material. The result is, we're going to get eighteen dozen bad imitations of STAR WARS. What STAR WARS did innocently and joyfully, they're going to do calculatedly and sadly. On the other hand, simply because some of these will make money, there will be more money available for the making of serious sf films. So it's moved up a step closer to the day when we will have responsible making of responsible sf films. Let me point out to you that SLAN has never been made into a movie. SLAN would make a marvelous sf chase movie but it's so close under their noses they can't see it

SFR: How about your own work? Would you like to see some if it done as films someday?

DICKSON: Quite frankly, I would be awfully scared to see that. I don't know that I would even agree to have any of the Cycle novels made into movies because I can't see any way in which moviemaking nowadays could do other than make a horrible doggone mess out of it. The best I think they would do is follow the action line, which would give us something entirely different from what I am after, since my action story is merely a vehicle on which I mount my philosophical argument. I can't see them making a movie that has any philosophical argument in there--I mean, not doing it properly and responsibly. (laughs) Oh, Lord, I can see what they would do to some of my characters.

SFR: Spider Robinson published a rumor in his review column in GALAXY that you would be doing an album for ANALOG records soon. Is that correct?

DICKSON: Of songs? Oh, yeah, not from ANALOG, from me. Sometime this coming year--again if I can find not merely the time but the money, since this is something I am determined to do myself and not through anyone else--I'm going to do a record in which I will be singing



some songs that I've written myself, such as "The Ballad of Jacques Christien".

SFR: I believe the rumor was that the ANALOG record was to have a reading of one of your stories.

DICKSON: I forgot. I believe, come to think of it, Ben Bova and I talked about it. But aside from something special like that, I'm now looking forward to doing everything myself, because that's the only way to control quality. For example, I'm hoping eventually to be reprinting in hardcover a number of my older books, with good bindings, good illustrations, each with a special foreword and so forth--they'll be essentially collector's items. I don't mean they will be highly expensive, but if I were doing them today they would probably come out at twelve or fifteen dollars a copy--about half again as much as an ordinary trade book.

Along with that I will eventually be doing some readings. At any rate, let me try the business of the songs first. That's going to be difficult enough to do. And if that works, then maybe we'll do some of these other things. Authors are essentially in the position of small businesses and like all small businesses we have cash flow problems. There are all sorts of fascinating things you want to do but how to you squeeze the money out to do them?

SFR: What other projects do you have in the works?

DICKSON: I have an old contract with Ballantine and the subject of it has been changed to a book called THE DRAGON KNIGHT, which will be a sequel to THE DRAGON AND THE GEORGE. Then three of my former novelettes--"Pro", "Home from the Shore" and "Jean Dupres"--are going to be expanded slightly and put out as relatively thin books, with illustrations, by Ace. I'm rather pleased with that. The novel of which "Enter a Pilgrim" is the first chapter is still puttingter forward, and I intend to wind that up within the next year. And THE FAR CALL is due to be published in March.

SFR: To end on a personal note, I understand you were down at the Cape to see the launch of the Apollo-Soyuz mission and more recently saw the maiden flight of the Space Shuttle in person.

DICKSON: That's right. I'm an inveterate launch watcher. I missed the first half dozen or so of the Apollo series because I thought I

couldn't afford it, but after going to one I decided that I would get there no matter how. I've been in the press stands now for about eight launches--most of the Apollo and Skylab launches.

I see the space program as a necessary step into a new environment. Since man's amphibious ancestors crawled out of the ocean, a step of this stature has never been taken. Out there beyond this safe little egg of a world we live in, there's all sorts of possibilities. We can't imagine what it's going to bring. But as Peter Pan said about dying: It's certainly something that would be terribly exciting.

CONTINUED FROM P.5

SCIENCE FICTION WRITERS OF AMERICA

Peter D. Pautz, Executive Secretary

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT!!!

May 4, 1978

The winners of this year's SFWA Nebula awards are:

BEST NOVEL: GATEWAY by Frederik Pohl
BEST NOVELLA: "Stardance" by Spider and Jeanne Robinson
BEST NOVELLET: "The Screwfly Solution" by Raccoon Sheldon
BEST SHORT STORY: "Jeffty is Five" by Harlan Ellison

The response was so overwhelming in the "Dramatic Presentation" category this year that a plaque was presented for:

STAR WARS by George Lucas

All of the above works were clear winners by first place votes, the (official) 8-7-6-5-4 point system, and the (unofficial, but oft-argued) 5-4-3-2-1 point system.

There were 211 ballots cast.

The Elections Committee (Frederik Pohl, chairman; Isaac Asimov; Norman Spinrad) met and counted the ballots on April 21st at Dr. Asimov's apartment in NYC. The elected officers for the 1978-1979 term are:

PRESIDENT: Jack Williamson
VICE PRESIDENT: Marion Zimmer Bradley
TREASURER: Joan Hunter Holly
SECRETARY: David Bischoff
EASTERN REGIONAL DIRECTOR: Charles L. Grant

There were 154 ballots cast.

The Nebula Award Anthology editor for this year will be Samuel R. Delany.

MARKET ANNOUNCEMENT
ANTHOLOGY: Working Title
THE HIGH FRONTIER

For 1979 Publication

Theme anthology of stories involving permanent colonies not on planets: "O'Neill Colonies", other artificial environments for permanent habitation, including asteroid civilizations but with major stress on artificial nature of environment (which presumably becomes "natural" to the inhabitants).

Nominal advance against pro-rata share of 50% of all royalties received by author. Book will be represented by Lurton Blassingame Agency and agent fees will be deducted. The book will be marketed abroad, some overseas sales already assured, pro-rata royalties will be paid on all foreign sales. US publisher is ACE Books.

Rights bought: non-exclusive world anthology rights only.

As in my past anthologies, authors are invited to write stories for this collection and market the serial rights for publication prior to publication of the collection. Higher advances will be paid for original stories, but pro-rata shares will not be different. Sufficient time will be allowed for serial publication.

Previously serialized or anthologized stories welcome.

Stories should use the non-planetary habitation as an integral part of the story, although a sufficiently good story in which the habitation is merely incidental will be considered. Send with ms. SASE and business-size SASE for editorial reply to Jerry Pournelle, 12051 Laurel Terrace Drive, Studio City, CA, 91604.

"RAY BRADBURY WRITES HUMANITY--NOT FANTASY--A HUNDRED YEARS FROM NOW, FOR THAT ALONE--IF FOR NO OTHER REASON--I GIVE IT AS AN HONEST OPINION THAT RAY BRADBURY IS THE ONLY WRITER OF THOSE REVERED BY THE FANTASY-LOVER, WHO WILL BE REMEMBERED AFTER FANDOM--WHICH WILL NOT LAST MORE THAN THIRTY MORE YEARS--DIES AWAY. I ALSO BELIEVE RAY BRADBURY IS THE ONLY PULP MAGAZINE AUTHOR WHOSE WORKS WILL STILL BE READ A HUNDRED YEARS FROM TODAY,"--MARION ZIMMER BRADLEY; THRILLING WONDER STORIES, OCTOBER, 1948.

'REMEMBER WHEN L. SPRAGUE DE-CAMP SAID, "IT DOES NOT PAY FOR A PROPHET TO BE TOO SPECIFIC."

--Lee Smith

LETTER FROM DARRELL SCHWEITZER

May 19, 1978

'One thought I have on SFR 25 is that my comment about UNEARTH being a joke is tactless and uncalled for. It is true that ASIMOV'S publishes more first sales per issue than they do (in July-August, five of them), but as long as UNEARTH can encourage new writers and actually produce results, fine. They have produced D.C. Poyer, a very promising writer who later graduated to us and ANALOG. And there was a very unorthodox story, "The Symbol Hunters" by Keith Justice, which was a bit too in-groupish for a wide market. (The sometimes I wonder. We just bought something similar by Arthur Jean Cox.)

'Yuggoth knows we need new writers. The appalling fact is that all your favorites and mine are not producing in the shorter lengths these days. Therefore the immediate future of science fiction magazines is in the hands (or typewriters) of people like Poyer, Barry Longyear (from whom we have bought some 4 novelets---this guy is prolific enough to be a reincarnation of Henry Kuttner), Gary Osgood, Ted Raynolds (recently we bought a novella from him which in concept makes RINGWORLD look like a hoola-hoop) and John M. Ford.

'ASIMOV'S actually has a rather fat backlog at the moment, but almost all of it is by unknowns. The only thing we worry about is getting names for the covers. The unknowns are writing good stuff, too. I am very impressed with Sharon Farber in the May-June issue, for instance. Sooner or later (preferably sooner) we hope to build these people up enough to make them worth putting on the cover. This can be done by sneaky degrees. The new issue lists Larry Niven, Jack Chalker, John Brunner, and Stephen Leigh. I think that's the first time anyone has listed Leigh on the cover. I think it'll get done again.

'Anyway, what this means is that the time has never been better for talented new writers to enter the middle-to-upper income slots in the short story field. And this will be more so in the future. Have you heard the news about NOVA, the Penthouse thing? It seems they'll print 40,000 words of fiction an issue, and pay \$800. to \$1200. for short stories. That sounds like 20¢ a word, which means the highest rates available for sf have quadrupled in the past couple years. (A healthy development, methinks.) The fiction editor is Dianna King, formerly of ANALOG. She knows what she's doing. Let's assume the magazine is a success. 40,000 words a month isn't

a lot, but it's enough to mean NOVA gets first grabs at all short fiction written by recognised names, unless the magazine has some taboos or slant I don't know about. This means the formerly first string markets (ANALOG and ASIMOV'S) are now in the back seat, and will be even more open to new writers.'

((Only if you assume NOVA will buy *all* of the short fiction by Names Lured by that \$800-\$1200 per story. But chances are the Names will find some of even their work returned---and will then send it to the secondary markets. Thus NOVA may inadvertently create a situation where Big Names will be marketing surplus to you and pushing new writers out.))

'I don't see how F&SF can do anything but go 100% fantasy in the face of such competition, or how GALAXY will be filling pages. The joke at the tail end will be AMAZING, paying 1¢ a word to NOVA's 20¢. And there's a distinct possibility that a successful NOVA could precipitate a price war among the upper level magazines as the competition for material becomes more intense.

'The moral of the story is that now is the golden age of short sf, from the writer's point of view. If you're any good at all, it's a seller's market.

'Another moral is that a writer should avoid typing himself. I think one of the reasons Campbell's ANALOG declined so seriously in the 1960's is that too many major writers thought just inconceivable for their work to appear there. Campbell never published Niven, Zelazny, Delany, the "new" Silverberg, Le Guin, etc. I wonder how many of them tried. Too many writers submit in such a way as to minimize rejection rather than maximize income. Even agents do this. But as Norman Spinrad remarked in SFWA BULLETIN a while back, you should send everything to the highest market (PLAYBOY) first. When you stand to make a thousand bucks, it's worth risking the time and postage. Likewise, it will be worthwhile to submit everything to NOVA first, as much as I hate to admit it, being associated with ASIMOV'S.

'Le Guin brings up an interesting point about male writers using female pseudonyms. I wonder---are the recent feminist of anthologies the first overt cases of sexual discrimination in the adult sf field? In Juvenile publishing it is a simple marketing fact that boys read books by male authors and girls read books by females. Therefore a man writing for girls must use a female pseudonym, and a woman writing for

boys turns into Andre Norton. But in the adult field?'

((I would imagine the women editors of feminist of anthologies would reject such male-written stories, perhaps giving the reason that men can't write like women, and such stories would be unethical and fake, somehow.

((Conversely, imagine the hue and cry if an anthology appeared with the title, MEN OF WONDER: Science Fiction Stories By Men About Men.))

'The only case of discrimination against women I've ever been able to verify was (it figures) Hugo Gernsback. He claimed that women could never write sf, therefore he would not buy stories from women. He was somewhat surprised to discover that Leslie F. Stone, from whom he had been "buying" (if that is the right word, considering his payment policies) was a woman. She still tells this story. But before long Gernsback was printing Claire Winger Harris. Did the other sf/fantasy markets ever discriminate against women? I seriously doubt it, considering how hard they frequently were for material. It would take a very dumb pulp editor to turn down a publishable story because it was by a woman. C.L. Moore says she used the initials to hide her identity from her boss at the bank, lest he she really didn't need the job after all. At the same time the same market (WEIRD TALES) happily printed Mary Elizabeth Counselman. Once you get into the 1940's and 50's, there's Leigh Brackett, Margaret St. Clair, Katherine MacLean, Judith Merril, Mildred Clingerman. And these people had genre books published under their own names, so the book publishers don't seem to have discriminated either.

'I suspect there have been such low percentages of women involved in

THE ONLY PROBLEM I CAN SEE WITH THIS IS THAT IT MIGHT CONCEIVABLY BRING CIVILIZATION, AS WE KNOW IT, TO AN END...



the field in the past simply because it didn't attract them, and no more than that percentage submitted stories. Certainly nobody ever made sexual discrimination a selling point before the feminist anthologies. Of course this is category thinking again. Feminist literature is a definite publishing category. Feminist sf is a hybrid attempt to get both markets. In other words, a new ghetto. (I wonder, would it be possible to create a NAKED CAME THE STRANGER in this field? 25 male sf writers write stories under female pseudonyms and publish the result as a feminist anthology...)'

((I suppose it could be done, as could women write a 'male' anthology. But is there a market for an explicitly all-male sf anthology? Unless... the stories were all about gay males in the future. Such a book, written by women, might be verrry interesting....))

LETTER FROM MARGARET CUBBERLY April, 1978

'Sometimes I get a mental picture of you as a kind of Madame LaFarge, sitting at the foot of the guillotine with your knitting and an expression of delicious anticipation. The guest executioners line up and the victims are brought in. Ah! There goes Maltzberg's bloody head into the basket. Squirmed a bit didn't he? Chuckle. Chuckle. Knit one. Purl two. And now they are dragging poor old Heinlein up the steps. Wham! Off it comes. Tough old bird. Click. Click. Russ and Meisel with those noses in the air? On your knees, girls. Slam! Good aim there. A bit of drawing and quartering later? Heh. Heh. Purl three. And voila! At last. Ellison is carried kicking and cursing from the cart. But wait, he breaks free! The Scarlet Pimpernel escapes again. Ah well, perhaps next time. One can wait.'

((Bring me the head of this woman! She has blown my whole editorial philosophy! Spread her entrails before my feet! Draw her and quarter her. (Will she do it for a quart??) Bring on the thumbcrews! Put her in the Iron Maiden! Is nothing sacred around here? Alter! How did you sneak this into the magazine?))

"I did it when you were sozzled on that homemade wine of yours, Gets. Whatamatter, can't you stand the truth?"

Of course I can stand the truth! I just don't want the readers to know the truth!))

5-15-78 Remember Roger Elwood? He came to science fiction, became a anthologist/editor phenom, and passed from our ken.

He is now at home editing a religious quarterly titled INSPIRATION. Having run out of publishers in the sf field who would believe in his projects (the laser disaster was the final blow, I should think... or was it ODYSSEY?), he is busy re-writing history with such self-serving statements as from this from a newspaper article in California:

"Elwood said he doesn't plan to write science fiction anymore. But he had decided to get out of that field anyway.

"It's a field which attracts rebels and drug addicts, and they tend to lose themselves in another world literally," said Elwood.

"I would tell myself, 'Here I am, a Christian, but I am involved in a field which makes me feel as if I am being compromised as a Christian.'"

"I would not allow profanity or graphic sex in my books," he said of his days as a science fiction editor. "Sometimes I accepted sex in the area of homosexuality, but only if the ultimate effect was to condemn. After all, you can't preach against it if you cannot show how evil it is."

"But the average science fiction is not necessarily Christ centered, and so I have called a halt to all science fiction work."

AHahahahahaha.....

By the way, INSPIRATION is published by Petersen's Publications of Los Angeles, who also publish 100 million copies a year of such mags as HOT ROD, MOTOR TREND, PHOTOGRAPHIC and SKIN DIVER.

Where will Elwood hop to after INSPIRATION fails? Well, he could always sell used cars.... Of course, they'd have to be Christian used cars.

CARD FROM LEE SMITH 1978

'On Paul McGuire's review in SFR #24 of the novelization of THE ISLAND OF DR. MOREAU, by Joseph Silva.

'Joseph Silva is a pen-name for Ron Goulart.'

((Ah, so? Very interesting bit of information for bibliographers and Goulart fans.))

NEW CASE, WATSON.
IT SEEMS A
MAN VANISHED
WHILE PASSING
THROUGH THE
REVOLVING DOOR
OF A PUBLISHING
HOUSE TODAY,
CHARS NAME WAS
ROGER ELWOOD.
RING A BELL?



CARD FROM DR. DEAN R. LAMBE May 9, 1978

'Never thought that I would agree with Darrell Schweitzer about anything, but his card with respect to your creative typos goes double for me. I don't object to the vast amount that you left out of my letter in SFR #25, but I did wince at your reversal of my statement--deafness is regarded as a far greater handicap in human society than is blindness, hence Bob Shaw is incorrect.'

((Really? It would be my judgement that loss of sight would be considered a far worse fate than loss of hearing. For me it would be. Apologies for the typos.

((Sometimes this typer "loses" a letter on the left margin when it snaps back on Return. And we don't always notice it. But that is no excuse for typing 'correct' when you wrote 'incorrect.'))

LETTER FROM RANDY REICHARDT May 18, 1978

'I recently graduated from library school, (in Edmonton), and I find myself, more and more, becoming ticked off at the stereotype image of the librarian, and don't we all know it: female, single, dull AND boring, old(er), hair in a bun,

glasses drooped around the neck and the ever-present tennis shoes. Of course, aren't we also all supposed to be just so utterly shocked at anything that even approaches being offensive, right? Zzzzzz(sorry). Well, of the stereotype's image, I can truthfully say that it fit into one of the categories rather nicely, that of being single. Enough.

'Suffice it to say, then, that Dean Lambe's snide remark about librarians and their possible aghast reaction to Steve Fabian's absolutely stomach-turning disgusting cover pisses me off just a tad. So, Dean, you want to know what the "librarians'" thought of Steve's cover on SFR 24? I like it, frankly, though I don't think it's his best cover recently. Shocked? Oh, I'm sorry. And please, no talking in the study carrels. Thank you ever so nicely.'

((The problem is not the modern librarians who are quite liberal and first amendment oriented, but with the beady-eyed little old ladies (and some old men) who sometimes object LOUDLY to library boards and commissioners and etc. about the "permissiveness" in the libraries and the "filth" available to "anyone". Guardians of public morality can be fanatic, hateful and vicious.))

LETTER FROM SANDRA MIESEL

May 14, 1978

'Since I'm mentioned several times in #25, I suppose it behoves me to comment. (It's all a plot to swell your mailbag, isn't it?)

((God, no! I recently had to buy a small suitcase and give up my bulging suitcase due to the increased mail load.))

'My essay, "Challenge and Response" has been the center of so much controversy, when Elsie Wohlheim was introduced to me for the first time she inquired, "Are you the notorious Sandra Miesel?" (Everybody run out and buy a copy of Daw's BOOK OF POUL ANDERSON so you can read what all the shouting was about.)

'Lenand Sapiro's letter leaves the matter exactly where it was to begin with: He still won't sign a formal release of rights to the original version of my essay because that would require communicating with me. An ambiguously worded statement in a fanzine lettercol is no substitute. I suppose it would be too great a compromise of principle

to have his lawyer forward the desired document. The complete file on the case would make fascinating reading--if only it were publishable. Maybe I'll do an andyoffutt someday and inflict the stuff on some convention audience in lieu of a speech.

'It so happens I know something about Rick Brooks' essay, "Andre Norton: A Loss of Faith?", which appeared in MANY WORLDS/BOOK OF ANDRE NORTON. According to Rick, it was originally published in the fanzine DIPPLE CHRONICLE, edited by Richard Benyo and copyrighted in Benyo's name. It was reprinted in the Elwood anthology without the knowledge or consent of the author. I'm not aware that Rick ever got anything out of the deal beyond a complimentary copy (after asking for one). Only Roger Elwood knows the rest and he doesn't speak to sf people these days.

'On to pleasanter topics. Elton Elliot's nice standard interview with Poul Anderson also refers to my "Challenge and Response". It was never intended to be the total, definitive statement on Poul's work. I have, after all, written ten other articles about him and am currently at work on some more: a Borgo booklet (AGAINST TIME'S ARROW: THE HIGH CRUSADE OF POUL ANDERSON, due in the fall), "Sing of her Memory", an academic study of his romanticism and a discussion of his use of science and history for DESTINIES. Poul has always been most generous with factual information to aid my research but he does not shape my interpretations. He's obsessively modest and hates to discuss his own writing. Indeed, it takes certain amount of fortitude to study a writer who considers literary criticism to be inherently worthless. Fans of his Technical Civilization series may be interested in my historical survey of it which will appear in something tentatively titled THE FLANDRY COMPANION (Ace). This includes a complete list of its components. A differently arranged list based on mine will appear in THE EARTH BOOK OF STORMGATE (Berkeley). It's time people realized just how extensive and complex this series is. They'll appreciate Poul more for the knowing.'

'I didn't get around to commenting on #24 but the Budrys stuff was marvelous.'

((I suspect that any writer--any popular writer who for whatever reason uses myth and symbols in his work will attract critical attention. And since of is a Criticism Growth Industry...))

LETTER FROM MAXIM JAKUBOWSKI

March 30, 1978 -- England

'I should like to comment on Phil Dick's letter in SFR 24 re Lem and Polish publishers. Despite my own Polish-sounding name, I have no axe to grind in the argument, but would like to point out that the exchange rate allegedly provided by Phil's bank is utterly incorrect. The present rate of exchange zloty/dollar is presently 33 zlotys to the US dollar; therefore, the sum of 49,000 zlotys is in fact the equivalent of \$1484 or thereabouts.

'Further, from past experience of traveling in Poland for both business and pleasure, I can vouch for the fact that 49,000 zlotys will buy far more than its dollar value equivalent.

'It is a well-known fact that zlotys cannot be taken out of Poland and Lem should have made this clear to Phil Dick, but most Polish publishers buying English-language texts usually provide the choice of a smaller amount, say \$500 in foreign currency or a larger amount, such as the 49,000 zlotys, if the writer is interested in spending it in Poland. And, yes, it is possible to use these royalties against the purchase of a LOT ticket for the air fare. I have done it, and so has Brian Aldiss I think when he went to Poland some time back.'

((Part of the problem may be that 'zloty' sounds like something a satirically-minded writer would make up for comic opera money.))



LETTER FROM RICHARD GILLIAM

May 4, 1978

'In regard to Wm. J. Denholm III's bibliography of H. Beam Piper I'd like to add MURDER IN THE GUN ROOM published by Alfred A. Knopf in 1953. This 243 page mystery concerns a wealthy gun collector who is murdered with part of his own collection. Piper uses the framework to show off his wide knowledge of firearms, even more so than in LORD KALVAN OF OTHERWHEN.'

((Yo. Thanks for the addition and side info.))

FEE-DOM ROAD

By
RICHARD
HENRY
KLUMP



Years ago, articles about him appeared occasionally in WRITER'S DIGEST. (This seemed only fair, since he was one of that publication's largest advertisers, taking the inside front cover position regularly month after month.) But it is safe to say that few people outside the world of writing and publishing had ever heard of him.

This has changed. His name, certainly, is still not a household word in mid-America, but he has rated articles in MORE and NEWSWEEK, has been mentioned frequently in book reviews and news stories about spectacular literary sales with record-breaking advance payments, and has even appeared as an offstage character in "Doonesbury" when some recently out-of-work statesman was holding a press conference about the book he was writing.

For various reasons, I will refer to him here as Big Brother, or BB. His brother and partner, although the elder of the two, will be known as Little Brother, or LB.

Big Brother deserves an enormous amount of credit, and not just for becoming probably the most famous, most aggressive, and in his area most influential literary agent in history. Together with computer typesetting and similar technological marvels, he has helped drag the writing and publishing business out of the gentlemen's club atmosphere of the nineteenth century into the real world. He may not have invented the literary auction, in which a manuscript is offered to several publishers simultaneously and a deadline for bids imposed, but he is certainly the first agent to make it work on a systematic basis. His hard-nosed insistence that publishing, if it is going to call itself a business, should act like a business has made him unpopular in some quarters, but it has had a profound effect on all of us who work in or on the fringes of that business.

And while some of his own business practices have been criticized, BB has always been rigidly scrupulous in the actual operation of his affairs. He is the only agent I know, out of hundred or more, who invariably makes out and signs his check for the author's share of any income the same day the agency receives a check from the publisher.

When BB started his agency, immediately after World War II, he seemed to know exactly what he wanted to do, where he wanted to go, and how long it would take him to get there. It shouldn't be surprising that a man like that wouldn't be the easiest possible boss to work for, and BB wasn't--which is what I'm going to talk about here.

While BB devoted long hours and most of his considerable energy to obtaining as clients professional writers whose work could be sold for substantial sums, he knew he had to do other things to provide a regular income. One of those things was one of the practices for which he has been criticized--an operation known as a "reading fee" service. He compounded the crime by advertising this service (even today, the "gentlemanly" view is that literary agents, like doctors, shouldn't advertise at all). Within a few months he had made a highly efficient, profitable enterprise out of it. Not only that, but the service he sold was by and large a uniquely valuable one, if the customer was capable of making intelligent use of the advice he received for his money.

There were usually three people on the reading fee staff at any given time, and I will forgo modesty to say that those three were almost always truly exceptional people. Men (not 'persons'): to the best of my knowledge, only one woman ever made the grade as a reading fee critic, although I must admit she performed

rings around most of us) who started their careers on the fee desk later went on to become successful writers, editors, and even publishers. Among his other talents, BB had a remarkable knack for judging talent and ability in others. Most of the men he picked were intelligent and creative, and possessed that indefinable quality called "story sense" to an outstandingly high degree. The few who didn't and happened to be hired anyway always departed after a week or two. Those who did worked for BB, on the average, between one and two years.

What happened was this: A manuscript arrived, accompanied by a check, the fee in those early days being \$5.00 for a short story and \$25.00 for a novel. (These multiplied considerably before BB dropped the service, or at least stopped advertising it, a few years ago.) The manuscript was placed in a folder and recorded on a file card by a secretary. The reading fee man who had just finished one assignment and needed another went to the files, took out the first folder in the top drawer, read the story carefully, and wrote a letter of criticism.

The letter was a solid two pages long and always followed the same general pattern, but aside from that it was usually incisive, pertinent, and full of suggestions ranging from mildly to extremely helpful depending chiefly on the recipient's ability to understand and make use of them. Given all this, one of the sub-functions of the letter was always to make the customer want to come back for more by sending his next story to Big Brother for further criticism. Therefore, the emphasis in the criticism was almost always on plot construction, hardly ever on writing style as such. The latter was always at least "promising."

An inept or careless letter probably got past the system occasionally, but all things considered I'd say that at least ninety percent of the customers received honest value. But let's flip the coin. Remember, the customer paid \$5.00 to have a short story reviewed. Of the five, BB took four, and the man who did all the work got one. Try reading an average story and writing a valid, helpful criticism of it in much less than two hours, and you'll see where the reading fee critic stood as far as his income was concerned.

True, there was a quota system. If you wrote thirty reading fee letters a week, BB paid a \$5.00 "bonus," so you wound up with a paycheck of \$35.00 before deductions. There was no restriction on how many hours you could put in, however, so it frequently happened that a couple of critics

would labor on into the late hours of Friday night or the wee hours of Saturday morning, taking turns going out for coffee and desperately trying to squeeze out those last few pages.

(Although the extra fiver was a "bonus," you very soon learned that if you couldn't produce thirty letters per week regularly you were no longer welcome to use a desk and typewriter supplied by the BB Agency. And paradoxically, while several of us carried keys to the office, keeping personal possessions in "our" desks was forbidden.)

I worked for Big Brother for almost exactly a year, from early 1948 to early 1949. With me on the fee desks at the time were Walter Pultz and Evan Heyman, who became, among other things, two of the closest and most wonderful friends I've ever had. Evan was not typical; he frequently didn't make his weekly quota because he just wasn't "motivated" enough. On the other hand, he was pretty sure that BB would never fire him, because he was the one genuine intellectual among us, and this intimidated BB considerably. (As a further clue to BB's personality, he admittedly hired me because (a) I was highly recommended by someone whose judgement he respected, and (b) I was not a college graduate.)

A little geography will be helpful here. BB's office suite was large enough to contain anywhere from eight to twelve desks. Little Brother and Big Brother had private offices at left rear and right rear, respectively. Most of the rest of the space comprised one large room, containing several desks. But as you entered at the front, you stepped into a small reception area with the receptionist facing you, a couch against the wall on your right, and on your left a door with a frosted glass panel labeled "Mr. Elliott" in gold leaf letters.

There was no Mr. Elliott. The sign had been placed there by a previous tenant and never removed. The windowless cubicle behind the door was important because, while not large, it contained cabinets full of office supplies and old records, and from two to four reading fee men at one time. Yes, it was cramped.

That couch was important, too; we took frequent catnaps there when working all night. Very late one Friday night, then, Walter was working in Mr. Elliott's office and I was trying to get some rest on the couch before tackling a final story or two. Walter still had five credits to go to make his thirty, and had elected to try the manuscript of a novel in hopes of getting the full five at one crack, even though that

would mean writing a five-page letter. There was no sound of typing, so I knew he was still reading, still turning pages while trying to keep his eyes propped open...

Suddenly, there was an ear-splitting whoop of pure delight. Mr. Elliott's door banged open, and Walter came popping out, flushed with excitement and pleasure. He had lucked onto that exception that came perhaps once a month at best. This client was really good! This guy was a writer!

To prove it, Walter started flipping back through the pages, reading aloud excerpts for my approval. And I had to agree that he was right. But as he read, he grew gradually more sober, and his face fell considerably.

The procedure, when one of us found a manuscript he thought was at least marketable, was to pass it on to BB with a short note of recommendation. BB would read it and, if he agreed, the manuscript would be offered to publishers and the finder would get his full credit without the work of writing any critical letter. But if BB didn't agree, the chastened critic would have to write the letter anyway. So if Walter recommended this novel, and BB didn't think it was good enough, Walter would have missed making his quota for the week.

It was a dilemma, and he struggled with it. But his conscience wouldn't let him not recommend the manuscript. He did so; and BB not only agreed, but sold the novel on its first submission. The book was the first Shel Scott novel; the writer, of course, was Richard Prather. Later on Walter and I both, as editors, bought stories from him.

You can see that there were problems. The ones Evan had were of a different sort, though. His intellectual superiority was genuine, and he honestly didn't like the strictly commercial fiction that was of necessity Big Brother's bread and butter. His criticism of it tended to be on the harsh side. But, if he found anything that seemed to have the slightest trace of genuine literary merit, it made everything worthwhile for him.

One day he discovered a would-be writer who was black, in his teens, and lived in Philadelphia. The kid really wanted to be a poet, and made it known in his first letter to the agency that he was so poor he couldn't possibly afford a second reading fee if nothing came of the first one. Evan was overjoyed. He wrote the kid a letter that was much longer than the rules required, going into de-

tail on all sorts of subsidiary issues, and offering as much personal help as he could manage to give. The rest of us knew--knew, mind you--that he'd never get something like that past Big Brother's always fair but always \$-conscious scrutiny. To our amazement, BB not only let Evan get away with it, but encouraged him to go on helping the boy at no further charge.

I wish I could report a happy outcome to this story, too, but I have no idea of what eventually became of the young black hopeful. I only know that when Evan decided to leave the agency's employ, he spent a day and a half of his final week criticizing the boy a last letter of criticism, advice and encouragement that ultimately ran to fourteen full pages.

Big Brother occasionally exhibited his more human side in other ways. One unusual evening, he and I were alone in the office. I was getting some overtime in; he was waiting for the first receipts from an experimental offshoot of the agency proper, an actual writing school with real live classes and instructors (chosen from the top levels of the agency staff), which was at that moment having its opening session. BB paced restlessly, dug out and showed me a couple of poems he had had published in YANK, THE ARMY WEEKLY while he was in service, and finally confessed that one of his greatest ambitions was to own a Cadillac. For many years now, of course, he and Little Brother too have taken delivery every fall of brand-new Cadillacs, with their initials on the license plates.

PHRENOLOGICALLY, THOSE THREE DENTS DO SUGGEST A BOWLING BALL!



Little Brother was an anomaly, somewhat out of place in the (such as it was) literary atmosphere of the agency. A pleasant and gregarious man by nature, he didn't like coming down hard on the staff, which was frequently his chore. He had little interest in literature or even commercial fiction; he was basically a businessman to whom a product was a product and the highest possible production was the goal. He had developed a technique for dealing with employees whose output was falling. He would call the offending man into his office and deliver a rather rambling sermon, the burden of which was that we should try to think of ourselves as workers in a shoe factory, putting shoes together, fitting this part to that part, striving for the highest quality we could give the materials we had to work with, but always doing everything possible to increase our output (and on, and on, and on). He had another lecture, for other occasions, which had something to do with rungs on a ladder, but the combined genius of the staff members never managed to make much sense out of that one at all, strive as we might.

Aside from that, Little Brother's main job was to read the outgoing fee letters before they were mailed to make sure none of them contained anything that might by any remote possibility deter the client from sending in another manuscript. LB was remarkably good at this, and until a reading fee critic caught on and got the routine down pat he would frequently find himself retyping an entire page to remove an offending suggestion.

When the letter was satisfactory, Little Brother would sign it. The signature said "Big Brother," and it would have taken a handwriting expert to detect any difference, but this was one of the few outright deceptions the agency practiced. The client was supposed to think he was dealing with BB directly. For internal purposes, each letter writer put his own initials at bottom left where you would ordinarily find those of a secretary: BB:me for Big Brother:mr. elliott, for example. Any client who voiced suspicions received in his next reply a description of the secretary, gratis.

Then there was Don Fine, who had started on the reading fee desk and managed to work his way up to the next higher level. He was an independent, feisty little guy who thought the whole business was pretty much a crock and did not hesitate to express his disagreements with BB, which were frequent. It is strange that he lasted as long as he did, but the end came in the most

unpleasant way possible. He called in one morning to say that his wife had had their first baby the night before and that he had one of the worst colds in human history (which was obviously true), so he was going to take the day off. (He may have added that the day in question was Washington's Birthday, which most businesses observed as a legal holiday.) The day after that, BB and LB came in very late in the morning (virtually unique in itself), having delegated the oldest and most trusted employee (who happened to be Lester del Rey) to fire Don before they arrived. True to his nature, Don fooled them. He waited around until they appeared and proceeded to tell BB what he thought of him, loudly and in detail.

A handful of others came and went quickly not because they couldn't do the job but because they couldn't quite believe this strange thing was happening to them or because they couldn't take it seriously. One, whose wardrobe tended to indicate that he didn't really need the job, simply walked out at five o'clock on his first Wednesday afternoon and never even came back to collect the pittance he had earned.

Another, a burly, jovial character who treated the whole thing as a joke for the two weeks he was with us, produced one punchline during his stay that will always for me somehow typify the entire experience. He was one of the crowd in Mr. Elliott's office late one afternoon when those of us in the outer room were talking about who should go out for coffee. We called in to ask if anyone among the newest arrivals wanted anything, and his deep, cheerful roar came blasting over the transom: "That's not for the likes of us!" The walls shook, and so did the privileged veterans.

And then there was... But not all of the memories concern fellow employees. Clients, professional and reading fee alike, were sometimes grateful to BB, and for Christmas 1948 a satisfied gentleman in Texas sent him a fifty-pound sack of home-grown popcorn. Having no possible way to use it all himself, BB divided the supply into smaller bags and passed them out to the gang. I had my share along when I went to a party at the lower Fifth Avenue apartment of Sam Merwin, Jr., who had invited me with some reluctance, obviously considering me a callow kid. When the party ended, I forgot the popcorn and left it behind in the kitchen. The next time I saw Sam, he was positively cordial, and confessed that he and his family--having been totally broke at the time--had

lived on popcorn for a week. We have been fast friends ever since.

In almost thirty years, BB seems to have refined his talent for selecting employees to the point where he can choose people who want to work for him forever or at least until they feel able to set up their own agencies. Every time I have visited BB's office in more recent years, the place has looked more businesslike. BB himself, interestingly, is one of the few people I know who has changed hardly a bit, and today looks more like twenty than fifty.

The more eccentric group who worked for him in those primitive days griped a lot about how badly they were being treated. We had no way of knowing how much we were learning, or how valuable the experience would prove to be later. I'm glad to say that I did realize it, finally, and that when I had the opportunity to tell BB I had realized it, I did.

SMALL PRESS NOTES ANNEX.....

Invaluable reference books for the fan/pro writer (and those who are intensely curious) are SCIENCE-FICTION AND FANTASY PSEUDONYMS Compiled by Barry McGhan. [Updated & expanded to 1976.]

And A HISTORY OF THE HUGO, NEBULA AND INTERNATIONAL FANTASY AWARDS [Revised and expanded through 1977.] Both published by Howard DeVore, 4705 Weddel St., Dearborn, MI 48125.

The pseudonyms book is \$2. The Awards book is \$3.

THE SILVER EEL is a 'once in a lifetime' publication by Robert P. Barger. It is a tribute to Fritz Leiber's Fafhrd and Grey Mouser stories and world. It has a complete bibliography, some fine art inspired by the stories, and a Tim Kirk cover. Another major item is Karl Edward Wagner's address to the Lankhamar Literary Guild which traces the Fafhrd and Grey Mouser through their more than forty years of life.

THE SILVER EEL is \$3. per copy and is available from Robert P. Barger, POB 8, Evansville, TN 37332.

Ray Faraday Nelson has had his latest novel, THE REVOLT OF THE UNEMPLOYABLES, published by a small press: Anthelion Press, POB 614, Corte Madera, CA 94925. The soft-cover edition is \$2.95. Hardcover price is unknown at this time, to me. Review next issue.

SMALL PRESS NOTES

Odyssey Publications does a fine job of reprinting from the originals some of the 30's pulp magazines. In fact, they put out a better product--better printing quality, better paper, trimmed edges.

Received for review are the Sept. 1934 issue of SECRET AGENT "X", and the #2 issue of DUENDE, a journal and archive for pulp lore.

If you are a pulp lover and collector you'll be interested.

Write to Odyssey Publications, POB 71, Melrose Highlands, MA 02177.

Duende #2 costs \$2. The reprint of SECRET AGENT "X" is \$4.50.

Jeff Smith seems to be the only conduit to sf fandom preferred by Alice (James Tiptree, Jr.) Sheldon, and therefore the writings by her in Jeff's fanzine, KHATRU, are likely the only ones you're likely to see.

In KHATRU #7 Jeff tells of the circumstances and background to the "unmasking" of Alice Sheldon, and "Tiptree" has an article, biographical, describing her life, history, feelings about "Tip" and about writing and sf. Very interesting and valuable. There is also a Tiptree/Sheldon bibliography by Jeff.

There are other items in this issue: an interview with Jon Anderson by Freff, reviews by good reviewers, and a fine lettercolumn.

Noted that Jeff Frane is now co-editor of KHATRU...but as yet his presence is not felt.

KHATRU is quarterly, \$1.25, from 1339 Weldon Av., Baltimore, Md. 21211.

I shouldn't review THE DIVERSIFIER #24, the first 1978 issue. The fiction, with the exception of the Charles V. De Vet story, is so full of amateurisms that make me cringe that I curse aloud--not at the authors, but at Clingan for publishing them.

This issue does have some merit--the interviews with E. Hoffman Price and Mildred Broxon (especially the Broxon) are well worth the price of the magazine. There are also book reviews and a market report. Some poetry.

\$1.50 from C.C. Clingan, POB 1836, Oroville, CA 95965.

PRETENTIOUS SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY #1 is the brainchild of Mike Ward, and it is impressive...and not pretentious at all. It is, in fact, the best first issue of a fanzine I've seen in many a day...and it has all the good things going for it:

good, tasteful artwork, a sense of humor, excellent layouts [the "pro" look of graphics] and adult, intelligent commentary on science fiction by Paul Moslander, Edward Wood, Richard A. Lupoff, and Andi Shechter.

Offset, book paper...at 24 pages the \$1.50 price seems a bit high. Subs are 4 for \$5. Send it to Mike Ward, POB 1496, Cupertino, CA 95014.

THE CALL OF THE STARS is Flying Buttress Publications' first 'graphic album'--five comic art sf and fantasy renderings/stories by Enki Bilal, a French artist.

The publishers think the graphic art story book is coming into its own. Could be. But what they are actually doing is offering comic book art in black and white on heavy book stock, with an attractive color cover. No ads for toys and other adult and child juvenilia. They ask \$2.95. Forty-six pages.

The drawing of Bilal is okay. It's professional, but his style of drawing and paneling isn't exceptional or revolutionary.

He deals with fantasy and horror, mostly, with impossible science as furniture.

According to the information sheet sent with this advance copy, THE CALL OF THE STARS will be available in June. Send to Flying Buttress Publications, POB 83, University Station, Syracuse, NY 13210.

I'm impressed as hell with the new THE NATIONAL FANTASY FAN, Vol. 37, #6.

The National Fantasy Fan Federation (NFF for short) has been in existence forever, and it is now, even more than before, an extremely valuable cluster of fan services and information ideal for the veteran fan, and especially the new or would-be/might-be fan.

There is an information bureau, a writer's exchange, a letter column, new members list, news, a short-story contest, a correspondence bureau, a trading service, a tape exchange, book reviews, a photo bureau, a new fanzine appreciation society, fanzine reviews, convention news, a welcome committee, an overseas bureau...and a lot of other activities. There are names and addresses galore.

HOW DISGUSTING!



The NSF is the place to get your feet wet in fandom if you have an urge to find out what sf and fantasy fandom is all about.

To join send \$3. to Janie Lamb, Rt. 1, Box 364; Heiskell, TN 37754. Make checks and money orders payable to Janie Lamb.

I'm impressed as usual with ALGOL. The Winter 77-78 issue recently arrived is a lovely package.

Marion Zimmer Bradley's "My Trip Through Science Fiction," autobiographical, unashamed, emotional, struck me hard. The interview with Michael Moorcock was of high quality and complements the interview with him that I'll be publishing here in SFR.

I am again impressed with the quality of Richard Lupoff's book reviews. He should be doing the reviewing for ANALOG instead of Lester del Rey and assorted stand-ins.

Lovely cover by C. Lee Healy.

I can't see much to object to or put-down about ALGOL, unless it is the \$35 or so of advertising content. But even ads can be interesting and valuable to a reader, since they give an idea of what's new in the sf world.

The Spring 1978 ALGOL has arrived, spiffy and as beautiful as ever, with its C. Lee Healy cover in yellows and browns.

The most memorable item is the Harlan Ellison SFWA Resignation Speech, full of his dynamics, shocks and good professional sense. The old maids of SFWA must hate him with such a hate!

My inner publisher/editor wonders at the retail price rise of ALGOL to \$2.25 for 84 pages, 26 of which are ads...but Andy may have a better reading of the readership than I.

The interview with Gordon R. Dickson was good but rather intellectual and dry, yet one little comment by Gordon caught my eye...he thinks there will be a neo-Puritan resurgence in America in the rela-

tive near future. It would be interesting to hear his views on that at greater length.

Three issues of ALGOL by subscription in America cost \$4.50. Send to ALGOL, POB 4175, New York, NY 10017.

AFTA #1 debuts with a "96 page double issue" and is interesting for its look at comics fandom. It's a whole different world, folks. There is some overlap, but not much.

AFTA is half-size, offset, and to my tired eyes the print has been reduced too much...a crime committed by publishers wanting to get too much material on the page.

Price is 99¢. But send him a dollar. Edited and published by Bill Dale Marcinko, 47 Crater AV., Wharton, NJ 07885.

ARENA #7 is offset, half-size, 36 pages, and fine in its interview with Mark Adlard and article by Ian Watson, "The Crudities of Science Fiction."

It is not so good in its attitude of intellectual superiority to 'common' sf and its liking for intellectual sf. Don'tch know.

Published in England by Geoff Rippington, 15 Queens Avenue, Canterbury, Kent, England CT2 8AY.

Airmail subscriptions from America only. \$1. per issue. Send cash if possible (due to incredible hassles in cashing personal American checks overseas). Subs in England and Europe: 40 pence per issue.

LONGBORE THE INEXHAUSTIBLE by Adrian Cole (fine illustrations by Simon Horsfall) is a short jape and satire and mockery and caricature of sword & sorcery/barbarian science fiction and/or fantasy.

But short as it is, this prose is so overdone as to be resistant to sustained reading. Consider this bit:

"Leaping bravely and nobly from his gallant horse, Longbore stood boldly and brazenedly in the very heart of the loathesome village, his massive, masculine frame etched against the crimson backdrop of glittering, golden dawn.

"Is there none in this demoniac, damned domain of dreary disease who will greet a traveller what has ridden hard and fearlessly through impenetrable swamps and over unclimbable mountains and through monster-haunted jungles and vampire-ridden necropolis to get here? Will none come forth to challenge the might of Longbore and test the menacing metal of Witch-Sticker, his tried and trusty blade, slayer of goblins, gremmils, giants and gibbering gorillas?"

Not I...not I. This item costs \$1. and may be available from Jona-

than Bacon, Box 12428, Shawnee Mission, KS 66218.

The thrust of THRUST #10 is in the writing and marketing of science fiction, with interviews with agents Kirby McCauley and Henry Morrison. There is the article by Charles Sheffield, "The Easiest Way to Become a Great SF Writer," and Ted White's column. And more..and more.

Doug Frazt, editor and publisher, reveals he lost several thousands of dollars last year...but he persists.

THRUST is worth the \$1.50 price, of a subscription: \$5 for 4 issues in USA, \$7. foreign. Back issues available. Send to Thrust Publications, POB 746, Adelphi, MD 20783.

Another of writer oriented fan magazine is Mark McGarry's EMPIRE. EMPIRE #13 features a special legal section dealing with rip-offs, copyrights, taxes...many other aspects.

Also in the issue: an interview with David G. Hartwell (editor at Berkley/Putnam), an article on his writing by F.M. Busby, an item by Robert Adams...a market report by Darrell Schweitzer. And more.

The print is too small for my comfort, but whatevehell...it's a good, highly informative zine. Price is \$1.50 per issue, or \$5. a year. Quarterly, I presume, though no publishing schedule is listed. From: Mark J. McGarry, 2 Leonard Place, Albany, NY 12202.

Peter Roberts' fifth edition of GUIDE TO CURRENT FANZINES is now available. \$1.00 from Peter Roberts, 38 Oakland Drive, Dawlish, Devon, UK. Send cash from America.

A possible rival to LOCUS is the new FANTASY NEWSLETTER. First issue is dated June, 1978, and it is scheduled as a monthly.

Published by Paul Allen, 1015 West 36th St., Loveland, CO 80537. \$5.00 for 12 issues, send first class in U.S.; \$9.00 elsewhere by airmail.

The emphasis is on fantasy, but sf is well represented. Departments include "Specialty Publishers," "Trade Publishers," "Paperbacks," "Author Notes," "The British Scene," "The Fan Press," and "Random Notes." Eight pages, offset, mailed in envelopes.

A good effort. I would suggest a two-column format to break up those loooong lines.

FANTASY BY FABIAN is a large, well-made, hard-cover volume using heavy gloss paper, containing the popular Fantastic Nudes series of 23 drawings (drawings isn't the right

word, somehow; paintings with pencil and ink is more accurate) plus numerous Lovecraft-oriented illustrations, and many, many others from other fantasy sources and inspirations.

\$15.00 from Gerry de la Ree, 7 Cedarwood Lane, Saddle River, NJ 07458.

WALLY WOOD'S WEIRD SEX-FANTASY portfolio of eleven plates on heavy card stock (12" x 16") promises more than it delivers as far as weird sex is concerned. These are mostly nudies and a couple portray a kind of antiseptic intercourse (Positions). No penetration is shown. No male genitals are shown.)

The style and techniques are fine 'graphic story' (comic book), and the edition is limited to 2000 copies, signed by Wally. The portfolio cover/enclosure is gold printing on red leather-textured heavy stock.

\$20. from Nostalgia Enterprises, Box 1009, Carmel Valley, CA 93924.

PACIFIC NORTHWEST REVIEW OF BOOKS is a tabloid newsprint 20 page effort of professional layout and type-set quality, published by Loren Mac Gregor, edited by John D. Berry, Paul Novitski and Susan Wood....sf fans all.

Is probably the format which will hold: an interview with a NW author or artist, and lots and lots of reviews of local books and books by NW authors or of books of interest to NW residents.

It's a good publishing idea and I hope it succeeds. All depends on distribution, I would imagine.

Scheduled for monthly publication, subscriptions are: individuals \$7.50 per year; institutions \$9.00 per year. Address: POB 21566, Seattle, WA 98111.

Perry A. Chapdelaine has organized his long-dreamed of Authors Co-op Publishing Co. The first volume is THE BATTLE OF FOREVER by A.E. van Vogt, in its first hardback appearance. [First published in 1971 by Ace Books.]



It has a dust jacket and many interior illustrations by Bob Maurus. There are 500 numbered, autographed copies available at \$14.95 each. Regular price is \$9.95.

Write to Rt. 4, Box 137, Franklin, TN 37064.

The tenth-year anniversary issue of WEIRDBOOK [#13] is available. It is an exceptionally fine issue, with some very fine fantasy art: the D. Bruce Berry cover, the Fabian, the evocative work of J.X. Potter...

Fiction by Adrian Cole, H. Warner Munn, Gerald Page, Eddy C. Bertin, Brian Lumley, Basil Wells, Darrell Schweitzer...others...

This is a quality offset large-size softcover book, on fine white paper. (Hardback available at \$15.)

W. Paul Ganley is the editor/publisher, and he is a long-time fan and fan publisher. He does not publish amateur junk. Many items from his publications are picked up for anthologies by big-press editors.

WEIRDBOOK #13 costs \$5. Send to P.O. Box 35, Amherst Branch, Buffalo, NY 14226.

It's curious why there is such a strong small-press activity in fantasy, horror and sword & sorcery fiction, and almost none in science fiction.

Probably because the big commercial publishers decided long ago that fantasy and horror ala Lovecraft were not big sellers, whereas sf has become a steady and growing goldmine for most publishers.

DRAGONBANE is a new quality off-set magazine devoted to 'Tales of Heroic Fantasy' and is edited by Charles Saunders, a talented writer of this sub-genre in his own write.

The coup of the first issue is "Sleeping Tiger" by Tanith Lee. But I found the other fiction that I had time to read---"From Under the Hills" by David Madison, and "Wings Over Antarctica" by Charles De Lint---of high quality and well-worth reading.

Obviously, you are buying the editor of these small press books and magazines; his taste and judgement. Saunders is one fine editor.

DRAGONBANE is \$3. from Triskell Press, POB 9480, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1G 3V2.

I spend a lot of time complaining about small print, I know, and it may be a sign of early senility, but I am convinced that there is a point of diminishing returns in the tactics of reducing type size to get more-text-in. And I think this point is too-little considered by editors and publishers.

So, please, Harry O. Morris, Jr., editor/publisher of NYCTALOPS, think seriously of a smaller layout page, or large type-size.

NYCTALOPS #14 is of a high offset, book-paper, heavy orange cover quality, with Stephen Fabian covers front and back, with high-quality art inside. Well-done layouts...

It would be relatively fair to call NYCTALOPS a Lovecraftian fanzine and a fine one. Fiction, analysis, letters, poetry....

More thoughts about small print: It requires more reader work to read anything below 8.5 type. The "eye" resists. The mind resists... I'm not aware of any studies in this area, but I'm sure they've been done. What I call reader dynamics may have another name, but it exists, and I'm pretty sure the average newspaper is the embodiment of all the lessons learned about the best column width, best paragraph length, best type size, etc.

Anyway, to get back to NYCTALOPS #14; it's available for \$2. per copy and from The Silver Scarab Press, 500 Wellesley S.E., Albuquerque NM 87106.

One of the meatiest issues of FOUNDATION in memory is #13, which features a special James Blish section. The standout of the issue is Blish's (under cover of his William Atheling, Jr. facade) humorous/serious long-view analysis and positioning of sf from a Splenglerian POV. It is titled "Probable Prolegomena to Ideareal History." He makes the analysis of his own fiction by Brian Stapleford and Brian Aldiss seem dumpy and clumsy in contrast.

In the letter section I loved this from James Gunn:

'I am reminded of a statement made a few years ago to an SFWA gathering by Leslie Fiedler: for too long critics have tried to tell readers why they should like what they don't like; what they should be doing is discovering why people like what they like.'

And on page 63 is published a letter from two Russian writers which should cure anyone--any writer--of any illusions he may have about the benefits of a powerful central government. The dynamics of power and the need to keep power, always, once the state reaches a certain point of control, brings this:

'Dear Fellow Writers,

We would not wish to bother you with the affairs of distant colleagues; however, our troubles today could well become your troubles tomorrow if the literary world community does not demonstrate strong solidarity.

'By now, you have probably heard about the long years of repression of the well-known publicists and authors I. Svitlychny, V. Moroz, Y.

Sverstiuk, V. Stus, V. Chornovil, S. Karavan'sky, and of many other Ukrainian and representatives of other socialist republics.

'Presently, the activities of government security organs have entered a new phase: special attention is paid to combatting science fiction, works of fantasy that develop the somnolent consciousness, and those that prompt evolutionary or revolutionary changes. Thus, for example, all books by Oles' Berdnyk (approximately 30 titles) were secretly removed from all libraries and burned in accordance with a special "circular". (In what way does this differ from Hitler's actions of 1933?) Berdnyk himself was excluded from the Writers' Union five years ago, and placed in cruel and miserable living conditions.

'They did the same with the poet and science fiction writer, Mykola Rudenko. For many years he had troubled the leading organs of Ukraine and the USSR with suggestions that they examine and consider a series of scientifically based forecasts in areas such as economics and sociology. Criticism of him was not lacking (except for literary criticism). He was expelled from the Party, from the Writers' Union, and became terrorised in all manner of ways.

'More than once, our living quarters were subjected to searches by members of the KGB (three times in O. Berdnyk's apartment and twice in M. Rudenko's). Literary archives were almost completely plundered: taken were scores of notebooks with plans for new works, unfinished stories and science fiction novels, tens of thousands of lines of Rudenko's poetry now impossible to re-create, and also, a philosophical work entitled "Gnosis and the Present". The works, "Holy Ukraine", "An Alternative Evolution", and many more were confiscated from O. Berdnyk.

'It is impossible to work creatively expecting cruel and brutal guests any day (or more precisely, night). You, Fellow Writers, have surely never even dreamed of such a situation where, in a socialist country, ignorant gendarmes burrow with their dirty paws through the manuscripts of writers and poets; where, upon these poets' dreams of a World of Unity, Humaneness, and Brotherhood, fall ominous shadows of a merciless present.

'Do not consider these facts to be incidental. The situation of science fiction writers is tremendously sad throughout our multi-cultural nation. For instance, immediately after the death of the celebrated Russian writer I. Efremov,

CONTINUED ON P.42

NOISE LEVEL

a column

john brunner

WAES HÆL AND HERE'S HOW!

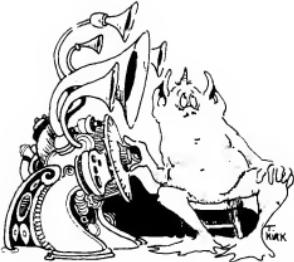
In the February, 1978 issue of THE HERBALIST (50 pp. quarterly from The Herb Society, 34 Boscombe Place, London SW 1)---which for some incomprehensible, but alas, typical reason is dated January, 1977 on the contents page---you'll find an article on traditional medicine by an Indonesian doctor, in which he argues that substances found in medicinal herbs can act both to potentiate the most active constituents, and to diminish their side-effects. He states, for instance, that rauwolfia root is much too effective as a hypotensive agent for its value to be limited to the "active ingredient" (reserpine) alone.

This accords so well with my own experience that I'm at once inclined to accept the rest of what he says.

But I have no intention of giving you the latest installment of "John Brunner versus the Pharmaceutical Giants"---on the contrary, because I am avoiding their products as completely as possible these days. What prompts me to mention THE HERBALIST is something far more likely to be of interest to SF-type folk. It's running a series on herbal beverages. Volume 2, #4 dealt with rum; the current issue, Volume 3, #1, has an extensive article on hipocras.

Quoted in it is a narrative poem of 1618, where the author recounts how eight kinds of ale were put on the table before him all at once, including "Ale of Woorme-wood, that could make one halt". (Not, that is, come to a dead stop, but limp or hobble along.)

Wormwood, of course, is "vermut", in German (hence vermouth), and the active ingredient is absinthe---a drink which my casual acquaintance with it leads me to regard as overrated. But if, as long ago as the early 17th century, they already knew about the disastrous consequences of wormwood addiction which led to absinthe being banned 300 years later, it looks as though here is one case where taking the whole plant doesn't help very much...



Never mind, next time they're tackling a much more cheerful subject---they're doing methergin. Members of the SCA, take note!

Whatever my opinion of the pharmaceutical industry, I still have a warm regard for the British National Health Service, and since on my visits to North America I have invariably found that (chiefly thanks to the Hearst newspapers, apparently) whatever goes wrong with it makes news over there, whereas what goes right is rarely mentioned, I'd like to share with you my current reason for being glad it exists.

Anyhow, there's never enough good news in the world.

It was a quarter to six on a Friday evening and we were setting out for our county town, Taunton, for a session of the Somerset science fiction group, the Ciderpress SF Society. (The best English cider is made in Somerset, so they boast.) It was also raining. I went to open the garage doors and slacked off on a patch of wet ground, and slick-knifed my right leg with my full weight on it.

As I rolled over---in a puddle, where else?---I remember thinking, "Damm! Have I any clean trousers to change into?"

And then it hit me, and I realized I was not about to get up from here without assistance. I yelled for Marjorie and tried to crawl back to the house. She came rushing out and I told her to phone for a doctor. (Four of them work as a group which covers South Petherton and another larger village, Martock, 2 1/2 miles away.) So she did, and got instructions on what to do.

Luckily our nice neighbor David Eccles was at home, and after phoning Marjorie got him to help me indoors and lay me on a couch. By now I was into shock: pallor, chills, shaking, nausea, the lot---but unfor-

tunately the pain had started to work through and that always gives you something to hang onto.

The evening surgery closed at six-thirty. Ten minutes later Dr. Parker, whom I'd never met before, rang the doorbell. Inspecting my leg, he found so much edema he thought I might have fractured the base of my fibula.

Ambulance!

So he phoned for one, and left a report to be handed to the driver, and went his way. The ambulance turned up; its crew of two strapped my leg, put me on a stretcher, took me to Yeovil General Hospital nine miles away---not incidentally, but by the smoothest route, because I wasn't an emergency. That impressed me.

The duty radiographer was standing by at home. They called her out (not, I'm glad to say, solely for me; there were also an injured child and a young man whom I saw leaving on crutches who had---I think---been knocked down by a car). There were long periods of waiting, but I found out why when I was parked for a time opposite the resuscitation room. They were working very hard in there.

To good effect. The patient's eyes were open when they wheeled her out.

Eventually it came my turn in the X-ray theatre and six plates were taken of my right foot and ankle. The duty doctor---an Indian, one of the people Mrs. "Iron Lady" Thatcher regards as a threat to our culture and way of life---studied them and found no trace of a fracture.

So a charming and helpful nurse eased me into a tubigrip support stocking and fetched half a dozen pain-killers from the pharmacy and said I should go home and ask my own doctor to call in the morning. (Saturday, bear in mind. He came, of course, to make sure that I, as one of his regular patients, was doing the right thing.)

By then I didn't have the face to ask for an ambulance to run me home, so Marjorie phoned a taxi and the hospital porter took me to the door in a wheel-chair and helped me on board. I paid the fare. Apart from that---No charge.

Oh, of course, I've paid my share of the insurance scheme which finances the National Health Service! What with the shuttling up and down of the exchange rate I can't quite work out whether what they bill me these days amounts to more like \$3 a week or \$5. But it's somewhere in

that region--i.e. painless.

Certainly it's true that the dying city-centers of Britain are underprivileged from a medical point of view; who'd choose to tackle thousands of people living in slums when he/she could take on half that number in a quiet country town with clean air and a common language? Hence, no doubt, the Indian doctor who treated me at Yeovil, whose population is about 50,000.

But the first thing that went wrong with the National Health Service was the British Medical Association. The second was a business-efficiency team called in to streamline it, which did the opposite. The foundation, luckily, has survived. Maybe next time they'll accentuate the positive.

***** CONTINUED FROM P.15

LETTER FROM GEORGE WARREN

May 6, 1978

'You say in SFR 25 that "TV moguls are spicing up their programs with lots more sex and realistic drama and comedy and will continue this trend to hold their audiences'. What realistic drama and comedy? I haven't seen any. And as for holding their audiences...they will continue to lose more and more actual viewers to the paperbacks and magazines, which believe it or not, are booming. Read the enclosed L.A. TIMES clip.

'It won't make any difference though. TV watching continues to slip and slide, but the networks are totally insulated from learning this fact. And numbskulls like Richard Revere (in the current ESQUIRE) will continue to go on about how the lousiness of TV says something significant about the taste of the American boob.

'The lousiness of TV proves nothing at all about America. The tube is exquisitely unresponsive to the public. The A.C. Nielsen ratings monitor nothing at all. There are 1200 Nielsen families (they say, have you ever met one? Have you ever met anybody who knew one? I knew one guy who claimed to have been a "Nielsen family" for one month; he was fired for watching too much ETV). These are taken to be representative of 73,000,000 American TV-watching families (where did we get that figure? More guess-work). This means that every Nielsen family--a hothouse concept based on inadequate sampling, the sort of crap a competent statistician would reject in a moment--is taken to represent 60,833 families. Do you re-

ally believe these possibly mythical yo-yos represent you or me at all?

'Worse: 276 of those 1200 families have adult members between 35 and 49; 444 have adults over 50. These are written off utterly in the lottery as demographic nonentities; they have, possibly rightly, been deemed too old and too smart to be influenced by the fatuous ads which pay for the tube. Only the 480 households with adults between 18 and 34 -- the suckers -- are consulted. Thus each of these is presumed to speak for 152,833 households. I reject this even more contemptuously. Moonshine, Claptrap. Flapdoodle, Pishposh. Horseshit. And for this they cancel a good kid show like SPIDERMAN, which my four-year-old adored, and enshrine Norman Lear. Imagine anyone taking this kind of statistical dreck seriously.'

((Well, TV talks and jokes about sex a lot, now, and some realistic TV movies are being shown. Like THE BASTARD, like THE DAIN CURSE. The problem is the dumb sitcoms that the networks keep trying out. How many years has ALL IN THE FAMILY been on now? And what have the networks learned from that? Nothing, apparently.

((I like to watch braless lovelies jiggle on TV, but not if I have to watch and hear endless series of enraging, tasteless jokes with them.

((Beyond that, the endless strings of commercials inserted too often is probably most responsible for decimating viewership. There is a point of diminishing returns in advertising, and the networks and local TV stations have obviously passed it. (What an opportunity for a fourth network: cut down drastically on commercials and increase commercial prices as viewership increases. But greed....)))

LETTER FROM ORSON SCOTT CARD

May 4, 1978

'I must confess that when SFR #25 arrived I was a bit put off at the idea of your own book being serialized in your own magazine. (I'm sure you expected some of that response: "He can't find anybody who'll take it, so he prints it himself"). However, contrary to my intentions, I started reading--and was hooked. The editor who rejected it in the U.S. was wrong: there is no more "gratuitous" sex in it (so far, at least) than in, for instance, Irving

Wallace's masterpiece of pious semi-porn THE WORD, and no more "gratuitous" violence in it than in practically everything I've ever written--and I'm a nice person.

'Now, don't misunderstand. I'm not accusing you of having committed Great Literature; you haven't even misdeemed yourself with a Significant Statement, at least in the first installment. But who cares? It's interesting, it's fun, and I didn't want to stop reading. The acid test, yes?

'Quibbles: You do have a tendency to overdescribe, judged by my absolutely impartial standards (anyone who describes more than I do is overdescribing; anyone who describes less than I do is leaving out important material), and I can't find any character who's good by any standard I'm familiar with. But perhaps that's your Significant Statement after all. Nobody is doing one damn thing but trying to survive, hopefully in style, but survive, anyway.

'Can't wait to see future installments.

'And I'm glad about the increase in number of issues. True, they'll be shorter. But as it is when SFR arrives it screws up a whole day. Now, a half day twice as often (my math doesn't work out, but you get the idea).

'Last time I wrote to you I mentioned that SFR was the only fanzine I had found that was worth reading back issues of (damn the prepositions, full speed ahead). Since then I have found a couple of other good ones, and Jan Howard Finder of Spang Blah said I should write to you and eat my words. But I only eat some of them--I still tear open the SFR envelope before anything else in the mail except envelopes that look like they might contain checks. You still take second place to money. And love doesn't come in the mail.'

((I do tend to people my novels with flawed and sometimes plain evil people. That bothers me a bit, because I wonder if any Big Publisher will want to buy them. Somehow I find myself rebelling against Nice Guys and Nice Girls and True Heroes. I don't think there's much money in the direction I am going. When I started writing for money in 1959 I had no problem having the line, but lately... Gad, am I putting myself above the Holy Readers? Am I failing to be Commercial? Am I ignoring all my diatribes and dictums? H-E-L-P!!!!))

***** CONTINUED ON P.27

AN INTERVIEW WITH LARRY NIVEN

There are a few writers in the science fiction field today who command the interest and attention of superstar Larry Niven, the author of such popular works as *WORLD OF PTAVVS*, *A GIFT FROM EARTH*, *NEUTRON STAR*, *ALL THE MYRIAD WAYS*, *RINGWORLD*, *THE SHAPE OF SPACE*, *THE PROTECTOR* and *THE FLIGHT OF THE HORSE*, among others. Moreover, his recent collaborative efforts with ace writer, Jerry Pournelle—*INFERNO*, *A MOTIE IN GOD'S EYE* and *LUCIFER'S HAMMER*—have catapulted him into national prominence.

Despite his enormous popularity in the science fiction world, Niven did not start out to be a writer. Indeed, his goal was to be a mathematician. However, after completing his B.A. in that field, he quickly came to the realization that his career options would be limited unless he chose to go on and pursue a Ph.D. degree.

Not long thereafter, Niven turned his hand to writing, a natural move, he maintains, since he had been "daydreaming" all his life. Although he was armed with loads of good story ideas, he discovered that he lacked the technical training required to be a professional writer. To solve that problem, he enrolled in a correspondence course in writing, something akin to the famous writing school approach. After spending a year of his time, both studying and writing, he sold his first story to *GALAXY*. He followed it up with another story and, then still another. Niven was off and running!

The interview below was conducted at the author's spacious home in Tarzana, California, where he was kind enough to spend several hours discussing his life and career. With a pipe in one hand and a brandy and coffee in the other, he zeroed in on my questions with skill and insight. Below, highlights of the conversation:

SFR: How did your background prepare you to write science fiction?

NIVEN: I grew up reading science fiction. I took science courses with the intention of creating the bravest of the brave new worlds the science fiction writers saw coming. But too much of science included too much nitpicking aimed at too little discovery. I didn't have the patience. So I waited for the scientists' results and then write stories about them.



Photo credit: Richard Todd

SFR: Were there prominent science fiction writers who served as role models early in your career?

NIVEN: Sure. But they're not people I hear anybody else name. With me John D. MacDonald was an important role model. I was also influenced by comic books, which were a big part of my childhood. They suggested several interesting plots and gave me lots of ideas for my own stories.

SFR: When did you reach the point where you felt you could make it as a science fiction writer?

NIVEN: I knew that when I sold my first story. Up to then, I was surviving on grim determination. I was twenty-five when I sold my first

story, "The Coldest Place", to Fred Pohl. I had been writing an entire year, as well as experimenting with a variety of writing techniques, before I landed my first sale.

SFR: Has your lack of formal scientific training ever hindered you in writing a story?

NIVEN: No, I can't remember anything specific. I suppose there were stories, looking back, that I would have thought more about had I had the material to think with. I am sure there were ideas, which entertained me for an afternoon, that never materialized into stories because I didn't know what to do with them. If I had had more information, perhaps they would have made it into story form. However, it's not as though I've run out of story ideas. I'm swamped with work—much more than I can really handle.

Conducted By JEFFREY ELLIOT

SFR: Some writers describe themselves as "driven" to write, while others view writing as simply a career. How would you characterize your own motivations?

NIVEN: I certainly don't see myself as "driven". I don't have the "psychotic" impulse which Isaac Asimov says he has. The only obligation I feel is to tell an entertaining story. Having said that, I'll admit to being a compulsive teacher. I'd like to train my reader to play with ideas for the sheer joy of it. I want him to daydream in color and three dimensions, with sharp edges and internal consistency.

SFR: Has your style changed significantly in the course of writing science fiction?

NIVEN: No, not really. I've become more versatile, but I haven't discarded any basic techniques. For instance, stylists often express contempt for the first person narrative. But I still like that technique for my purposes.

SFR: How important is "imagination" in the context of your work?

NIVEN: I've built my reputation around the extreme use of imagination in my stories. With that in mind, I should point out that some team of scientists usually arrived there first. For example, I got my data on quantum black holes from Dr. Robert Forward, one of the world's foremost gravity experts, who got his data from another, Stephen Hawking. I was the first science fiction writer to write stories about quantum black holes. My two stories were straightforward extrapolation, and both won Hugo awards. I try to keep up with the people doing the actual work. That's how I maintain my reputation for imagination.

SFR: Do you do a great deal of research in writing a book?

NIVEN: I do whatever it takes. And I do the research, generally, before I ever start writing. For instance, when I sat down to write *WORLD OUT OF TIME* it wasn't because I had finished the research, but because the research was done before I had a story. I try to keep abreast of the sciences. I subscribe to the major science publications. I attend AAAS meetings. And I stay in contact with various people in the scientific community, who keep me informed of major new developments.

SFR: How important is "emotion" in your stories? Is it as significant let's say, as "reason"?

NIVEN: No. If I include human characters in a story, I recognize they must react in plausible ways to whatever happens to them. However I place greater emphasis on reason. My writing appeals to a particular kind of reader. He might be a fan of mine because he likes solving puzzles. Or he might like strange new environments. Or maybe nothing attracts him, in which case he may be off reading *Destroyer* novels, which I do, by the way.

SFR: Are you concerned that your stories conform to known scientific fact?

NIVEN: I try to make my stories as technically accurate as possible. If the scientists come up with new discoveries later, then I can't really be held responsible. In fact, the first story I sold was literally obsolete before it hit print. It had Mercury non-rotating, so that the coldest place in the solar system was the point where sunlight never fell at all; where midnight crosses the equator on the black back of Mercury. Well, the Russians proved that Mercury has a tenuous atmosphere, which it continually loses (owing to the heat), and which is replenished from the solar wind. I don't think I can be held responsible for such a weird quirk.

SFR: How much rewriting do you go through in writing a book?

NIVEN: I do a great deal of rewriting. However, I try to do everything before my story reaches the galley proof stage. I recognize how much it costs to make changes at that point in the process. I might make minor changes here or there, but nothing too major.

SFR: Are you ever tempted to rewrite some of your early stories in light of what you know now?

NIVEN: I re-read *WORLD OF PTAUVS* not too long ago, and was surprised at how good it is, considering that I wrote it several years ago. That is one book, for example, I wouldn't want to rewrite. I guess I would have to consider each work individually. It's tempting, though, to want to rewrite something you wrote years earlier. I can think of one story, however, that I would like to rewrite. It's "The Ethics of Madness", which is in the *NEUTRON STAR* collection. I made a basic mistake in that story. I knew what I wanted to say about madness--namely that one's sanity rests in one's own hands. In reality, most people go insane because of their own actions. It doesn't just happen to

them. But I erred in staying with the image which inspired the story initially. I had a picture in mind which forced me to rely on a distracting ending in order to complete the intended picture I was trying to create. That approach proved to be wrong.

SFR: Which of your books gave you the most trouble? Why?

NIVEN: I suppose it would be *A GIFT FROM EARTH*. I got stalled for long periods in writing that one. Actually, I hadn't thought out the plot sufficiently prior to writing the book.

SFR: Do you show your work to others before it's actually completed?

NIVEN: Yes. For one thing, it's a lot of fun to talk about a half-finished story. For another, I sometimes need other people's ideas. For still another, they seem to like it. As a result, I like to get others involved in the process.

SFR: Why did you choose the "future history" approach to writing science fiction?

NIVEN: I didn't choose it, really. I just never decided not to write a future history. Actually, future histories had been around for a long time. They were an integral part of my reading in the science fiction field. I was familiar with Robert Heinlein's future history. I was even more familiar with Poul Anderson's future history, which I think is more consistent. Heinlein's future history is as chaotic as the "known space" future history. As I see it, though, there's no one general theme in real history. Why should there be one for future history?

SFR: Were you concerned about trying to minimize the chaos inherent in writing future history?

NIVEN: Yes, very much so. Actually, I fared quite badly in that regard. It didn't really bother me, though. My main purpose was to write a good story. If the assumptions fit, fine! As I got to be more skilled as a writer, I started to look more carefully at the assumptions behind "known space" and when they didn't fit in terms of the story, I would simply change things around. I did not want something that looked like a "known space" story, but really wasn't one. Even then, I made some mistakes. For example, in the first third of my novel, *PROTECTOR*, I made a major error. However, I was able to work out most of the problems before it was finished.

SFR: Do you have a favorite among your books?

NIVEN: No, I like them all.

SFR: What about a least favorite?

NIVEN: Again, I don't really have one. If I dislike a book at the end I'll play around with it until I'm satisfied. I wouldn't sell something I didn't like. Actually, I've stopped writing stories two-thirds of the way through because I thought they weren't going anywhere.

SFR: How would you describe your readership?

NIVEN: I don't write for everybody. I don't even write for the guy who read my last book. Generally though, my "ideal" reader is a lot like me, except that he needs things explained to him.

SFR: Do you ever feel a sense of competition with other science fiction writers?

NIVEN: No, science fiction writers don't really compete with each other. Even among the bad ones, every writer is different. Every writer has a different point of view, a different thematic concern, a different approach to writing. Although many science fiction writers tackle the same subject, the results are quite different.

SFR: Is this a good period for a fledgling science fiction writer to get started?

NIVEN: I don't really know, since I'm not a fledgling writer. Certainly when I started writing, it was a good time. Generally, I guess this is a good time. There are a lot of science fiction magazines around, even though several have folded in the last few years. If you can't sell a story to any other magazine, you can always sell it to GALAXY. And if GALAXY won't buy it there are AMAZING and FANTASTIC. On the other hand, new writers shouldn't expect to get rich writing science fiction. For every person who makes it, there are dozens more who starve to death.

SFR: If you were asked to advise a new writer in the science fiction field, what pitfalls would you warn him against?

NIVEN: The ideas most worth writing about are those that nobody has yet used in their stories. They're also the hardest to get across to the reader. Furthermore, a new writer should use the simplest, clearest language possible. Stylist-

tic experiments are for people with nothing to say. Also, remember that fads are for second-raters.

SFR: You were quite active in science fiction fandom prior to your success as a writer. Has it changed a lot since then?

NIVEN: Yes. Since my initial involvement in fandom, nearly fourteen years ago, I've noticed some interesting changes. At the time I was active, there was a "misfit" element in fandom, especially in the club to which I belonged. For instance, approximately 75% of the women had physical handicaps of one kind or another, by which I mean that one girl was cock-eyed, another was night-blind and going day-blind, etc. In fact, I can only recall one girl who had no handicaps at all. Moreover, all the men and women wore glasses. And we were all the first-born child or the only child in our families.

SFR: What do you like best about being a writer? What do you like least?

NIVEN: The best part is having written. Writing is hard work! There are landmark moments: when the broad story outline is there in your hand, when a scene is letter perfect, when a character finally takes life, when you're going through the manuscript adding the final touches of phrasing. The best moment, though, comes when it's done. The worst is when you're forced to admit to yourself that you can't finish the damn thing.

SFR: Which science fiction publications do you most enjoy reading?

NIVEN: I don't wait eagerly for any of the magazines, even though I subscribe to most of them. Anything really worth reading will reach the "Best of the Year" anthologies.

SFR: In general how would you assess the quality of science fiction criticism?

NIVEN: Quite poor. The average science fiction critic is as likely to be wrong as he is to be right. Overall, the critics writing for the fanzines and professional magazines aren't especially good. They are often prone to miss the point in their reviews.

SFR: Do you find time to read many of your contemporaries in the science fiction field? If so, who are your favorites?

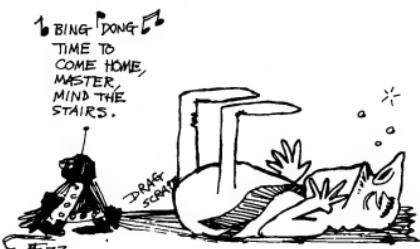
NIVEN: Yes. I read as much science fiction as time permits. My favorites are still of the Poul Anderson school. James Tiptree, Jr. is quite good. I also like Alan Dean Foster's stuff.

SFR: Where is science fiction as literature, going in the future?

NIVEN: Science fiction, as usual, is galloping off in all directions. "Hard" science fiction is alive and well, as witnessed in THE OMIUCHI HOTLINE, by John Varley, published in 1971. One thing, though, STAR WARS is causing a terrific boom in science fiction. If one-tenth of that new audience sticks with what they've discovered, then we writers should find ourselves earning more money. This means we'll spend more time on a given book which, in turn, means we'll see better books.

SFR: What do you see as your major contribution to the science fiction field?

NIVEN: I don't believe the science fiction field would be different if I hadn't existed. I continued an old tradition--namely, the extrapolative story, in which ideas are tracked to expose their implications for the future and their effects on human society. However, I did one thing that few writers took the time to do. I learned my projected societies so thoroughly that I could see the "humorous" parts, and thus write about them. It's the direct opposite of the Ron Goulart approach and it's hard work. If the average



science fiction writer works hard enough to create a believable, well-rounded, consistent society, he usually tends to take it much too seriously. I try to bring the same attitude to my collaborations too. This is evident in scenes in *A MOTE IN GOD'S EYE*, just previous to MacArthur's entry into Murcheson's Eye

SFR: What is it about your work that explains your enormous popularity?

NIVEN: I had a bit of good luck. The "New Wave" hit its stride just as I was starting my career. "New Wave" stories typically concentrate on experimental styles and the exploration of character, to the detriment of extrapolation, solid background, and storytelling. It's a seductive approach, a fine excuse for bad writing and not doing one's homework. All the new writers were writing "New Wave" at the time except me. My only competition came from Robert Heinlein, Poul Anderson, Hal Clement and the like, the very people I wanted for my peers.

SFR: What projects do you have in the works for the future?

NIVEN: Jerry Pournelle and I are finishing *OATH OF FEALTY*, a novel dealing with the politics surrounding an "arcology"--city-in-a-building. We also have several other collaborations in mind. One is a murder story set in present time. One is a tale of the invasion of Earth by an extraterrestrial war fleet. One is an episodic sequel to *A MOTE IN GOD'S EYE*, following Motie-to-human relationships over a couple of hundred years. The question is: Which story do we write first? A related question: Which story will the publishers pay the most money for? Meanwhile, I'm falling far behind on my contract for *THE RING WORLD ENGINEERS*. I also owe a short science fiction/detective novel set on the moon. And there are several speeches to write. Actually, I've got too many projects waiting for my attention.

SFR: Thank you, Mr. Niven.

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LETTER FROM G. COLLIER

May 12, 1978

Being a professional reader is a tough, demanding business. I absolutely refuse to be categorized as a "science fiction" reader. Early in my career, many of my first purchases were in the genre. When

you're young and struggling to learn your craft, you're happy to read anything. And the pulps were cheap. I mean cheap! But aspiring young readers have to start somewhere. Even then, what I was reading was literature, and the crap was reading itself out of my system.

I don't owe SF a damn thing. Sure, I've read my share of Hugos and Nebulas. They're "nice" to read, and I'd never refuse to accept one. But they don't mean much. I read for myself, not for any other human being on this planet. If others appreciate what I read, fine. If they don't they can stuff it. I've worked too hard to get where I am. Reading is a lonely business. No one forces you to sit down and face those pages full of words. The fact that I intend to get the most out of my reading is one of the Realities of the business. Another Reality is walking into any decent newsstand. Look carefully at the space devoted to "SF". Then look again at the space devoted to "mainstream". Any idiot can plainly see what that means to the professional reader. I am not your local charity.

If that makes me one without manners, fine. I don't owe SF a damn thing. To repeat: I am most uncomfortable with the label "science fiction reader". I'll no doubt be fighting that the rest of my life.

We're all whipping a dead horse, anyway, Geis. The ever-diminishing number of great readers in this country are turning into watchers. The tube. Not that I object. A great number of the stories I've read have been turned into television screenplays. What I do object to is the loss of control. I've seen it happen all too often: You spend a lot of time reading something and it shakes out on the tiny screen in fragments that bear little resemblance to the original. There is one series in particular that I will have nothing to do with, but I'm not going to get started on that.

Enough for now. But please remember that I don't like labels. What I read is literature.'

LETTER FROM ARNE C. EASTMAN May 17, 1978

Commenting upon the Carol Avedon - Ed Przasnyski debates in SFR's 23-24 I do agree with Avedon Carol.

'My experiences with MD's have been negative.

'Around 1962 I suffered from hemorrhoids and was offered free surgery. I declined and the hemorrhoids remitted spontaneously and never showed up, even after an 800-mile bicycle ride to Wilmington, North Carolina from Noo Yawk.

'My wife was offered, and purchased, flagyl but declined it in favor of yogurt which cured her problems in that area. We reviewed the doctor's decision in the PDR.

'I was offered an ointment containing cortisone but I decided against it and the ailment remitted spontaneously.

'My wife had the kid delivered by a nurse-midwife while the ob-gyn slept in an adjoining room. No anaesthesia and she signed out of the hospital one day after the event because of the disturbing presence of a mouse under the radiator. A researcher we met later confirmed it was research mouse XL-922(Q) who was lost a short time before.

'It was required that I have some sort of certificate on natural childbirth before I was allowed into the delivery room. I went to a Catholic hospital and we were refused the viewing of a film on breast-feeding because, as a nurse explained, the subject looked like the "Happy Hooker". Catholic-oriented hospitals try very hard to discourage breast-feeding because of the anti-pleasure attitude they have toward childbirth.

'Both Carol and, most certainly, the doctor Przasnyski, declined to explain what the Physicians' Desk Reference is. The PDR is a hardcover book, red, about the size of the Manhattan Classified that lists the behavior and characteristics of drugs. The possessor may exercise review powers over any drug ingest-ed or about to be ingested. The PDR may be purchased at any bookstore adjoining a medical school.

'Doctors get very nervous and edgy and skittish and surprised when you make reference to the PDR. They're always complaining about lay access to this book.

'We all know about medical schools and the AMA or we should know. Every so often one reads about "hereditary" doctors because of the massive tuition required.

'Przasnyski's eyes might bug out when he hears that I used to "pop" a Vitamin B12, Folic Acid and Iron Supplement after giving blood until my "works" ran out. Dispos-able hypos make very poor small-

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THE ALTER-EGO VIEWPOINT

"What are you muttering about, Geis?"

"Merzbble frenzaverd...dirxy rexabrats..."

"Out loud! What?"

"I don't want to review these books with you, Alter! I want to go upstairs and watch golf on the tube!"

"You have a duty, so do it. No more puttings off until tomorrow. This is 'tomorrow'."

"All right! Damn it! I'll help you with four books. After that you're on your own. No guiding mind to keep you from making an ass of yourself, no cautionary whispers and no heavy editorial blue pencil."

"Fine with me. You're a coward, Geis. Always were and always will be."

"Bah! What book is first?"

"Robert Shekley's new novel, published in England by Michael Joseph Ltd. The title is THE ALCHEMICAL MARRIAGE OF ALISTAIR CROMPTON."

"Fantasy, hah?"

"Uhh, no, it's more sf wedded to psychiatry... See, this guy Crompton is a stick-in-the-mud but a brilliant creator of perfumes--in a future of easy space travel and human habitation of zillions of worlds in the galaxy. He is also a schizo--cured by splitting off two of his personas and putting them in short-lived artificial human bodies.

"But he is unhappy. He wants to be whole but the problems..."

"Don't give away the story, Alter!"

"Fear not, Geis. Suffice it to say that Shekley's satire is as sharp-edged as ever and that beneath the flayed hides of society and culture and all else, the man is saying something important."

"Which is?"

"That you may think the grass is greener on the other side of the hill, but maybe something hungry is over there waiting for you to come and find out."

"That doesn't tell me a damn thing."

"Oh, hell, Geis! It's a fun

read. It makes you think. What more do you want?"

"I want to go upstairs--"

"And watch golf." Sigh.

"But first, Alter, we have to note that the price for this new Shekley is £4.50 ((about \$8.95)) and that the address for Michael Joseph Ltd. is 52 Bedford Square, London WC1B 3EF, ENGLAND.

"Do you have an opinion on THE HERMES FALL by John Baxter, Geis?"

"Yeah. It was published by Simon & Shuster, costs \$8.95, and it's about an asteroid--Hermes--that regularly comes close to Earth. This time it makes direct ocean hit and causes all kinds of direct and indirect catastrophe to Earth and us. Written with a cast of characters and a multiple point-of-view plot that shouts to the knowledgeable reader that Baxter was aiming at a movie sale and best-sellerdom. At the same time the book slows whenever the asteroid and disaster is off-camera. The characters' personal lives are a drag and Baxter isn't good enough to make them worth reading."

"Oh...okay. I don't think I need to add that. If you'll drag the corpse away, Geis, I'll take care of the next book."

"Alright, Alter, the arena is clear. Clean sand on the floor. Is this the book you're going to sacrifice to Ghu?"

"Yes. John Morressy's newest, UNDER A CALCULATING STAR (Popular Library, \$1.50). It reads as two separate novelets with a stitched-on ending. Let me expl--"

"You'll have to explain that a bit."

"Yes. The first part of the novel is about Kian Jorry, an intra-galactic criminal who has assembled a specialized crew to penetrate the legendary dangers of a legendary planet wherein is hidden the legendary treasure of a long-dead brigand."

"Hey! Exciting!"

"Hey! Yes. Imaginative, well-told, as they land and cross deadly terrain, enter the Citadel...and are picked off one by one. Only two survive: Jorry and his strong-man associate Axxal. They make it with

a few big jewels but the main treasure is still there.

"After some transition pages and event, Axxal becomes the central character as Jorry flies away in his spaceship. They are on a planet, now, of city-state level, and he leads a revolt against the winners of a recent revolution; he is concerned with getting his fellow Quespodons off-planet in a captured trader/slaver spacer.

"Jorry is of a cunning breed of mankind, and Axxal of a subservient type. Only it turns out that the last shall be first....

"My problem with this novel is its structure: the protagonist is killed and the "n---" survives and prospers. The story ends in midbook, becomes a different story, and both end independently of each other.

"Somehow Morressy didn't play by the rules here. That treasure hunt should have been the whole book."

"Your turn to review, Geis. I see you have picked INVOLUTION OCEAN by Bruce Sterling, #4 in the Harlan Ellison Discovery Series for Jove. (\$4.50, \$1.50.)"

"True, Alter. this has an introduction by Harlan in which he proclaims Sterling a major new talent who writes superbly."

"Isn't that obligatory? Would he pick a so-so writer's novel and admit it in print?"

"Well...Bruce Sterling undeniably has talent and is skilled beyond his years. He writes well. But his greatness is to come if it does. INVOLUTION OCEAN is a good, sense-of-wonderful sf novel. It has pace and color and detail. There is one boggle-point for me in it, though--"

"The 500 mile wide, 70 mile deep crater on the planet Nullqua which contains all the air on the planet?"

"No. That's credible. It's--" "I know. The drug called flare which the young hero---anti-hero---distills from the innards of the---"

"No. It's the sea of dust at the bottom of the crater upon which ships sail and in which "fish" and whale-like creatures live. I just don't think dust has enough density to support a ship of size, and if it does, I don't see how any creature could live and move in it."

"So that wiped out the plausibility of the whole voyage?"

"Right on. But the mad captain was interesting, and the insane idea

of building a submarine from the carcass of a whale..."

"Don't forget the unfortunate, tragic love affair between the young hero, John Newhouse and the winged woman, Dalusa. And the incredible dust storm, and the sharks and the mysterious, mythical Elder Race said to live in the bottom of the crater under the ocean of dust."

"Yeah, yeah, I said it was a good book. Far, far better than its lousy cover which is a photograph of a man plunging into real water."

"What are you snirking at, Alter? What's what's so goddamned funny?"

"This big book of Gahan Wilson cartoons, "...AND THEN WE'LL GET HIM!" He has this malign humor I date on."

"His ghoulish humor must have been born with his birth, since (the promotional material says) 'Originally declared stillborn, he was revived by an old-fashioned doctor who tossed him into a bowl of ice water. 'There must,' Gahan says, 'have been brain damage.''"

"That must have been what happened to you, hub, Geis! Only the doctor tossed you and missed--you hit the floor on your head."

"I'll never tell. I just want to know, how come, in movies and TV, when an old-fashioned doctor makes ready to deliver a baby, he always calls for lots of boiling water? Shouldn't he also ask for a bowl of ice water? Do modern hospitals have ice water handy?"

"Never mind! Listen, this is a letter-size book, softcover, with at least 150 of his best cartoons. Published by Richard Marek. Costs \$4.95. Worth it. A hardcover edition is available at \$12.95."

"What are you sitting there for, Geis, drooling, eyes dazzled... Are there lotsa nudes in that art book you've got on your lap?"

"No, Alter. I am admiring the remarkable paintings by Bruce Pennington. A whole big hardcover book of them on the future prophecies of Nostradamus."

"No kidding? He's illustrated that medieval visionary's predictions?"

"As best he could, yes. I find the English translations of the original French verses difficult to understand, though. The prophecies are so ambiguous! And Pennington's interpretations are one step further in losing relevance, as far as I'm concerned."

"So if the predictions are mush and the paintings based on the predictions are strictly personal with the artist...what's the point of the

12" x 12" full-color plates and heavy paper?"

"The paintings, Alter! These are essentially Pennington's vision of the future from the 22nd century to the start of the Great Millennium' at the beginning of the 24th century. His outlook is grim and catastrophic. The paintings are lovely. His imagination and execution are marvelous."

"Uh-huh. You ought to see the 3-d photos I have from my time-travel days. They're up in my spaceship, in permanent orbit. I'll show them to you sometime. The destruction of New Orleans in 1989, for instance, when..."

"Yes? When what?"

"Uh...forget I mentioned it. The important thing is this big book was published by Simon & Shuster, is called *ESCHATUS*, and costs \$8.95."

"I'll never forget, Alter!"

"Geis! What are you doing reading a comic book?"

"I'm not reading, Alter, I'm squinting. The idea of reprinting Stan Lee's DOCTOR STRANGE comic books in pocket book format is okay...but squeezing a full comic book page down to pb size makes for eye-strain. But I suppose it's okay for the kids."

"Let me look at that... I see that this is published by Pocket Books and is 81447 on their list and costs...\$1.95!!!!"

"The pages are all in color, as originally published by Marvel Comics, and that costs more to print."

"Well, Geis, I see the artist is Steve Ditko. This may be blasphemy, but I don't think much of Ditko's drawing ability. If I didn't know he was a professional of long standing I'd judge him a talented amateur who needs more practice."

"*Gasp!* Your standards are too high, Alter!"

"Maybe, but I note that the covers for this pb were done by a far better artist than Ditko, and that artist is not identified anywhere.

No! Wait, now. Here on page 159

I WILL APPLY
THE SOUR
CREAM TO
MISS MILDRED'S
FAIR WHITE
BODY.



is a signed page of his work.... I think it says 'Bunek' or 'Buner'. Whoever, he's a fine artist, and I'd pay for a collection of his work."

"Obscene, Geis, obscene!"

"What? This book? No, A.K.A.-A Cosmic Fable by Rob Swigart is a delicious satire, a thrilling tweaking of all kinds of noses. I love it. I only wish to Ghod I could find time to finish it!"

"You're reviewing a book you haven't finished? Oh, Geis, you'll be up on Report before the Confederation of Constipated Critics."

"I know. But this book is a delight and Swigart is so damned good, that I'll take the risk."

"It's about this industrialist-with-a-dream, Avery Krupp Augenblenie, who starts seeding the country with aphrodisiacs..."

"And it's about the astronaut Avery who returns after a ten year space voyage to climax the on-going love religion founded by his voyage (he has only aged three months)..."

"And it is a wry/funny/mockng dip into five or six subplots--slices of lives affected by Avery's activities...."

"It's the best, most entertaining, in-command, graceful satire I've read in a long time."

"I guess you do like it. Okay, fen, Houghton-Mifflin has published it in hardback at \$8.95, and soft-cover at \$4.95."

"I'd like to mention the appearance of the first four Donning 'Star-Blaze' Editions, edited by Polly and Kelly Freas, each of which has a superb Freas wrap-around full-color cover and four or five full-page interior illos by Kelly. Lovely quality 5-1/2 x 8-1/2 softcover books. \$4.95. The books are: ANOTHER FINE MYTH... by Robert Asprin, CONFEDERATION MATADOR by J.F. Bone, SOME WILL NOT DIE by Algis Budrys, and WHAT HAPPENED TO EMILY GOODLY AFTER THE EXHIBITION by Raylyn Moore."

THE VIVISECTOR

A Column By Darrell Schweitzer

DEATH IN FLORENCE

By George Alec Effinger

Doubleday, 1978, 180 pp., \$6.95

For those who like this sort of thing, this may be the sort of thing you'll like, but for the rest of us, be warned that the jacket copy writer for this book is an outright liar:

'In a wild, crazy novel made of equal parts black humor and insight, George Alec Effinger has stripped away the veneer of civilisation, revealing the deep truths by which we all live. Without the culture we have accumulated, existence is sometimes a nightmare, sometimes absurd, sometimes courageous and wonderful.'

In brief, it is not and it does not, and it is even questionable if this thing is really a novel. Its only unshakeable qualification is length.

I must admit, heretical as it may seem that I have never been greatly impressed by Effinger's work. Bland is the word I would use to describe it. The average Effinger piece consists of somebody encountering something unusual, saying with a shrug, "Wow, that's weird", and wandering off in a daze. No depth. No development of character or idea. Not much of anything. But, strictly speaking, nothing this side of a non-functional word pattern can be said to be without content, so when we say "no content" we usually mean trivial content.

DEATH IN FLORENCE for instance. It isn't even one of the worst recent offenders of the type. Scored on the Dhalgren Disaster Scale from #1, slight and innocuous, to #10, utterly mindless, Effinger gets about a #4, but still he is making serious mistakes which I think will ruin him both artistically and financially.

He is not a storyteller. Fred Pohl once said a story should contain interesting people doing interesting things in an interesting setting. Effinger gives us totally dull cardboard cutouts doing nothing

in particular in a completely unbelievable setting. Which brings us to blunder #2. Effinger isn't thinking. He has come up with what strikes him as a Neato Idea and written a novel about it without even attempting to render it plausible. If this really were a "wild, crazy novel" he might have pulled it off as absurdist comedy. After all, Marx Brothers' plots aren't plausible either. But whatever comic talent he may have is only displayed very briefly for a page or two, twice in the course of the book, then carefully tucked away.

The idea is that in the very near future a Dr. Waters is able to found Utopia 3, a sort of personal improvement reserve which consists of most of western and central Europe. Whole countries have been evacuated. Where are the inhabitants? "Staying with relatives", someone remarks. What is done with all the empty space? Well, a handful of Utopians wandering aimlessly around, rooting through the possessions of the people who left, living off cannibal food, and not doing much of anything. A lot of driving and a lot of eating. Somebody builds a miniature golf course. The unbelievable thing is not that some crackpot would come up with such a scheme for ensuring the everlasting peace of the world and brotherhood of mankind, but that millions would go along gladly, and the biggest population upheaval in the history of humanity would take place for such abstract pie-in-the-sky reasons as making a few individuals "better people". E-Even if there were a story going on here, it would be almost certainly doomed to failure out of sheer failure to convince the reader. And there isn't. After four automatonsumble through 164 pages, a dissident who somehow knows everything about the establishment but it never caught putting up his posters, warns that Dr. Waters is really a new Hitler with an army hidden in the evacuated area and a scheme to conquer the world up his sleeve.

ALRIGHT! WHO PUT SUGAR IN MY GALL AND WORMWOOD?



Waters fights back by slipping notes to the characters, as if the faith of three or four people matters in such a situation. How the notes are delivered is never explained. On page 179 we are told that it's all over; the secret army has been exposed by a single person and Waters resigned in disgrace. In other words, the entire story took place off stage in the space of 15 pages!

I think that tells you a lot about why you don't want to read this book. If it were carefully thought out and drastically restructured so that it made some sense, it might work as a short story or a novella, perhaps somewhere between 5000 and 8000 words long. The rest is padding, a long string of inconsequential anecdotes. *Yawn* Avoid.

THE DEVIL IS DEAD

By R.A. Lafferty

Gregg Press, 1977, 224 pp., \$11.00
Introduction by Charles Platt

Veteran SFR readers may be astonished to read that I completely and utterly agree with Charles Platt on something, especially after the exchange we had over a certain literary dinosaur Mr. Platt used to edit (see issue #17), but yes, I do agree, 100% on two points--that THE DEVIL IS DEAD is very welcome back in print, and that it is better to enjoy Lafferty than probe him for

profundities. The profundities are probably there, but it's best to let them seep slowly to the surface. I find the suggestion that fiction is to be read rather than explicated refreshing.

The only writer I can compare Lafferty to is the Charles Finney of THE CIRCUS OF DR. LAO--elegant, folksy nonsense--but there's more to him than that. Lafferty has a plot and characters who grow and change, and a great deal more substance. There is of Marx Brothers-ish surface humor (e.g. a donkey which is a direct descendant of the last Byzantine Emperor), but the actual outlook is grim. Think of it as a much grimmer, more violent version of Zelazny's THIS IMMORTAL, as written by Charles Finney and occasionally disguised as a mystery/suspense novel. Lafferty shows a considerably wider range of talents in this length than he does in a short story.

Basically it's the story of an Italian named Finnegan who wakes up hung over one morning in the presence of one Saxon X. Seaworthy (not to be confused with X., who shows up later), with whom he sails around the world while slowly remembering that he first met Seaworthy while burying Papa Diabolous, who may be the Devil and didn't stay dead long enough to miss the boat. Also involved are a giantess, a mermaid of the more common, two-footed variety (the tailed type are nearly extinct) and a Finnegan look-alike who vanished without leaving a trace of a body and a wide assortment of shady characters, most of whom meet violent ends. Summarizing Lafferty is harder than you may think, folks. I haven't mentioned the dreams, the various people who turn out to be other people, or the fact that everybody in this odd batch may be members of a distinct species of humanity. There are two kinds of human beings, says Lafferty, those who belong and those who don't. Finnegan & Company are of the latter variety. As Platt points out, this theme of the affinity of outcasts (Is there a sian in the house?) is one point where the novel intersects with science fiction. Otherwise one might call it a comic fantasy (the genuine article, as opposed to the aforementioned weak tea served us by Effinger), surrealism and modern myth, and superbly inventive at that. Strictly speaking it is unclassifiable, which is why Avon originally had trouble packaging it, and it went out of print. But no, I can't agree with Platt's assertion that this would have been better published as general fiction. The mainstream audience would never have understood it, and it would have sold even less copies. Anyway

let's just be glad we have it back. Lafferty is one of the great originals. Because he is good at what he does and no writer in some future generation will ever duplicate his appeal, I think his work will survive, even if only one person reads him a year, every year, as long as the English language survives. Not for everybody, but worth looking into

THE HILLS OF FARAWAY
By Diana Waggoner
326 pp., illustrated
Atheneum, 1978, \$16.95

This book is obviously intended for libraries, and for that modern curiosity, the teacher who doesn't know the subject he is teaching. Its major virtue is that it will give the novice reader some idea of what fantasy is about and what has been done in the field, and will lead him/her on to other books. For the rest of us, it is of some interest, but not really something to get excited over.

The book mostly consists of an annotated bibliography, which fortunately doesn't claim to be encyclopedic, because it isn't and 61 pages of theory. Ms. Waggoner has some interesting things to say. I am particularly taken with the observation that fantasy as we know it, as deliberate artifice, is not the oldest form of literature, but a comparatively recent invention, a result of the Post-Age of Reason notion that the Real and the Supernatural are separate and distinct. (By contrast, ancient and medieval man didn't see the difference.) For her, Phantastes is the first fantasy. But I'm afraid she pigeon-holes excessively. While most of us are arguing (or have given up arguing) about the difference between fantasy and science fiction, Ms. Waggoner has defined science fiction plus mythopoetic fantasy, heroic fantasy, adventure fantasy (these being different), ironic fantasy, comic fantasy, nostalgic fantasy, sentimental fantasy and horrific fantasy. To make life interesting that last one is not the same as the ghost or horror story. All this I think, violates an Occam's Razor principle of literary criticism by forcing the reader to accept too many of the author's assumptions. (For one thing, it is obvious she is neither a fiction writer nor an editor or else she would have gone crazy long ago with all those categories.) It is to her credit that unlike many other critics who are otherwise non-writers, she writes

in a clear and orderly fashion, so her arguments can be easily followed and her reasoning makes sense, if you accept her long string of givens.

You can also see her biases. At one point she claims mythopoetic fantasy is inherently evangelical and later on she takes Mervyn Peake to task for having no moral order behind his work. Then she tells us G.K. Chesterton was "the first mythopoetic fantasist to equate disbelief in Christianity with stupidity rather than evil". Implicit is the assumption that it's an either/or situation. (Sigh, is there no room for a lusty pagan fantasist?) She is also harsh on anyone who doesn't take a proper view of women, notably James Branch Cabell, whose women are usually stock Dame Van Winkles and C.S. Lewis, who committed indiscretions in THAT HIDEOUS STRENGTH.

I think the Christian/moral bias may account for some of the curious omissions in the bibliography. Clark Ashton Smith is nowhere mentioned, for example. I imagine that in her scheme of things she simply had no use for him and because he sometimes wrote crudely, she felt safe in ignoring him. (But then she lists Hodgson's THE NIGHT LAND, which is infinitely worse.) In the same vein, Jack Vance, of DYING EARTH and EYES OF THE OVERWORLD fame is not mentioned. Considering how seminal an influence that first book was, I'm surprised she didn't invent a category for it.

I fear that at times she has ventured beyond her own expertise. A quick look to the biographical



note on the jacket reveals what one suspects: a librarian and children's literature expert and the few fan-zines she mentions would make her a Mythopoetic Society type. She is very big on Tolkein, Lewis and Williams, complete with extensive listings of criticism. (Why Williams is ranked with the other two, I'll never know since he wrote some of the murkiest fiction ever in what purports to be English. At times you're not sure!) But beyond that, I'd guess her knowledge of adult fantasy comes from reading Lin Carter's Ballantine series and a quick trip to her library. Her library had a Storiesende edition of Cabell, so she carefully lists each volume of the BIOGRAPHY OF MANUEL even the non-fiction and non-fantasy ones, but seems unaware of the SMIRT trilogy (which is in print) or THE DEVIL'S OWN DEAR SON or THERE WERE TWO PIRATES. (Which are fantasy.) She doesn't seem to have read some of the De Camp items, particularly THE FALLIBLE FIEND, which she thinks is a short story collection, and "The Wall of Serpents" as reprinted in GREAT SHORT NOVELS OF ADULT FANTASY. Her synopsis includes "The Green Magician", which is in the original Avalon book but not the Carter anthology. She doesn't know there are six KAI LUNG books instead of two. The only Marion Zimmer Bradley listed is THE FALCONS OF NARABEDLA.

And so on. I can only hope the listings of children's fantasy, which is a field I know little about, are better than this. However, I suspect this book will mostly be referred to by people who can't tell the difference, and when they've read enough so that they can, it will have served its purpose.

SWORDS AGAINST DARKNESS III

Edited by Andrew J. Offutt
Zebra, 1978, 288 pp., \$1.95

I am in a hopeless position to actually review this book, since there is a story by me therein, making me incurably biased, but I would like to advise all the would-be fantasy writers out there to read the Poul Anderson essay, "On Thud and Blunder", which may also be found here. It is, in its own way, as important as LeQuin's "From Elfland to Poughkeepsie". What LeGuin does for fantasy style, Anderson does for specific content. In a very witty manner he carefully examines the various blunders made by S&S writers, from fifty-pound swords, to barbarians winning all the time, to medieval societies which consist of nothing but swordsmen and tavern wenches. I confess that if I had

read this before writing "The Hag" I would not have had my hero ride his noble steed at full gallop for far longer than is horseily possible. Many writers, says Anderson, regard a horse as a motorcycle with legs. Well, I never rode a motorcycle either...

THE GOTHIC HORROR AND OTHER WEIRD TALES

By George Wetzel
Illustrated by Tim Kirk
Paul Ganley, 64 pp., \$4.00

Paul Ganley (Box 35, Amherst Branch, Buffalo, NY 1426), whose WEIRDBOOK is now probably the best fantasy magazine in the country, with FANTASTIC in a hopeless muddle and WHISPERS very infrequent, has now gone into the book business. His books are printed in the same format as the magazine, 8 1/2 x 11, which makes the artwork look very nice indeed. Wetzel is best known as one of the real pioneers of Lovecraft scholarship, but he has written a small amount of fiction over the years, mostly for fanzines and small press magazines, and once for an Arkham House anthology. He has a polished style, and a definite talent for imagery, but I find most of his shorter work fragmentary and underdeveloped. One novelet in this book of course isn't, but the others are pleasant, if minor stuff. Very readable.

A BARGAIN: Readers may be interested to know that I have copies of my two T.K. Graphics books for sale, signed if you like, for less than cover price. SF VOICES (interviews, including some not available elsewhere, with Bester, Silverberg, Bova, De Camp, Aldiss, Pournelle, Gahan Wilson, etc.) is \$3.30. ESSAYS LOVE-CRAFTIAN (articles on HPB by HPL, Fritz Leiber, Bloch, Wetzel, Mosig, yours truly, etc.) is \$2.30. The latter is a chance to support starving authors, because the contributors will be paid out of money collected this way.

CONTINUED FROM P. 27

machine lubricators because the oils swell the plastic. Of course I had not had one minute's worth of medical training and I'm still here.

'No, Przasnyski, my experiences with MDs have been almost entirely negative. My brief brushes with

the medical profession have been frustrating and infuriating. If I could only bypass the physicians' total access to the USP me and my PDR and my Merck manual would do us fine.

'Example: As a subway motorman I come across cats and dogs broken up and smashed by the subway. New York says I may not possess a small .22 revolver nor may I possess the "works" and Nembutal to professionally euthanize these animals. Whenever possible I endeavor to gather up the wrecks in a sack I keep for the purpose and I'm obliged to pay \$5 to have the wretched thing euthanized. I am not permitted to be ethical.

'Przasnyski, you may redeem yourself by sending me a brace of disposable hypos and 1,000 ccs of Nembutal in small ampoules. Send it through Geis and I'll pay. You might also send some Vitamin "K" (injectable) to ameliorate my wife's nosebleeds. Advise on dosage and I'll send a reasonable consultant's fee or I'll look it up myself in the PDR -- don't bother. Do this for me and you may continue as a member of the highest paid profession wowing the lumpen.'

('Aha...ummm...no, don't nobody under no circumstances send me no drugs nohow noway, no sir! Not even vitamine.))

LETTER FROM SCOTT EDELMAN

May 16, 1978

'... being a comic book writer I did notice that in the comics category of the British Fantasy Awards for 1977 the author for the second-place story was listed as Archie Goodwin, when the author and artist were in fact the same person--Jim Starlin. Archie Goodwin was the editor of the piece, though.'

('Thanks for the correction. I'm glad to have a readership who cares and is willing to write and make sure proper credit is given in an instance such as this.))

LETTER FROM ALAN DEAN FOSTER

May 4, 1978

'In addition to the problems of varying size of the mother ship in CLOSE ENCOUNTERS which both you and Jack (Chalker) allude to, plus your

comments re other foolishness involving special effects and story development, one could note other annoyances not mentioned in the three C3K views run in SFR #25.

'1) All of the scout ships which swoop down to check out the prepared landing area of Devil's Mt. dive out of a ring of roiling clouds (presumably conjured up for purposes of concealment). The mother ship is shown rising up from behind the mountain, however. What I want to know is how the hell it got there without being noticed? Snuck up on little cat feet? I can see the alien commander speaking through his little pucker-grin now: "Let's jump up behind 'em and say boo!"

'2) Why does the mother ship arrive upside down? Nice effect, that ship-roll, but...why?

'3) As our massive mother passes over the awed scientists, a dark, cloud-like shadow is shown (twice, I believe), passing over them. I seem to recall this scene taking place in the dark of night. As the mother ship is lit up like the gaze of a foreclosing banker, wouldn't it be correct to have the onlookers somewhat in shadow and then see a line of brilliance crawl over them?

'4) The two varieties of alien are never explained or accounted for. We first see a slim, attenuated wise type with long arms, then switch for the remainder of the encounter to our cute little aged babies.

'I did enjoy the humanizing gesture in one long shot during the montage of assembled aliens where one spends the entire shot scratching his crotch. Nor did any of the three views mention the homage Spielberg pays to veteran special effects folk involving the gathering cloud effect...it's foreshadowed as Dreyfuss' kids watch a sequence utilizing the same effect in the 1956 TEN COMMANDMENTS on their home TV set.

'Bill Warren's film reviews are a welcome, welcome addition. Partly because Bill clearly cares as much if not more about film than he does about SF.

'The LA Times Book Review section recently ran a longish interview with Gore Vidal. The man seems enormously successful and unhappy. Of particular interest was the length the article went to in order to avoid labeling Vidal's latest opus (KALKI) science-fiction. It said, (the book) "is not science fiction... it's fiction science". Now that we've got that perfectly clear...

(Poor man. Has he not heard of 'Speculative Fiction'?)

THEY SAY I AM MAD.
BUT I AM NOT MAD.
FLAKY, PERHAPS...
DISORIENTED, CERTAINLY.
BUT I HOLD FIRM TO
MY MISSION.

WHICH IS, I
MUST ADMIT,
A LITTLE...
SHALL WE
SAY...
BIZARRE?



sion of the Lord of the Nazgul and say something like, "Yuk! What a lousy makeup job!", whereas I long ago lost count of the number of times mine read through the Ring trilogy.

'As for the way Roy Neary is characterized, apparently Jack Chalker has met a far different kind of person in Middle America than I have, and he is lucky. I have known far too many people like Neary--competent at their jobs, keeping their artistic sides confined to hobby levels, intense, confused when confronting something beyond their experience, and above all, INARTICULATE. How someone like that reacts when overwhelmed by alien input is going to vary a lot. UFO literature abounds in instances of such people becoming fanatics or outright psychotics. It is a safe bet that UFO contactees who brought a background of sf reading to their own Close Encounters would react differently, and it doesn't take much imagination to spell out how. Try and guess.

'Give up? Mostly they keep their mouths shut about it! Neary couldn't. But if he had been a different kind of person to begin with, the film would have had a different story line and a lot less people able to identify even a little with him.

'Maybe Jack Chalker wishes that Mrs. Guiler would have smacked little Barry, but I don't, and I would like to know why he does. What on earth for? What did the kid do wrong? Would you suppress his natural curiosity and Sense of Wonder? I got a lot too much of that kind of treatment when I was a kid and it didn't do me any good at all. At best it taught me to wear an ill-fitting mask I had to shuck off in my late teens, it taught me to despise machismo in every form, and it gave me an undying aversion to people who mistreat kids even if they piously mouth the old "it's for your own good" nonsense. We just last week told our two that we would have to find them another dentist after learning how their then current one was behaving.

'Granting that Spielberg's theme of "how the government can manipulate you" is understated, still it is perceived even by random viewers. I have made a point of listening to people's reactions as we file out of the theatre after a performance. A surprising number are crying. (I did, as did MZB.) But a still larger number are saying things like, "Those goddam Air Force people have been lying to us all along just like they lied to Neary and the others at that conference. I bet they already are in touch with flying saucer people and just ain't TELLIN' us."

LETTER FROM WALTER BREEN

May 2, 1978

'After reading those contrasting reviews of CLOSE ENCOUNTERS, I begin to wonder if you and George Warren and Jack Chalker and I saw the same movie at all: If there are not 3 or 4 different versions around. Normally (you should excuse the word) I don't bother to argue with reviewers, but this time there is some point to it. (Yes, I did once make an exception for some people who trashed one of MZB's books but that was a flagrant instance of bigotry masquerading as fair comment).

'Jack Chalker, of all people, should realize that sometimes leaving details to viewers' imagination (as to readers') can be more effective than spelling everything out. This is one good and likely reason why Spielberg and Trumbull left a lot vague about the aliens; we can and do project our hopes and wishes onto them, just as young minds have learned to do analogous projections onto Tolkien's dimly-described elves, ents, orcs, trolls, etc. This is why radio drama used to be a lot more effective than much TV of today, and it is why I suspect that Bakshi's LORD OF THE RINGS--even if it is orders of magnitude better than the TV HOBBIT, which was trivial even compared to the original book--will not make many more converts to Tolkien, and why it will disappoint devotees of the original books. Sound effects and makeup and visuals are no match for one's own imagination in providing the authentic frisson. Any kid brought up on monster movies (like our two) will probably look at Bakshi's ver-

'Will you see it more than once, Jack asks. Well, I saw it six times so far, and I won't refuse an invitation to watch it again. And each time I see it, I notice things I missed earlier. Flaws, sometimes, to be sure, but sometimes beautifully crafted details. That same process induced me to see STAR WARS ten times (compared to the 28 times a friend of my son's racked up...), and I'll gladly watch that again too. But I will not compare them, they're too different. Oranges vs. poolballs. Space-opera vs. whodunits.

'Yes, whodunits. When you ask, REG, or Alter as the case may be, why the aliens kidnapped little Barry, you don't realize that the answer is easily deduced. What better way to convince Earth people that the Aliens are harmless, than to return a small child not only unharmed but obviously delighted with his experience!

'Why did the mother ship look bigger at first sight? Optical illusion, mostly. Down there near the ground at Dark Side of the Moon mostly you see the exit port and a very small segment of the dome--not its gigantic height; said exit port and dome occupy only a minute proportion of the volume of the whole, its wider parts would have been out of range from the camera angles chosen.

"If that incredibly intense electro-magnetic force caused by the small scout UFOs could make every electrical appliance and toy in a house turn on and go bananas, why didn't it have an effect on the body/brains of humans..."? Mostly because in the former instances it was deliberately, selectively tuned; at the Dark Side of the Moon there was less reason or none for turning on its full force. I am inclined to think that its prolonged presence temporarily freaked out both Roy Neary and Mrs. Guiler. And maybe in the long run that is why Neary chose to model the Devil's Tower in his living room rather than his garage. (Or perhaps the real reason is that Mrs. Neary kept the car in the garage.)

'A flawed masterpiece, to these eyes. An intense emotional experience. Meant to soften us up to hear the report of actual contacts? Maybe. Flaws or no, I loved it.

'Now comes Lynne Holdom with her story of a religious STAR WARS book purporting to extract the gospel from the film. Its publisher ought to be in the same closet (for a few hours at least) with the Jesus Freak who harangued us during the last half hour or so of our wait in line to see STAR WARS the second time,

back when such lines were the rule. This klutz was insisting that we should not watch the film because, forsooth, it was a "glorification of evil", that Darth Vader is Satan, that the Force is Christ, and that the film was feeding us lies about God's work and God's plans. We pelted him with questions like, "Have YOU watched STAR WARS?" (He hadn't) and "How do you know so much about the movie? (Because, he said, he read the Bible!) and "Do you have to be a virgin to serve Jesus?" (He evaded that one.)'

(*Your explanations, rationalizations and excuses for what others see as flaws in CLOSE ENCOUNTERS are well done and convincing, but if they are necessary then the movie failed to that degree. The argument holds that if intelligent movie-goers were puzzled and missed the clues and didn't make the deductive leaps, missed the insights...then the fault lies not in the viewers but in the script and direction.*)

5-20-78 Those old, familiar premonitions of editorial disaster are creeping down my back. I have just been going through the accumulated letters-of-comment, deciding which and how much to print in this issue---or what's left of this issue---and what it is coming down to is using the letter which best discusses the subject most interestingly, most succinctly. Sometimes two letters have to be used.

The point is space is limited, primarily because of the second part of my ONE IMMORTAL MAN. I begin to doubt I'll want to self-publish my novels in SRF after this---they take up too much space. I may decide.... Gad. I could publish my novels as separate books---small print runs---and offer them to you long-suffering readers.

Hmm...
Hmmm....

I can see it now.... STAR WHORES by R.E.G. & Alter, cover and interior illustrations by Stephen Fabian....

Then there's CANNED MEAT which I have adapted from my sf sex novel RAW MEAT which was published about ten years ago. I want to make some further changes, add a different ending, and....

Well, we'll see.

"Geis, you're money hungry!" True, Alter. Got to think about my old age, you know....

SCIENCE FICTION POETRY ASSOCIATION NEWSBULLETIN #1

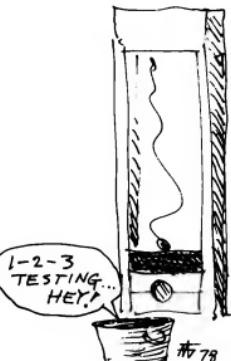
April 9, 1978

'The purpose of this newsbulletin is to announce to all our members that we have decided to go ahead with the project mentioned in our March newsletter--we will be giving an award for Best Science Fiction Poem of the Year. There will be two categories, one for the Short Poem (under sixty lines) and one for the Long Poem (sixty to five hundred lines.) I assume the reason for the upper limit is obvious; if it isn't, it will become very clear as you read the procedures below.

'Any member may nominate one poem in each category. The poem must have been published in 1977, but does not have to have appeared in a science fiction publication. It may be a poem from an anthology, provided the anthology appeared in 1977. To nominate, send us a copy of the poem or poems together with the mailing address of either the poet or the publisher. We will then contact the poet-or-publisher and request permission to print the poem in a special issue of STAR LINE devoted entirely to serving as a showcase for the nominated works. Members will then vote by letter or postcard to SFPA, the votes will be tallied and the award will be announced. Our timetable goes like this:

'Deadline for receipt of nominations--April 24, 1978;
Publication of Special Issue--May 1978;
Deadline for receipt of votes - June 9, 1978;
Announcement of award in STAR LINE--June 1978.

'Since STAR LINE comes out in the last week of each month, this schedule should be a reasonable one--I



hope. Much of it depends upon the cooperation of the members, since I cannot begin requesting permissions to print until the nominations come in, and the permissions procedure takes time. We'll assume for now that it can be done this fast, and if any delays come up that seem to demand an adjustment of the schedule I will send out another Newsbulletin letting you know.

'Members who want to participate in the award process but don't want to subscribe to STAR LINE may order a copy of the Special Issue containing all the nominated poems for \$1.00; the issue will be sent to you first class mail.

'If all goes well with this, next year we'll try removing the upper-line limit. The problem is of course how all the members are to be able to read a science fiction poem of the length of *Paradise Lost* (for example), since we could not afford to print it in STAR LINE even if we could get permission to do so. This year we'll stay with the do-able.

'That's it for Newsbulletin #1.'

Suzette Haden Elgin
Secretary, SFPA

'The Science Fiction Poetry Association is an unincorporated nonprofit organization formed in January 1978 for the purpose of supporting science fiction poetry and providing a forum for the exchange of information on the subject. The President is Dr. Elizabeth Chater, Professor Emeritus, San Diego State University, and long active in science fiction. Suzette Haden Elgin serves as Secretary, Newsletter & Newsbulletin Editor, and General Factotum. Our monthly newsletter, STAR LINE, publishes original sf poems, reviews, articles, and announcements of interest to our members. Dues for SFPA are \$2 a year; subscriptions to STAR LINE are \$5 a year; membership with a subscription is \$6 a year. Our mailing address is SFPA/STAR LINE, PO Box 2012, Leucadia, California 92024.'

5-25-78 MOVIES - MOVIES - MOVIES

THE FRENCH QUARTER R-rated. Low-budget about a girl who comes to New Orleans to seek a job, gets into a bar scene, is drugged and slated for a prostitution/white slave fate.

She dreams while drugged that she is a new girl -- a virgin -- in a whore house in the early 1900's, and that the madame is going to auction off her virginity. She falls for the piano player. When she wakes the detective who saves her from the

fate worse than death is the man she loves in her dream. No explanation for this. Dumb.

Virginia Mayo (now in her late 50's at least) plays the madame, and the young man who played WILLARD a few years ago is the pianist/detective.

There is some nudity and some attractive breasts seen.

LASERBEAM a fair bad movie. Some well-done aliens in a spaceship kill a human who has been driven mad by the amulet power source of a stolen alien laser rifle. But the aliens leave the rifle and amulet behind.

Another young man finds the gun and amulet and goes mad, ending up killing and destroying all around the local desert and town in California.

Roddy McDowell and Keenan Wynn have two-minute walk-on parts of little consequence so that their names can be used to draw customers in the picture's advertising. Tsk. They both hammed it up outrageously.

In the end the aliens kill the second young man, too, and this time take the gun and amulet.

Strictly for popcorn afternoons.

THE EVIL About an Old Mansion being taken over for rehabilitation of drug users. It sits on a Gateway to the Devil, who was locked in by the original owner of the house.

Richard Crenna, Joanna Pettet, and Andrew Prine are the leads. It has an R-rating because of the grue. The Gateway is inadvertently unlocked and all hell breaks loose. The Devil imprisons the party of six or seven in the house and murders them one by one, as usually as they try to escape.

The last two--Crenna and Pettet--finally confront the Devil, wound him with a sacred iron cross, and reseal the Gateway.

The movie had strong elements of Lovecraft themes in the beginning, but it degenerated to a God/good vs. Devil/evil confrontation and lost its punch and interest, for me.

Adequate acting. Victor Buono as the Devil is excellent--in a few scenes he stole the film. Worth seeing.

6-1-78 Recent deaths in the sf/fantasy field: ERIC FRANK RUSSELL, 73, dead of a heart attack on February 29th.

J. FRANCIS MCCOMAS, 66, dead after a prolonged illness, April 19.

1978 NEBULA AWARD WINNERS:

Best Novel: GATEWAY by Frederik Pohl.
Best Novella: "Stardance" by Spider & Jeanne Robinson.

Best Novelette: "The Screwfly Solution" by Raccoona Sheldon.

Best Short Story: Jeffty is Five" by Harlan Ellison.

Special Award [not a Nebula]: STAR WARS.

More changes forced by economics are due for this issue of SFR. After getting word that a heavy cover would cost \$600. more (the expense is in the sheet-fed printing required and the extra collating time... all highly labor-intensive) and with consultation with Ken Mitchell of Times-Litho, I've decided to go to a 64-page all book paper format. This gives the magazine an appearance of increased quality (all-newsprint was too shabby, really) and gives the readers four more pages of text.

I'll need those four extra pages in order to complete the serialization of ONE IMMORTAL MAN in three installments.

Technically, two 32-page signatures are less expensive to produce than a 32 + 8 + 16 sequence, which is what would be required on the press that uses book paper. It gets a bit complicated.

Even with these "savings" at 64-page book paper, the issue will cost around \$400. more than the 96-page all-newsprint #25 last time.

Speaking of ONE IMMORTAL MAN, the work load is too heavy for me, to do 1,000 words of the novel each day, read, review, do commentary for REG, and other necessary household and life works and tasks.

I will finish the novel and will see it published and completed in SFR this issue and next. But after that there will be a further splitting-off of Geis from SFR. The fiction production will slow down and will appear in separate publications. Perhaps novels of a peculiar self-indulgent type...such as STAR WHORES, CANNED MEAT, MASTERS OF DEATH...

All of which will allow a lot more interviews, reviews, letters, etc. in SFR, which your letters have said plainly would be welcome.

So it goes.

I have been pleasantly surprised by the response to my announcement that my personal journal, RICHARD E. GEIS, will resume in mid-June. So far I've gotten over 320 subscriptions and will have 400 printed.

At the same time, because of the recent postage increase for first class mail, and the too-high cost of short-run offset printing, I expect to go back to a mimeoed printing, using electrostatics for heading and illos. The Olympia will get 1500 or so words per page in that format. I love that typer....

CONTINUED ON P.44

OTHER VOICES, OTHER VOICES, OTHER VOICES, OTHER

MASTODONIA

By Clifford D. Simak
Del Rey Books, 1978
Reviewed by Orson Scott Card

The tyrannosaurus charged at them, his mouth ajar, ready to devour.

"Well, Bill, looks like we've happened onto time travel, don't it."

"yep, Jim, shore does". They fired their elephant guns, dropping the huge beast in its tracks.

"Say, let's cut off the head and take it back as proof."

"No way. That thing must weigh half a ton. Anyway, Edith's been takin' pitchers. Thet's proof enough."

The executives of Safari Company watched the film as it came to an end. The president of the company turned to the others and said, "Dog-gone. Danged if they didn't happen onto time travel. Never would've thought it possible. But there's no way they could've faked that movie. That was good. We gonna make a bundle offa this."

All right. I confess. I'm ex-aggerating. But somehow a novel in which an alien, an ancient space-craft, time travel and telepathy are all easily taken in stride by everybody doesn't hit me as being too plausible.

And yet. I can't hate a Clifford Simak novel, for all the implausibility, for all the shallow writing that seems to typify his most recent work. I first discovered Simak's work about six years ago, when my only sf background was a dim memory of Andre Norton, early Heinlein and the Groff Conklin anthologies I had read when I was ten, and a more re-

cent discovery of Asimov and Bradbury. I joined the sf book club and one of the selections was *BEST SCIENCE FICTION STORIES OF CLIFFORD D. SIMAK*. I read the book in one sitting. I loved it. I bought everything else by Simak I could get my hands on. Because he had magic.

Not the magic of ideas--a dozen writers outdo him there. What held me were his entrancing characters. Simak writes the nicest people anywhere in science fiction. If there is a heaven, it'll be populated with characters from Simak's books. They aren't heroes in the sense of swash-buckling adventure; they're heroes who bear with adversity and remain nice afterward in spite of the crap life hands them.

Which is the problem with *MASTODONIA*. Life doesn't hand anybody any crap.

Plot outline: Asa's dog Bowser has been time-tripping, bringing back goodies like fresh dinosaur bones with the meat still clinging to them. Furthermore, Asa found some spaceship fragments in a pit on his property, made of an alloy that doesn't rust after thousands of years. All of this is ho-hum—he keeps it to himself. Then, of course, there's the cat-faced alien, more than a little reminiscent of Alice's Cheshire Cat, particularly since only the grinning face appears. Again, Asa and his long-lost girlfriend, Rila, accept everything without a qualm. No one suspects he's going insane. They make friends with the alien through a telepathic halfwit named Hiram (who shows more intellect than many of the book's fullwits), and the alien sets up timeroads for them on request, just because he likes them and he wants a friend. There are commercial com-

plications; the government wants to get into the act (but doesn't really try all that hard); and millions of people riot for a chance to go back and live in the Miocene. The alien picks this moment to achieve nirvana and get accepted into the celestial Rotary Club that runs the universe, leaving Asa and Rila with no timeroads back to the Miocene, so that the rioting millions will have to end up living in Mastodonia, their beloved hideaway in Folsom Times. But just at the last moment (and on the last page) Asa discovers that he has been given the ability to establish timeroads. Everything ends happily.

I think that somewhere in the middle of that synopsis I got sarcastic. Unplanned—but irresistible. Everything is so easy.

There are structural problems. The first seven chapters—admittedly short ones—are 90 percent dialogue; all the important events to date are told about, they don't happen on-stage. Somebody told me once that was bad writing. It's sure as hell dull reading. Finally in chapter eight Asa stumbles (literally) through into a different time period and things finally get underway. But even then, except for a ramshackle charge by a disinterested mastodon, nothing happens. Problems are easily coped with. Threats are easily avoided. Nobody is really in much danger.

It might have been different if the mastodon had been interested in tramping our hero to death. It might have been different if the elephant guns, which hadn't been fired in ages, simply hadn't worked. It might have been different if even the villains hadn't turned out to be niche.

Imagine Hamlet if Uncle Claudius had been nice. Imagine a nice Macbeth and a Lady Macbeth who always does what's right for other people. Sleep through a King Lear in which Goneril and Regan are dutiful, loving daughters. Yawn with me through a Faust in which the devil politely declines to take Faust's soul because Faust had been so nice about everything.

The reason Simak's nice characters have worked before is because they had to function in a not-nice world. Now their goodness borders on stupidity.

There are minor quibbles, here and there. Simak has a tendency to

IT VIRTUALLY FAVORS
BOOKS TURNED OUT
BY THE NOVELS WRITING
PROGRAMS ON THE
SAME COMPUTER.



YOU LAUGHED WHEN
MACHINES PUT US
MUSCLE-TYPES OUT
OF WORK. HOW DO
YOU LIKE THE N.Y.
TIMES BOOK-REVIEWER
PROGRAM?



screw up his contractions, or not use them at all. There are awkward sentences like "Otherwise, even the kind of metal I am finding would not have survived except as metal chunks". (Maybe I'm wrong, but a normal person would probably say "would not have" or even "wouldn't have". If there's anybody normal reading this, let me know if I'm right.)

And when sharp-minded banker Ben Page, loaded down with an elephant gun, steps through a timeroad and sees his city disappear to be replaced by open steppie country, is he disoriented? No. He looks around skeptically and says, "Now look here. You been fooling me. Where are all them dinosaurs?"

Yup. That's right, Ben. We just made the whole city disappear as a joke. Ain't no dinosaurs. Ain't no time travel.

Ain't nothin' to make this book worth reading. It's jest another episode out of Mayberry R.F.D.

SCIENCE FICTION ET SOUCOUPES VOLANTES (SCIENCE FICTION & FLYING SAUCERS)

By Bertrand Meheust
Preface by Aime' Michel
Afterword by Pierre Versins
Mercure de France, Paris, 350 pp.
Price unknown.

Reviewed by Ian Watson

"May it not be", as a Tibetan lama asked Alexandra David-Neel, "that like children born of our flesh, these children of our mind separate their lives from ours, escape our control, and play parts of their own? If such entities exist in the world, are we not liable to come into touch with them? Few, indeed, suspect what the great storehouse of the world which they tap unconsciously, contains. One must know how to protect oneself against the tigers to which one has given birth..."

If our sense of paranoia has been adequately teased by such revisionist ufologists as John Keel (see Robert Anton Wilson's review of THE EIGHTH TOWER in SFR 23) then here is the book that will really get you worried, oh SF readers and writers, for it is you who are responsible for the behaviour of UFOs. It is you, and your antecedents of the last hundred years, who determined the shape of UFOs, the way they fly, the look of their crews, what they do to contactees, the whole peculiar panoply of the phenomenon. It is you who are respons-

ible for the scars and the scarings, the revelations, the sudden failures of car engines, the kidnapping of Brazilian farmers.

In the 1890s the Middle Western states of America underwent a notorious UFO flap, of phantom dirigibles, but Bertrand Meheust is the first person that I know to realize that everything that happened in that well-documented 1890s flap was pre-imagined in print several years earlier by Jules Verne in his novel ROBUR LE CONQUERANT--and worse, far worse, that all the mutating details of phantom airplanes, flying saucers and contact with menageries of humanooids from little green men to angelic supermen, the exact details of everything that has come to form the corpus of ufology, is already present, always a few years earlier (perhaps 5, perhaps 30) in some feuilleton or cover illo or pulp story from America, France, Germany, setting the stage for the subsequent event. And yet those who experience those later intrusions of unreality into their lives have invariably had no earthly way of knowing that the origin of their inspirational or terrifying experience is really some ghastly forgotten rubbish with some such title as "The Blue Peril" or "Green Sploches" or "The Master of Light", churned out to meet an ancient deadline thousands of miles away and years before.

It would be nice to be ironic at this point. Unfortunately the joke is on us, for Meheust, from a vast sifting of the pulpy past (plus, be it said, the nobler classics of our field) provides meticulous chapter and verse--exact parallels between absurdities in print, to amuse the passing moment, and later UFO absurdities in the "real" world--to support his thesis that close encounters of all kinds have been copyrighted in advance by SF romancers of the past hundred years, and that when new twists turn up in stories they inevitably filter through into the phenomenon a few years later, exactly as per text, to afflict some innocent highway patrolman or Mexican peasant who has had no possible contact with the text nor would have had any interest in it.

So, how? Meheust, who is a philosopher, and an acute one--a phenomenologist with neo-gnostic sympathies--argues persuasively that this symbiosis between SF imagery and UFO "events" arises because a single "objective mythical web" organises, in the order of reality, the UFO manifestations, as surely as in the mythic order it organises the preferred imagery of SF; and that this can be related back to an archaic substratum of human thought which gives rise to dream imagery

and which forged the transmutational symbolism of alchemy (as analysed by Jung) and which also precedes and conditions the shape of actual technological development and scientific discovery, generating at the same time a dream logic organised around a deep yearning for control imposed upon the uncontrollable, as well as for a totality of being from which man is excluded (yet which can open to him briefly).

Much SF imagery--on the surface gratuitous invention ("Where do your crazy ideas come from?")--actually emerges from this unconscious psychic zone. But how can villagers in Papua perceive these images objectivised in their skies? And how can one be physically abducted by an archetype? Or how do machine-mandalas register on radar screens? What is the nature of this quasi-reality which is at once of the human psyche, and at the same time a set of seemingly independent physical events?

As Meheust shows, UFOs do obey rules. They are at once ostentatious--showing themselves--and on the other hand elusive, so that "hard" evidence of them and duration of sightings vary inversely as the possibility that observers will actually get close enough to pin them down. "Holes of impunity" are apparently known to them in advance, as though deterministically they will never put a foot, or a pseudo-real landing jack, in the wrong place at the wrong time. Yet they continue to show themselves, and the observing consciousness can be statistically proven as "necessary" to them.

In short, impossibility of proof is not an unfortunate coincidence



with UFOs but one of the essential characteristics, leading Meheust to suggest that all our knowledge of them represents a kind of Solaristics, not of Lem's distant ocean world, but of our own planet, and that the closest "science" to ufology is criminology—for the crime is never repeatable in the laboratory, nor observable by the actual criminologist, by definition.

A veritable Sherlock Holmes of this embarrassing and irreal phenomenon, Meheust poses an approach to a solution, based upon concepts of evolutionary hierarchies of knowledge within a collective psychic framework. If we understood our own symbolic thought processes better we might at last grasp the nettle, without merely being stung; and a science of a transpsychic reality may be lying in wait for us which could be to the human mind what Lobatchevski's mathematics are to the geometry of Euclid.

This is the most stimulating, analytical and intelligent book I have yet read on the UFO problem. It is in French; let's hope it gets translated soon.

LUD-IN-THE-MIST
By Hope Mirlees
Del Rey/Ballantine Books, 1977
273 pages, \$1.95

Reviewed by Lee Weinstein

This is one of the titles recently resurrected from the old Ballantine Adult Fantasy Series, and it has not been as well treated as it might have been. The new cover does not compare to Gervasio Gallardo's artwork on the original 1970 Ballantine edition, and most unfortunately, Lin Carter's brief introduction to this obscure book has been deleted. It would have informed us that the book first saw print in 1926, and that Miss Mirlees was a minor British novelist who enjoyed a brief popularity during the 1920s with such works as THE COUNTERPLOT and MADELINE. LUD-IN-THE-MIST is her only book to survive the test of time. Like Peake's GORMENGHAST TRILOGY or Lindsay's A VOYAGE TO ARCTURUS, it is one of those unique items that defy classification.

The story is set in Dorimare, a country, which like Dornenghast, exists outside of history and geography in a universe of its own. Its people have names like Master Ambrose Honeysuckle and Miss Primrose Crabapple, and its villages have names like Moongrass and Swan-on-the-Dapple. To its ports come goods from far off Cinnamon Isles and the Amber Desert.

Dorimare borders on Fairyland, a strange and forbidden country over the hills, that is only spoken of in discreet whispers. The plot revolves about the smuggling of fairyfruit into Dorimare. Nathaniel Chanticleer the mayor of Dorimare's capital, Lud-in-the-Mist, becomes aware of the problem when his son begins to exhibit strange behavior. Soon the madness spreads to other young people of the town, and eventually they are drawn over the hills into Fairyland. Chanticleer's efforts to trace the source of the smuggled fruit are hindered by the fact that the law does not recognize its existence. These laws had come into being after the present government had overthrown, centuries earlier, a duke who had been in league with Fairyland. As the novel reaches its climax, Chanticleer, with overtones of the Orpheus myth, crosses the hills into the forbidden land to retrieve his son.

Miss Mirlees makes one serious



error near the beginning of the book. After a nice introduction, she almost destroys the illusion of a secondary universe she had carefully built up. The second chapter begins with, "Before we start our story, it will be necessary...to give a short sketch of the history of Dorimare..." This sort of dear-reader-disrupting is disruptive to the suspension of disbelief necessary to this kind of fantasy. A more flagrant example occurs a few pages later: "...a Winckelmann, had he visited Dorimare, would have found, as he did in the rococo Rome of the eighteenth century..." Such obtrusive references to the real world act to negate the reality of the imaginary universe. Fortunately, there are not many.

The great strength of the book, however, lies not in the fact that it creates an imaginary reality, but in the fact that it is a highly symbolic work that may be interpreted

ed on a number of different levels. The conflict between the down-to-earth people of Dorimare and mysterious realm of Fairyland seems to symbolize the conflict between the material and spiritual aspects of Man's nature. There are certain parallels drawn between Fairyland and Death. There are definite overtones of political satire, much of it aimed at the judicial system. And it works at face value as a story. It doesn't have the vivid imagery or well-drawn characterizations of certain other works, but it manages to create a beauty and atmosphere all its own. One can only hope that some diligent researcher may one day uncover some more forgotten fantasy by Miss Mirlees.

DARKNESS WEAVES

Reviewed by L. Craig Rickman

Karl Edward Wagner has been receiving a lot of attention lately—both as an editor and writer. In the genre of sword-and-sorcery, he has instilled more than a little "new" blood. This needed transfusion has come in the awesome form of Kane.

Warner Books has recently released his newest Kane epic called DARKNESS WEAVES (1978, 288 pps.—a good deal at \$2.95). Like the others I've read—DARK CRUSADE and BLOODSTONE, this is no ordinary S & S novel. And Kane the First Murderer is no ordinary hero. He is a demon and a hero both, admirable in his deeds, selfish and horrible in his methods. Kane is a man in his weaknesses and a hero in his capabilities. There can be no doubt that he is the most vivid creation since Moorcock's Elric.

The book concerns Kane's attempts to secure an empire for a misshapen-were-creature named Efrel, who wants the life of the emperor as well as his kingdom because of the terrible mutilation he did to her. Caught up in her all-consuming hatred, she has employed Kane as the general of her demon and human army. With this force, his and her sorcery, Kane moves to fulfill her plans.

Kane is the only one who could do it, and he does—with the help of a lost race of devils from the deep sea. The emperor, one Netisten Maril, is not altogether likeable, so the reader doesn't pout when he dies at Kane's sword. However, the emperor's beautiful daughter, M'Cori, is captured and sent to receive Efrel's attentions.

As the book nears a bloody climax, Kane turns on the mad witch. But Efrel pulls a bit of sorcery on

Kane and the immortal warrior's plans go awry. As with the other Kane novels, most everyone not already slain gets thataway gloriously in the final climax.

Except Kane.

He, as he has for millenia, survives, moving along to a place that remembers him in only the darkest legends.

I look forward (while questioning my reading morals--Kane is not for the fairy tale enthusiast!) to the next Kane epic. To be certain, it'll be bloody and, at times, perverse; but for certain, it'll be good--incredibly good.

WELL OF SHIUAN

By C.J. Cherryh

DAW Books, #284 for April, 1978

253 pages, cover art by Michael Whelan. (UJ1371, \$1.95)

Reviewed by David A. Truesdale

Anyone who has had the good fortune to follow Ms. Cherryh's work from her first well-received fantasy two years ago, GATE OF IVREL, to her second, a science-fantasy, BROTHERS OF EARTH, to her third, a science fiction entry HUNTER OF WORLDS, will readily appreciate her latest fantasy work, which is the sequel to GATE OF IVREL and the second of a trilogy.

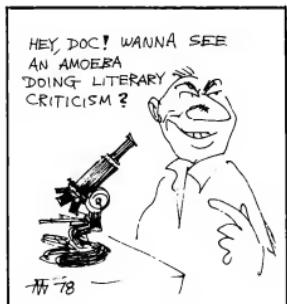
WELL OF SHIUAN again has the ancient and powerful Morgaine of the Qujal and her sworn servant Nhi Vanye i Chya attempting to close one of the last of the world and time-spanning Gates on the world of Hiuaq/Shiuan. But a problem arises when the people of Shiuan learn of the Gate and attempt a mass exodus through it in order to escape the flooding and breakup of their entire planet. It is their sole hope of survival, and it is Morgaine who has come to seal it from them forever, for the Gates have long ago been determined a terrible evil, threatening by their very existence to disrupt the fabric of time and space.

The main burden of the story is Vanye's catharsis into something more than a man without honor, an outcast from his own people, and the poor peasant girl Jhirun, whose bound determination to leave her homeland sets a great deal in motion. As is obvious from her previous novels, Ms. Cherryh delights in the creation of alien societies and much intricate background detail, so much so in this story that of the 115,000 plus words comprising this adventure, perhaps in only one half sentence in the whole book is it made

clear just why the world of Shiuan is a doomed world at all. There are several vague and obscure intimations of why the planet is breaking up and drowning, but it was not made clear enough in the text for this reader, even though a slightly misleading rear cover blurb tries to make up for the fact.

Also perceived is a marked lack of action due to much setting of the stage, much mental and verbal maneuvering by the principal characters, again a propensity for extended mood, character and world description that while beautiful to imagine and interesting to read, slows the pace considerably. But this being the second installment of a trilogy the slower pace is to be expected, if not entirely welcomed.

Nevertheless, I give a hearty thumbs up to WELL OF SHIUAN, for despite its flaws it is a rich and



entertaining work by a gifted and maturing storyteller, who happens to be the most recent recipient of the John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer of the Year.

LONG AFTER MIDNIGHT

By Ray Bradbury

(ISBN 0-553-10882-4. \$1.95.)

Science Fiction, 275 pages.

Bantam Books pb. for Apr. 1, 1978.

Reviewed by David A. Truesdale

This is the first paperback publication of Bradbury's first new book in seven years and the first in a six-title reissue of his past work from Bantam. This collection contains 22 short stories many of which are neither science fiction or fantasy, but Bradbury remembering-in

short vignettes or nostalgic mood pieces--about his childhood experiences in Illinois. Some are particularly poignant and touching, several minor excursions in self-indulgent sentimentality, while the majority of the stories can be lumped into two fairly distinct categories: fantasy from the *Weird Tales*, Other Worlds type markets of the early 1950s; and Ray perpetually attempting to resurrect a number of his favorite writers or influences from the past, such as in "The Parrot who Met Papa" and "Forever and the Earth" where Hemingway and Thomas Wolfe are through different devices permitted to join us once again--albeit in each case for only a short time.

If you like Bradbury you will like this new collection. My personal opinion is that after reading through the whole book without a break I came away tired of being hammered with too-often gushy sentimentality time after time to the point where I felt like a stick of penny candy in a General Store on a hot August afternoon in Macon. Reading a few stories at a time would be a better way to approach Bradbury in this instance. Overall it is a fine collection.

The other five books coming from Bantam, with new covers by artist Ian Miller, are THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES, THE ILLUSTRATED MAN, I SING THE BODY ELECTRIC, R IS FOR ROCKET and S IS FOR SPACE.

THAT BUCK ROGERS STUFF

By Jerry Pournelle, Ph. D.

Garvin Claypool, Editor

Etequeer Press, Los Angeles

Limited edition--500 copies

Autographed by Author

Introduction by Larry Niven

Reviewed by Lee Smith

This is Pournelle's first collection of his *Star Further Out* articles from *GALAXY*. Included are: The title article, "That Buck Rogers Stuff", "Halfway to Anywhere", "What It's Like Out There", "Black Holes and Cosmic Censorship", "Fuzzy Black Holes Have No Hair", "How Long to Doomsday", "Survival with Style", "Blueprint for Survival", his and Niven's introduction to *MOTE*, "Building the Mote in God's Eye", and an excerpt from "Porpoises and Promises", called "Best Track Record".

I'd read all these articles in *GALAXY* over the three years of Baen's editorship. Individually, they're pretty impressive assessments of our world at present. Each shows a

specific aspect of today's civilization, and, considering the tools at our disposal, explores the various alternatives we have, extrapolating their possible futures with uncanny accuracy. By themselves, these articles are insightful surveys—provocative probings into controversial subjects, lessons on sensible approaches to them, and cudgels of deterrent against the berserker-attitude opponents of such rational thinking. Put together, they form a devastating assault: They present a full, uncarving and undeniable picture of our society and it's problems projected into the years ahead this profile shows, in detail, what's wrong with the trend of the present and what we should do about it.

Niven's introduction summarizes Jerry's life, emphasizing the events that helped turn Pournelle's career toward writing science fiction. Among other things, he gives a detailed account of how their own collaboration came about, their working record together, and an assessment of the results--he says their team is the most successful in history; and considering the \$236,000 they got on LUCIFER'S HAMMER, I quite agree. Most illuminating.

Hardbound, with dust jacket

112 pp. \$9.00

Checks payable to:

Gavin Claypool
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POB 84087-VA Branch
Los Angeles, CA 90073

MYTHOPOEIKON

By Patrick Woodroffe
A Fireside Book, Simon & Schuster
\$9.95

Reviewed by Mark Mansell

Patrick Woodroffe is a popular artist of book-covers and record jackets, though he is more known in England than over here. MYTHOPOEIKON is a selection of the best of his work.

It is impossible to accurately describe Woodroffe's work. A blend of sur-realism and accurate true-to-life, he can catch wild nightmare images with as much skill as an erotic scene. His use of color and form is imaginative and skilled.

There are too many different types of things to make an adequate selection, but among the things he has done have been several of A.A. Merritt's covers, many of Michael Moorcock's, some of Dashiell Hammett's murder mysteries, Jack Vance's GREY PRINCE, Joe Haldeman's FOREVER WAR and far too many more to make a choice of favorites.

The images range from cluttered symbolisms to achingly beautiful panoramas of other-worldly scenes. Woodroffe's style is unmistakably his own.

There are also notes about his work, himself and about each of the pictures within the book. The reproduction of the pictures is excellent on very high-quality paper. At the price it is a bargain no fan of science fiction and fantasy art should miss.

THE VISUAL ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SCIENCE FICTION

Edited by Brian Ash, Harmony Books
352 pp., 7 1/2 x 10", paperback.

Reviewed by Bruce Nyhoff

A more accurate title for this book might be THE INFORMAL ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SCIENCE FICTION in the sense that it's not a rigorous alphabetical listing of names, titles and terms; in addition, the pictorial material is an adjunct to rather than an integral part of the printed text.

Brian Ash, who I gather is the main author of the text, has made previous excursions in this area by writing such books as FACES OF THE FUTURE: THE LESSONS OF SCIENCE FICTION and WHO'S WHO IN SCIENCE FICTION. Mike Ashley, author of THE HISTORY OF THE SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE series, is credited as "Principal Research Consultant". An extensive research effort went into the preparation of the book, judging by the hundreds of bibliographical references and SF art reproductions. The book shows no evidence of being slouched. The illustrations (both color and b & w) are generally well-chosen and carefully identified, but many are reproductions of recent paperback book covers. Also, many of the magazine cover repros are little bigger than postage stamps. On the plus side the book reproduces the dust jackets of numerous small-press first edition hardcovers. Several of the illustration and author photos appear to have been tak-

en from James Gunn's ALTERNATE WORLDS--to the point of making the same mistakes in picture captions.

The opening section of the book entitled "Program", is an extended chronology subdivided into separate sections for magazine publishing, magazine stories, books, films & TV and fandom. It's basically a roll-call of magazines published, first publications and noteworthy stories by significant authors, important SF films and books, and the most significant fanzines, conventions and other fanac. Major improvements would have been to include the life-spans of the authors mentioned and brief notes explaining why the selected stories are considered significant. This entire section can be considered redundant in the sense that much of the material presented could have been incorporated in the later sections dealing with the same subjects. I must repeat at least one entry: "1972: Mass influx of crudzine-publishing neofans". (p.62)

The bulk of the book is taken up by the section "Thematics", being a series of articles exploring the various concepts and themes taken up by SF writers, such topics as "Spacecraft and Star Drives, Utopias and Nightmares, Lost and Parallel Worlds, Robots and Androids, Sex and Taboos", etc. Each subsection has an all-too-short introduction by a noted author, such as Poul Anderson, Isaac Asimov, Fred Pohl, Arthur Clarke, Larry Niven, et al. The book's main shortcoming lies in the fact that Ash has openly chosen not to take a critical stance with the result that his text is generally a rather dry outline of the way various SF concepts have been developed, reminiscent of future-oriented articles in POPULAR MECHANICS. One might accurately sample the flavor of the book from the following excerpt chosen more or less at random:

'Shortly after the Second World War, when computers were developing rapidly, sf writers went through a period when they studied individual computers and their problems, as in Dickson's "The Monkey Wrench". By the time



of Poul Anderson's "Sam Hall" (1953), the concept of a future society under the rigorous rule of machines is taken for granted and forms just part of the backcloth. By this stage, sf writers are ready to stretch the boundaries, and in *THEY'D RATHER BE RIGHT* (1954) by Mark Clifton and Frank Riley we find Bossy the super-computer which can confer immortality and psi-power on humans.

British writer F.G. Rayer wrote a convincing series of stories about the development of a super-computer called Magnis Mensas. It first appeared in a short story, "*Deus Ex Machina*" (1950), in which the computer acts as judge and jury in a court case. The theme was developed in *TOMORROW SOMETIMES COMES* (1951) when atomic warfare sweeps the earth and the computer takes control. In "*The Peacemaker*" (1952) Magnis Mensas, working for the good of humanity, actually helps an alien invasion. This and subsequent stories emphasize that an emotionless machine will always take the logical, necessary step even though it may appear to be working against man. (p.182)

My personal reaction is that it might have been more profitable to have a different prominent author explore each of the various topics at length, e.g., Asimov on robots, Clarke on space exploration, Moorcock on sex and taboos, etc.

The barrenness of the text makes the aforementioned "guest" introductions seem all the more lively by comparison. One may judge the depth of Ash's approach by the fact that the subsection on alien cultures is about as long as a short magazine article.

Ash's text doesn't really come to life until the final article entitled "Inner Space", which deals mainly with "new trend" SF. He objectively surveys the entire "New Wave" controversy, including both its literary antecedents and progeny. The works he describes sound much more interesting than was the case in the previous subsections. His concluding thoughts bear repeating: "While many traditional enthusiasts may in retrospect view the new wave as a temporary upheaval on the broad of horizon, there seems little doubt that the movement was responsible for strengthening the emphasis on certain concepts and concerns already developing within the genre, and for attracting at least some new contributors to the

field. If it did nothing more than that, its existence will have been worthwhile". (p. 246)

Other positive features in the "Thematics" section include the complete future history cycles of Poul Anderson, Robert Heinlein and Olaf Stapledon, and James White's life-form classification system.

Perhaps to make up for the previous lack of personal viewpoint, the next section "Deep Probes" is devoted to a series of essays by authors and critics. Brian Ash's "Hardware: the Influence of Science" is a routine rundown of the effects of science and technology on society. Edmund Cooper's "Interaction: Science Fiction and Society" is an exhortation for SF to take up the holy crusade of social consciousness-raising. George Turner's "Science Fiction as Literature" draws several valid criteria required in taking a literary approach to SF. He does not automatically condemn it for de-emphasizing character development for the sake of bringing out a story's environment. However, he sets seemingly impossibly high literary standards for SF: "The fact is that since (Thomas More's) UTOPIA science fiction has not produced a novel of classic stature". (p. 260)

Damon Knight's "The Value of Science Fiction" is a short but thoughtful examination of the reasons why readers are attracted to SF, in short, escape + wonder.

L. Sprague de Camp's "The Barbarian as Hero" ably contrasts the romantic ideal of the barbarian with scientific reality. He suggests that the main attraction of the barbarian story lies in looking either forward or back to the emancipation of late adolescence.

Brian Ash's "Software: the Psychological View" is a summing up of the ideas presented so far in the book and ends on a note of cautious optimism.

The final section of the book "Fandom and Media" continues the tone of the "Thematics" section, but is generally more intriguing, perhaps because of a less inhibited approach.

A fringe-fan myself is hardly competent to judge the merits of the subsection on fandom. However, Ash captures rather well the liveliness that I've observed in fandom myself. Curiously he classifies SFR as "sercon". The winners of all major SF awards through 1976 are comprehensively listed along with information on the Worldcons. However, in his description of a typical convention, Ash forgot to mention the "huckster's room".

The subsections on SF art, comics, movies, TV, book and magazine publishing and criticism and research are competent if overly concise. I was surprised to learn that none other than Gene Autrey was the star of an early '50s SF TV show, *PHANTOM EMPIRE*.

Ash has devoted almost a page and a half of small print to a comprehensive listing of works of SF criticism, history and bibliography, remarkable for a genre not generally considered as "serious literature".

I especially enjoyed the section "Fringe Cults", which explores with an attitude of healthy scepticism the respective controversies surrounding the persons of Charles Fort, Richard Shaver and L. Ron Hubbard.

In sum, *THE VISUAL ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SCIENCE FICTION* is passably entertaining and informative, yet neither indispensable nor unique in point of view.

***** VESTIGES OF TIME

By Richard C. Meredith
Doubleday Canada, Ltd.
186 pp., 1978, \$7.95

Reviewed by W. Ritchie Benedict

I have a weakness for the books by Richard C. Meredith. I gobbled up two earlier books, *RUN, COME JERUSALEM* and *AT THE NARROW PASSAGE*. Although the time-travel-parallel universe theme has been used by many other SF writers, I can appreciate an author who can utilize an old theme with such style, pace and color.

This new novel is the concluding volume of a trilogy that began with *AT THE NARROW PASSAGE* in 1973. I have nothing against trilogies but it is frustrating as hell to find that somehow you have missed the middle volume. According to the liner notes, the second novel was *NO BROTHER, NO FRIEND* (should that be Brother? - a typo or not?) which so far as I know has not appeared at all in this area in hardcover or paperback. For some reason, the first novel was brought out by Putnam's and then the series was dropped. It is to Doubleday's credit that they have picked up the third book. All of Meredith's fans would have been left dangling.

The concluding book finishes the saga of a paratime soldier of fortune, Eric Matthers, who has become stranded in a Neo-Carthaginian world in which Hannibal succeeded in conquering Rome. In exchange for a primitive time-traveling device the locals have developed, he agrees to

let himself be cloned. The group in charge of cloning 337 replicates are a bunch of revolutionaries interested in disposing of the aristocratic hierachal leadership that has caused the society to stagnate. Mathers, however, has problems of his own. He is still attempting to destroy the non-human Kriths who have an interest in twisting the history of all of parallel timelines to their own ends, as well as the even more alien blue-skinned Paratimers, who also have unknown sinister plans. A weird figure known only as "The Shadowy Man" can apparently straddle all space and time at will, and has been aiding Mathers for reasons neither group, nor Mathers himself can comprehend.

I was glad to see that Meredith managed to avoid all the pitfalls that sequels are prone to. Not only did he manage to cover the general outlines of the plots in the preceding two books for those unfamiliar with them, but he was able to tie up all the dangling questions and resolve them in a thoroughly satisfactory conclusion. I found the third book weaker than the first, in that there are not as many secondary characters and also because of the flashbacks that are necessary to maintain continuity.

But the novel can stand on its own with the fascinating descriptions of time-space distortions carried out to defeat the psionic powers of the ruthless alien forces.

The cover illustration is slightly misleading as the clonic revolution does not actually occur as planned.

Although many of the ideas are very familiar--almost cliches--the action and tremendous verve shown in writing this short novel help to make any defects irrelevant, at least during the reading of it. It moves so fast that it is over before you know it. A winner all the way.

RE-BIRTH

By John Wyndham

A Del Ray/Ballantine Book, \$1.75
185 pp., cover art by Michael Herring
Reviewed by Paul McGuire III

Roughly the first two-thirds of this novel is the episodic narration of the protagonist's youth. It is strong on characterization, with a few effective vignettes.

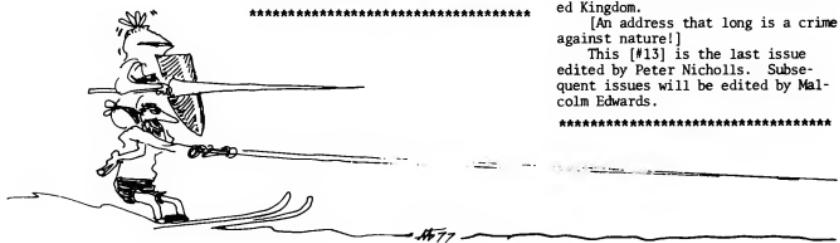
The story is set long after the Atomic War, in Labrador. The all-prevailing religion is obsessed with discovering and eradicating any deviation from their recorded norms. Various incidents assist our hero's coming of age, and also cause him to wonder about the correctness of this mutation paranoia. It dawns on him, finally, that he is a deviant himself.

David Storm is one of eight children who are telepathic. While they are learning to control and hide their talent, David's little sister is dramatically revealed to possess the gift in a somewhat wild, and incredibly powerful manner.

Eventually, as one might expect, discovery is made and Dave, his sister, and girl friend flee for their lives to the "fringes", where outlaw mutants have a refuge. The question is, can they survive long enough for the *dues ex machina* to come and make everything all wonderful.

Two familiar (too familiar?) and related themes tie everything together; telepaths are superior human beings and telepaths will be persecuted. Nothing terribly original, but after all, the book was published in 1955. Still, the book doesn't really deserve to be called a classic, but then, few of the books labeled that by publishers in this young genre do either. At this time, I am more interested in an SF book's entertainment value than its future literary stature anyway.

Occasionally, RE-BIRTH seems to be the READER'S DIGEST version of a larger work, but it is interesting and generally well-written.



CONTINUED FROM P.21

guests -rom the KGB paid a visit to his widow, conducted a ruthless search, seized many valuable manuscripts. For a long time afterwards, his name was taboo, and subscriptions to a six-volume edition of his works were cancelled. Following complaints by other science fiction writers, a three-volume edition was permitted, but his major works, "Time of the Bull", "Spare the Razor", and "Inais of Athens" were deleted from the edition. Many works by the well-known science fiction writers, the brothers Strugatsky are banned, and foreign science fiction is rarely published. The future has become a frightening prospect to the organs of security--in it they sense a threat to their totalitarian rule.

"Ah, yes! It is impossible to keep the fire of the mind and heart in the paper labyrinths of vetoes and persecution for long. Prison walls and even death will not check the flight of flaming thought."

'Brother writers! Raise a cry of protest against the medieval persecution of literary men. The era of space travel demands free contacts, free thought, the fusion of all creative efforts, to built a unified World of Joy and Love!

'We await your words of support. The situation is fearsome!'

'Mykola Rudenko
Oleg Berdnik'

Kiev

Now that, I submit, speaks of an insecurity in those in Authority that is hard to believe. But, then, I've often observed that sf is a subversive literature by its very nature, and the rulers of the USSR have come to the same conclusion.

If a Big Media campaign is ever launched someday in the USA about the dangers of sf and fantasy, you'll know it's time to be really paranoid.

Subscriptions to FOUNDATION are \$7.50 (surface mail) \$12.00 airmail, from: The Editor, FOUNDATION, The Science Fiction Foundation, North East London Polytechnic, Longbridge Road, Dagenham, Essex RM8 2AS, United Kingdom.

[An address that long is a crime against nature!]

This #13] is the last issue edited by Peter Nicholls. Subsequent issues will be edited by Malcolm Edwards.

Several small and evanescent war-gaming firms have already bought out games based on J.R.R. Tolkein's THE HOBBIT and THE LORD OF THE RINGS. However, these tactical and unauthorized games pale into insignificance beside WAR OF THE RING, which has just been published by Simulations Publications, Inc., 44 E. 23rd St., New York, N.Y. 10010. After long and frequently frustrating negotiation with the Tolkein estate, authorization was finally achieved for the game. Its price is \$15.

The game board is the familiar map of Middle Earth, laid out in hexagonal spaces ("hexes") in SPI's usual fashion. There are 400 pieces; some represent individual characters while others stand for armies of Men, Elves, Dwarves, Hobbits, Orcs or Trolls. The game has provision for combat either between individuals or armies - or both; by mutual consent, for example, Faramir and Gothmog can have it out with each other in single combat before their armies set upon each other.

The game is in two forms; Character and Campaign. The Character

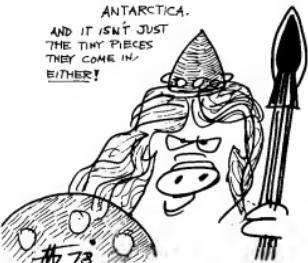
The Dark Power commands truly enormous armies. After all the reinforcements are mustered, Sauron has at his disposal 210 Strength Points of Human Infantry, 200 of Human Cavalry, 20 of Mumakil, 20 of Trollis, 305 of Orcs and 72 of Urak-Hai (defined as "elite Orc Infantry"). This is aside from Saruman's separate command, and compares with a total strength for Gondor and Rohan combined of only 288. Yet the Dark Power player is severely limited in the use of these forces. Every turn he gets between 8 and 13 Shadow Points, which must be carefully expended. To initiate army combat, for example, costs 3 Shadow Points, and to search for the Ring-bearer costs 1 point per Nazgul and then is more likely than not to miss him. The Dark Power player will continually be finding that he cannot accomplish the simplest task for lack of Shadow Points - and they can not be accumulated from one turn to the next, either. Even moving an army costs 3 Shadow Points for a force of any size, and makes it difficult to these forces to be concentrated where they can do any good. This presumably represents the prob-

and Shelob in Moria.) There are also Magic Cards, which are acquired by the Fellowship player when characters are moved into the appropriate hexes: Rivendell, Edoras, Isengard, Lorien, Minas Tirith, Thranduil's palace, or Barad-Dur. One card is the Ring itself; others are Palantiri, Elven-Blades (the only thing that can kill Nazgul), an Elven-Rope that will take characters across impossible terrain, or Shadowfax, who can carry up to one Man and one Hobbit, and increases movement allowance for them.

On each turn, each player draws an Event card, which may be kept until needed. This can be played to change the results of combat ("Orcs in State of Battle Frenzy"), slow down the opposition ("Pipeweed Cache

FINDING A HERO
ON SOME BATTLE
FIELDS IS LIKE
SNUFFING FOR
TRUFFLES IN
ANTARCTICA.

AND IT ISN'T JUST
THE TINY PIECES
THEY COME IN;
EITHER!



PIGKYRIE

game is fast and easy to play. The Fellowship player has nine counters representing the Fellowship of the Ring, while the Dark Power player has the nine Nazgul, the Mouth of Sauron and Saruman. The Fellowship tries to get the Ring (originally in Frodo's possession) to Orodruin for destruction, while the Bad Guys must first search for and spot the Ringbearer, and then stop him, grab the Ring, or use Nazgul to reduce Minas Tirith, Dol Amroth and Helm's Deep. This version is a walkover for the Fellowship, but introduces players to the Campaign game.

The Campaign game has armies as well, and several more individual characters to lead them. But first the armies must be mobilized so that they can move and summon reinforcements. Mordor and its allies mobilize whenever Nazgul or Orc search (a separate phase of the game) spots a Hobbit. But, unless Gandalf can get there and warn them, Rohan and Gondor cannot mobilize unless invaded. This puts a high priority on Gandalf, since Mordor can throw a strong force over the border and besiege Minas Tirith before Denethor can mobilize.

lems involved in running an empire based on fear and cruelty, or keeping a mixed encampment of Orcs and Haradrim quiet when each regards the other as potential entrees.

Each major character has his or her individual card, with a Tim Kirk illustration. (Thranduil, fortunately, looks nothing like the caricature of him presented on television on 27 November.) The card gives the combat ability, leadership ability (in the Campaign game), ability to take wounds, and (if a magician) the Sorcery power of a character. It also tells how easy the character will find it to remove the Ring once it is on. (Denethor, Boromir, Saruman, and some others won't be able at all.)

Six of the hexes are marked with the "Eye", and if individual characters of the Fellowship player land there a card corresponding to that hex must be turned over. It might be a Balrog, Shelob, a Troll, or a Barrow-Wight which must be fought at once - or it might be no more than a rumor. (Thus, you might find the Balrog in the middle of Myrkwood

Discovered... No Hobbits can be moved more than two hexes... this Game-Turn!", escape from captivity ("Eagles!"), or sow dissension ("Boromir Attempts to Seize the Ring", which requires immediate combat with Frodo). Playing these cards at the proper time is a major element in the game.

There are some minor technical problems with the game. Large armies are sometimes represented by stacks of counters some 10 or 12 high. If they are besieging a fortress, this stack may have to be set atop another stack of defenders. Players might want to let one suitably marked blank counter represent a whole stack, and then keep the actual counters represented by it at the side of the board. The game board itself is in two parts, and should be taped or clipped together. However, the hex numbering begins

all over again on the eastern board instead of continuing from the western board as it ought.

Purists will probably have a few objections on the mapboard and game. The regions marked on the board really don't have much to do with the game, except as they enable 'Spotted' Fellowship players to escape by moving into the next region. The Shire is far too large, extending to the Gulf of Lune and including the Grey Havens—but excluding Buckland. (Still, an appendix to LORD OF THE RINGS states that Buckland was not formally annexed to the Shire until more than 40 years after the War of the Ring.) Sarn Ford is represented on the map as a bridge, and Fornost and Tharbad appear as inhabited towns rather than ruins. Esgaroth does not appear at all. All the citadels are of the same strength, though Minas Tirith is obviously a much tougher nut to crack than, say, Isengard or Dol Guldur.

Two "spin-off" games have been developed with War of the Ring, each selling for \$5. (All three games are available in a single pack for \$20.) Gondor deals with the siege of Gondor, and is SPI's first real attempt at a game of siegework. (The sieges of Tyre and Constantinople are now under development in SPI's play-testing rooms.) The game includes the destructive effect on defenders' morale of catapulting in the heads of their casualties. Sauron is a simulation of the battle which ended the Second Age, in which Elendil, Gil-galad, and Anarion fell, and Isildur hacked the Ring off Sauron's finger. Less is "known" about this battle, and SPI's designers accordingly let themselves go on this one. Sauron casts spells from the top of a pedestal toted around by Orcs, gives Sinister Visions to his adversaries, causes a Total Eclipse of the Sun (Limit: Two per game), or releases the Beast of Mordor with its Death Breath.

All these games are two-player, though War of the Ring has an option for a third player representing Saruman. In this case Saruman may form temporary alliances with either of the other two sides on any mutually agreeable terms. If Saruman ever gets control of the Ring, the Nazgul start to come over to his command, at the rate of one per turn. This raises the possibility of Nazgul of different allegiances fighting each other. Saruman wins if he controls all the surviving Nazgul plus Isengard, Edoras, and Helm's Deep. Sauron wins if he has the Ring brought to Barad-Dur.

*SPI's Constantinople game is now on the market.

or controls all the Mordor and Gondor, citadels plus Dol Guldur, Helm's Deep, Isengard, Hobbiton, and Thranduil's palace.

Of course, the Fellowship player has some advantage in knowing his history. It is highly desirable to get Boromir away from Frodo at the very beginning of the game, and send him off to Gondor where he can be of some good commanding armies. And the sooner you can get Gandalf the Grey killed off, the sooner he can come back as the more powerful Gandalf the White.

Event cards can be played at any time the holder wishes, so the game is unsuitable for postal play. And the serious, "Purist" type of war-gamer probably won't care for such things as crystal balls, elven cloaks, or curing wounds by laying on of hands. But two or three dedicated Tolkien fans could have a very pleasant couple of hours over this one.

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CONTINUED FROM P.35

LETTER FROM RICHARD E. GEIS TO GORDON R. DICKSON

April 25, 1978

'Dear Gordon:
I read with great interest your mention in your ALGOL interview that you believe that a Neo-Puritan revolution will take place in America before the turn of the century.

'What is there in present-day culture and trends that tells you this? Do you have a specific man or movement you are watching?'

GORDON R. DICKSON'S REPLY

May 19, 1978

'There's not much I can say in just a few words about the historical movement I called the Neo-Puritan revolution, and which I think may be coming. As you might have heard, after saying I would sign no more contracts in advance on Childe Cycle books, I came to a situation which promised me the necessary two years to do THE FINAL ENCYCLOPEDIA without thinking of other things; and it looks as if I will be contracting that book, therefore. Hopefully, from then on, I can operate with the Cycle books as the backbone of things and won't have to hop, skip and jump around. If that happens,

taken some of these other things I want to do, like the book on the thematic novel itself and a few other such pieces, will come out—and one of them will be at least a long essay on this business of the Neo-Puritan revolution.

'Briefly, (and probably unsatisfactorily) meanwhile, my opinion on this is essentially based on a charting of those same historical cycles that have concerned me all these years. Bear in mind that what I'm referring to is not a guns-in-the-street type of revolution, although it could come to that in certain areas or countries, I suppose, but a revolution of manners and customs. And, to answer your question, I do not have my eye on any particular individual or movement at the present time—it's far too early for this, for one thing. Perhaps in my ALGOL interview I should have said that I expect the revolution I'm talking about to be recognized as existing by the turn of the century. From that point, it will probably carry deep into the twenty-first century, if it turns out to be of the magnitude I would guess for it—though regardless of its magnitude, it would be only one of a number of factors making history at that time.'

'What I base this conclusion on is an expected swingback from the increasing libertarianism of our present century toward a corresponding conservatism, reinforced by the fact that the western world, at least, is emotionally affected by the fact that we are approaching a second millennium. In fact, not only the western world seems so affected if you look at the historical records you find an association of important periodicity involved with the idea of "millennia" as far east as India. The eternal human parochiality toward time—the very natural desire to feel that "in my years, history made its first and greatest turn toward a better and greater future" inevitably tends to uncork desires for social change in people both at times when some certain social goal seems to have been achieved (the respectability/Empire feeling of the British in the late Victorian period and/or our own present feeling of having brought naturalness, common sense and a duty to avoid prejudice to American thought) and when some large historical period seems about to be concluding. Look at the actions of individuals and societies in Western Europe, particularly toward the end of the tenth century as the first Millennium approached—and then turn back to our own present moment to look for parallels to these actions.'

'At the moment what I see is the

eighty-year up-curve toward liberalism beginning to peak; with the down-curve toward conservatism just ahead. Reinforcing that down-curve will be the already visible trends toward a splintering of large societal bodies into small but vocal and active groups demanding their rights to a day and place in the sun. Reinforcing it also will be the faith trends which are already becoming visible, with established churches presently losing membership, and any number of new, fundamentalist faiths--some unashamedly and actively radical to the point where they set the legal structure of society well below their own pattern of religious laws--growing hand-over-fist in size of memberships, power and wealth.

'Along with this there is another factor--one that was never present in history before, because until the present a technology like that enjoyed by our current society was inconceivable. We now enjoy a facility of communication, primarily with the telephone, television and air transported mail, and of transportation, primarily by the auto and the jet plane, which is breaking up isolated social units and pushing us hard toward a new commonality and a new individuality, hallmarked by a strong turn back to individual crafts and self-sufficiency. You and I, Dick, in our involvement with science fiction already belong to a highly individualistic community that is not merely national in geographic extent, but to one that is flatly international. We have much more in common with our like-thinking friend in Europe, Japan or Australia than we may have with our nearest physical neighbor.

'This, individualism, along with the other cyclic factors, has its effect in general on a world caught up in a single economic web of forces--whether its inhabitants like to recognize that fact in the light of their political and other beliefs or not. It is going to bear on all of us alike in the coming years, and it is eventually going to push us by the beginning of the next century in my estimation, into what in effect will be--whether it is politically recognized as such or not--a world-wide society which will need a new set of laws.

'Contrary to the fond beliefs of many of those who dream of founding new societies in the name of freedom and an improvement of the lot of the members involved, the new sets of laws devised by such societies almost invariably tend to be repressive, rather than liberal. The laws of our own founding fathers on Plymouth Rock are a clear-cut example. A difference in the past

has been that such young societies could justify their strict social controls by calling them the cost of independence from the older society against which the new society was in reaction. But if the particular new society we are concerned with is, for the first time in human history, world-wide, then there will be no other society to react against --and the only reaction possible is against the mores and manners of the past. And it will be our own liberal present which will be that past.

'Enough of this. Here, I've gone and fulfilled my own prediction by running off at the typewriter. Besides, as much as I might stretch this out here, the full reasoning for this notion will take a separate and larger bit of writing, done with time to think. If you want to use any of this in the REVIEW, would you be good enough to point out that it is by no means a carefully thought-out bit of argument, but a sort of overflow from a great deal of thought that has been piling up in rough draft for a long time awaiting the essay - time I mentioned earlier?

'Which brings to mind something else. If you want to use any of this--as I say--feel free, but since in many instances I'm quoting myself from work already done in first draft and which will hopefully someday see publication in finished form, I'd like you to do so with the understanding that the rights to any other use of the wordage stays with me. I imagine you already have patterns of publication that amount to that, of course, but the years have taught me that it never hurts to mention such things, and I do want to avoid any personal, premature discussion of these conclusions in mind until I have time to get my reasonings into proper shape and order.'

((Thank you, Gordon, for the far-longer and extensive reply than expected.

((I question the trend toward individuality and crafts and self-sufficiency. I know such make nice feature stories and are "glamorous" to most rat-race inhabitants, but I don't see how even more extensive mass communications and mass media will foster it. On the contrary, an even greater majority of people will be conformist and passive and dependent while the mass media give lip service to the virtues of individuality.

((I don't see the establishment allowing or encouraging a technology

that would permit the average person to free himself from "society" in any real way.

((I do agree that a "conservative" period is coming upon us. The youth culture is fading as the baby boom ages into its 30's.)

LETTER FROM ROBERT A.W. LOWNDES

May 29, 1978

'Two items in the May SFR were sufficient to rouse me from my usual lethargy. A word about the lethargy: I inherited it from "Doc" Edward Elmer Smith, author of the "Skylark" and "Lensman" series. The last time I spoke to him, I mentioned with a wide grin that I'd always admired his lethargy. When he responded with a blank look, I reminded him that he frequently referred to it on the rare occasions that he wrote letters to the SF magazines, either commenting on criticisms or questions relating to his stories or to wax enthusiastic about some new author, such as Weinbaum or C. L. Moore. He laughed and said, "Well, if you like it you can have it!" So I took it with thanks and have treasured it ever since.

'But to get a trifle serious for just a moment, there is something in the May issue that calls for correction. In his department, "The Vivisector", Darrell Schweitzer states (page 57) that Robert E. Howard's sequel to SKULL FACE was "abandoned by REH in 1931 because WEIRD TALES was making noises about going bi-monthly. He never got back to it, even though WT did not go bimonthly..."

'WEIRD TALES did indeed go bimonthly in 1931. I have all the nine issues for that year and they appeared as follows: February-March on sale January 1st; April-May, on sale March 1st; June-July, on sale May 1st. The June-July issue carried the announcement that, with the next issue, August, WT would return to monthly publication. That issue also contained part one of a six-part serial, TAM, SON OF THE TIGER, by Otis A. Kline-- (Which I selected for reprint when I was editing Avalon's science fiction series) and it was rare in those days for fantasy and science fiction readers to have to wait two months in between installments of a serial. However, the August WT came out on July 1st as promised, and it appeared on the first of each month thereafter for the rest of the year--right up to April 1933 when something else happened that gave me a sinking feeling, because we'd just lost the Clayton ASTOUNDING STORIES earlier

in the year. But that's another story.

'Actually, there were three items that aroused me, but in the interim between arousal and actually getting to the typewriter, I forgot the third and didn't remember until I stopped typing on the first page to check the May issue for the proper page number on Schweitzer's bit of misinformation--then it came to me.

'I haven't read Seabury Quinn's novel, ALIEN FLESH, but reading several descriptions of it, besides the one in SFR, tells me something that others do not seem to have noticed. That I have read the story before. ALIEN FLESH is very clearly an expansion of the novelette, LYNN FOSTER IS DEAD, by Seabury Quinn, which appeared in the November 1938 WEIRD TALES. I haven't re-read it for some years, but the last reading confirmed my original impression of 1938 that it was among his best stories. And the WT readers voted it the best story in the issue. (I do think it could have won out against better competition, that was not among WT's better issues of the period--a minor, though good Lovecraft tale, "The Nameless City" and a good, but not outstanding Bloch story, "The Hound of Pedro" and the first installment of an absorbing serial by Thomas P. Kelley, "I Found Cleopatra", which was good reading despite the debt to Haggard's SHE.)

'Before coming to the final matter, my congratulations on your expansion; smaller issues more frequently are more welcome than big, fat ones less often. My sympathies are re your high blood pressure; my vet has been operating on mine all year and has finally got it back to normal.

'The final matter is the one of Sturgeon's Law. I'm not entirely sure that you and Bloch really understand it. If it is a law, then it is 100%, and means exactly what it says, no more, no less: "90% of everything is crud".

'I should have written earlier, but may yet be in time to save you from the suggested 12th Labor of Geis, with Bloch's assistance; it would be an utter exercise in futility.

'Consider now: You have thrown out 90% of everything. However, that 90% is now itself a thing, a unit. Therefore only 90% of it is crud. The 10% you have preserved is also a thing, a unit. Therefore, 90% of it is crud.'

'To cite another law, rather loosely: You can't win, you can't break even, and you can't get out of

the game.

'With that comforting thought I leave you.'

(*But you have to change to a higher standard of value if you apply the 90%-is-crud rule to the 10%. Keep on doing that and you'll be down to the finest sentence in an entire novel...and then...the finest word? The finest letter? I prefer "I".*)

LETTER FROM NANCY ALSOP

May 30, 1978

'By the way, I read SFR for my personal enjoyment, but I also read the book reviews for my job as a high school librarian. You offer far more reviews than any of my standard tools, and I've found I can rely on your reviewers for accuracy. Thanks a lot.'

LETTER FROM ARTHUR D. HLAVATY

May 10, 1978

'George Warren's tales of the distribution biz are fascinating. (Among other things, they lead to a brand-new conspiracy theory about who shot Larry Flynt.) On the other hand, I did not care for the parts of his letters that were obviously written with one hand cupped over the family jewels to ward off the Demon Feminists. Let's see...We boycott Tiptree because she wrote That Story; then we boycott LeGuin because she wrote an intro for Tip-tree; then we boycott anyone who says nice things about LeGuin...

'If you and Avedon Carol and everyone else are going to keep discussing H.J. Eysenck, you might at least spell his name right. There have been studies "proving" that psychotherapy is harmful, that it's helpful, and that it makes no difference. The crucial factor tends to be how one defines "cure," "harm" etc., and there is no agreement on this. By the way, Eysenck also claims to have proven that there is a significant racial factor in intelligence.

'Buzz Dixon's story about stores with a "preponderance" of sexual material reminds me of a true story. Around the turn of the century, the New York State Legislature decided to protect the people by outlawing saloons and allowing only restaurants to serve booze. So all the saloons became restaurants and usually had precisely one sandwich on display and allegedly for sale.'

AN OPEN LETTER TO GEORGE WARREN FROM PATRICIA MATHEWS

1978

'Your letter on rape proves once again there is no such thing as unprintable garbage. It took me five minutes to dig out the ideas from underneath the rhetoric, so tell me if I am mistaken in thinking you said:

'1. Rape is trivial. Your Fate Worse Than Death quote indicates you associate rape with sexual intercourse rather than with violent assault, but even so, do you discount the factor of "against her will?" If this is trivial, why are men so often, publically petulant at the thought of being asked to have sex with a woman they find totally unattractive? Or domineering?

'2. Women who talk about murdering rapists really want to rape men. Well, I agree, an eye for an eye is a lot more emotionally satisfying. However, being impossible in this case, murder will serve very nicely, thank you.

'3. The fact that women object to rape proves Freud's theory of penis envy. Run that by me again, very slowly? I must be dense today. In fact, the fact that both sexes object to armed robbery proves Karl Marx's theory of - it doesn't? Strange...

'4. There are a lot of women running around trying to sing bass, imitate John Wayne, and stuffing their pants suits with Handkerchiefs. Where? I mean, where do you find them? Not in business, unless you are recalling Elaine Morgan's dictum that most men console themselves with the thought that under the expensive three-piece pants suit and high-style hairdo is only a female body, and therefore, in their eyes, an inferior. Are you a follower of Morgan's? Not in dyke bars, either, where the battle cry is "Proud to be a woman - women are people and don't you forget it". Indecent haste to be butch? That was 1958.

'5. And in line with Morgan's thought, that if you haven't got a male organ, you haven't got it. I can see how a man would think that way; it's what he has. I can't see a woman thinking that way.

'Note: It used to be a lot of blacks were thought to either (a) want to be white or (b) want a white mate and in a society where those were symbols of first-class personhood that sort of self-hatred did prevail. Have you noticed how it is declining?

'Likewise the women. We don't

want your prick, buster, we want your job. On the same terms as you got it. Not by being "superqualified" or finding a loophole, not by starting as a secretary, not by walking an edgy line between our ability and our (male-defined) "femininity".

'We don't want your prick, we want veterans of motherhood to have the same benefits as veterans of the military; we, too, took several years out of our lives to serve our society, you, by killing people, we, by producing them. And rearing them!

'We don't want to wear the pants in the family, but what God ordained we should wear the apron? Even the "henpecked" husbands beloved of the media don't share fifty-fifty, even when their women work, except as a self-conscious experiment.

'We don't want your prick, but we'd like a little of the rejoicing when one of us is born as when one of you is born. We'd like a little less of the training to do nothing and watch ourselves to see we don't do something wrong, a little less running around after our men cleaning up behind them and defining ourselves as their auxiliaries.

'And we are damned tired of your prick-civilization wars.'

REPLY BY GEORGE WARREN

June 5, 1978

'To Arthur D. Hlavaty:

(1) Larry Flynt's bodyguards recently gave an interview in the ENQUIRER in which they said Larry was shot by the Mob, whom he had ripped off in the East. They called the Baptist-crank theory and the CIA theory ridiculous. (2) "look here, Rastus, aren't you being paranoid and unfair in canceling your subscription to KKK NEWS just because of a few weekly editorials calling for tar, feathers and rope?" Huh. Who said anything about boycotts? I am just withholding my beer money. And my applause. And my respect.

'To Patricia Mathews:

(a) You are in fact mistaken in what you thought I said. You could use some relatively inexpensive lessons in accurate reading and precision writing. (b) Who is Elaine Morgan? From your account of her I would not follow her into McDonald's for free hamburgers. (c) You have funny ideas about how much easier it supposedly is for a man to cut it in the world, kid. Everywhere I started in the world, I started at the bottom. The guy who didn't is usually somebody's goddam in-law.

It has nothing to do with his being male. You just came up in a goddam permanent recession where decent jobs are scarce, and where pull counts even more than it usually does. Hell, women dominate my racket (book publishing) these days. And all of my favorite editors are women. And they didn't get where they are by whining. They got there by being tough and smart and resiliant. (d) Anybody with eyes to see could detect in my letter that I think the penis-envy concept is chuckleheaded nonsense; it is, however, harmless chuckleheaded nonsense when placed beside the notion that as a second-rate substitute for rape, "murder will serve very nicely, thank you". God, God almighty, just listen to yourself! How can you sit there and type such murderous, bloodthirsty nonsense with a straight face? (e) You want my job, kid, come get it. There's always room for another good pro writer in this racket, and there's no damn discrimination either. In this business if you're good enough and tough enough and determined enough folks will always make room for you. You won't get there by whining, though, and you might as well forget about starting at the top. Your namesake Patty Mathews, for instance, sells historicals in the millions these days. I can tell you, however, that she didn't get there on the quota system or by marching in a picket line. She got there by paying dues and lots of them. If you were a child of the sixties you may not understand this.

The concept of paying dues was not much in evidence in those days. Good things were just supposed to happen to you because you demanded them. Well, the world never worked that way--except for those damn in-laws we were talking about. Sorry you had to wait so long to learn the facts, pal. But you will not change them by whining about the inequities of existence or by blaming it all on nasty old Men. (f) The rest of your argument is stale, feeble, second-hand talky-poo clipped out of BULLDOZYKE NEWS. For God's sake, speak and think, for yourself. Prick civilization wars indeed. They were money civilization wars and you know it. Everything is economics, kid. First thing Golda and Indira found out when they got into office. They didn't do any damn better than the men did.'

I welcome a new (to me) artist to SFR. Bruce Conklin has all the skills and inspiration to be a regular for SFR and for many pros and softcover publishers. I have asked him to do a cover.

CONTINUED ON P. 53



THE HUMAN HOTLINE

S-F NEWS

BY ELTON T. ELLIOTT

ACE NEWS

Ace is going to nine original SF titles per month in October.

They are in the final stages of picking up Gordon R. Dickson's main literary corpus for six-figure sum. The cornerstone is the upcoming final Encyclopedia part of the Childe cycle, which is expected out in around 18 months. Plus nine Dickson titles, plus other parts of the SF part of the Childe cycle. The book will be released from now through 1980.

Ace will be reissuing twelve Sheckley titles.

They also will be doing several Ian Watson novels.

Poul Anderson is writing a Flandry novel. Ace has also bought up all the rights of the Flandry series. They will republish all of the Flandry titles in sequence, starting with *ENSIGN FLANDRY* in February 1979. A few of the older stories will be revised for consistency. The covers will be done by the same artist. Sandra Miesel will have a literary analysis of Flandry in one of the books.

Algis Budrys' new book from Berkley-Putnam, *BLOOD AND BURNING*, is a short story collection. A non-sf novel, and an unspecified book are also in the works.

John Varley has completed his second novel *TITAN*. It will be serialized in ANALOG in four installments starting in the December 1978 issue; the book version will be out sometime in 1979 from Berkley-Putnam for a reported \$20,000.

Fawcett and Popular Library seem to have been quietly merged by CBS. But the S.E.C. has taken CBS to court on anti-trust charges to force divestiture of Fawcett.

Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle have done a "rationale" for a Buck Rogers series of 9 novels. The rationale covers how Buck Rogers was hurtled into the future and also why the Venus and Mars of the old pulps exist and not the ones we know today. They are series consultants and plotters, not writers. The writing will be done by Eric Holmes, author of *MAHARS OF PELLUCIDAR*. The books will be published by Ace.

An error last issue: Pocket Books will publish Jerry Pournelle's two laser books, not Ace. *LUCIFER'S HAMMER* has sold one hundred thousand copies in hardcover.

FANTASTIC and AMAZING are back to a bimonthly schedule.

The spate of movies attempting to cash in on the big bucks potential gathered in by *STAR WARS* and *CLOSE ENCOUNTERS* remains unabated. Two new projects are typical. *CYBERNIA* is produced by and will star the Osmonds. Another new movie is *HOUSEWIFE FROM OUTER SPACE* starring Shelley Winters in the title role.

Jack Vance has a new novel coming out entitled *WYST: ALASTER 1716*.

A.E. Van Vogt has sold a new novel, *PENDULUM*, to Daw Books.

Marion Zimmer Bradley and her brother Paul Edwin Zimmer have written a novel. It will be published by Daw Books.

Lorne Greene will play the commander in *BATTLE STAR: GALACTICA*, ABC's new Science Fiction series.

Juanita Coulson has sold a novel *WEB OF WIZARDY* to Del Rey Books.

The date on the release of the third book in Jack L. Chalkers' *WELL* series has been changed to November of 1978. The title has been changed also. The new title is *QUEST FOR THE WELL OF SOULS*.

Robert Moore Williams, author of *CONQUEST OF THE SPACE SEA*, *THE LUNAR EYE* and *ZANTHOR AT TRIP'S END* among others, died recently.

JIM BAEN'S STATEMENT ON PERRY RHODAN'S CANCELLATION:

"I would be shocked and cynically amused if a firestorm of protest arose over the cancellation."

The Ackerman interview will be concluded next issue.



ACE BOOKS:

July:

Jerry Pournelle - EXILES TO GLORY
 Alan Yates - CORIOLANUS THE CHARIOT!
 Ian Watson - ALIEN EMBASSY
 Keith Laumer - THE GREAT TIME MACHINE
 HOAX
 Alexei Panshin - RITE OF PASSAGE

August:

*Laumer - RETIEF AT LARGE
 Robert Sheekley - PILGRIMAGE TO EARTH
 Bob Shaw - WHO GOES THERE
 Jack Vance - THE BRAVE FREE MEN
 Panshin - STAR WELL

September:

Charles Sheffield - SIGHT OF PROTEUS
 Ed Ferman - BEST F&SF: 22
 Ben Bova - THE DUELING MACHINE
 Fred Saberhagen - BERSERKER
 Panshin - THE THURB REVOLUTION
 **Gordon Dickson - ARCTURUS LANDING

*448 pages and is a new collection.
 **Revised and updated.

Manor Books are going to be doing a fantasy series starting in June, 1978, called the Dannus series. There will be five in the series. They are the PRISON OF REGLATHIUM, THE CONQUERORS OF REGLATHIUM, THE CAVES OF REGLATHIUM, THE DARK STRAITS OF REGLATHIUM and THE SLAVES OF REGLATHIUM. They are described as being in the tradition of Conan and Gor.

Manor Books are also publishing THE COROBITE MINES by Peter Roberts and REVOLT ON JUPITER by John Martin. This information courtesy of Neil Bernstein, Publicity Director of Manor.

BERKLEY BOOKS:

(Hardcover)

JULY:

Suzie McKee Charnas - MOTHER LINES
 Terry Carr - THE YEARS' FINEST FANTASY, VOL. I

Philip Jose Farmer - THE DARK DESIGN
 Algis Budrys - MICHAELMAS

*Terry Carr - THE YEARS' FINEST FANTASY: VOL. II

Robert Silverberg - TO OPEN THE SKY
 Barbara Paul - AN EXERCISE FOR A MAD MAN

August:

Harry Harrison - THE ADVENTURES OF THE STAINLESS STEEL RAT
 Elizabeth Lynn - A DIFFERENT LIGHT
 Clifford D. Simak - SKIRMISH: SHORT FICTION OF CLIFFORD D. SIMAK
 Moorcock - THE CHRONICLE OF CORUM

September:

T.H. White - BOOK OF MERLIN
 Charles Platt - TWILIGHT OF THE CITY
 Algis Budrys - BLOOD AND BURNING
 F.M. Busby - ALL THESE EARTHS
 Norvil Page - FLAME WINDS
 Frank Herbert - THE GODMAKERS
 **Larsen & Thurston - BATTLE STAR: GALACTICA

Note: THE ILLUSTRATED DUNE is a trade edition. Berkley will also publish the 1979 R.A. Howard calendar by Ken Kelley.

John Silbershank is the new SF Editor at Berkley-Putnam. Dave Hartwell is SF Editor-in-chief.

DAW--SF BOOKS:

August:

C.J. Cherryh - FADED SUN: KEZRITH
 Alan Burt Akers - CAPTIVE SCORPIO
 A.E. Silas - THE PANORAMA EGG
 Gordon R. Dickson - HOUR OF THE HORDE
 John Brunner - TOTAL ECLIPSE

September:

Andre Norton - YURTH BURDEN
 Jack Vance - STAR KING
 Jo Clayton - IRSUD
 Michael Moorcock - RITUALS OF INFINITY
 Andre Norton - PERILOUS DREAMS



DEL REY BOOKS:

July:

Tony Rothman - THE WORLD IS ROUND
 Terry Carr - THE BEST OF YEAR #7
 James P. Hogan - THE GENTLE GIANT OF GANYMEDE
 Robert A. Heinlein - CITIZEN OF THE GALAXY
 Poul Anderson - BRAIN WAVE
 H. Rider Haggard - SEA AND ALLEN

August:

Stephen R. Donaldson - LORD FOUL'S BANE
 Jack L. Chalker - DANCERS IN THE AFTERGLOW
 Martin Caidin - CYBORG
 Raymond Z. Gallun - THE BEST OF RAYMOND Z. GALLUN
 Lester Del Rey - ROCKET JOCKEY
 H. Rider Haggard - SHE

*The cover of the Carr anthology is by Carl Lundgren and will be made into a poster.

**Glenn A Larson is the producer of the Hardy Boys, Switch, etc. Robert Thurston has contributed to ANALOG among others.

September:

Jack L. Chalker - EXILE TO THE WELL OF SOULS
 Arthur C. Clarke - VIEW FROM SEREN-(non S-F)
 Heinlein - SPACE CADET
 Lester Del Rey - THE BEST OF LESTER DEL REY
 Frederik Pohl - A PLAGUE OF PYTHONS
 Haggard - AYESHA: THE RETURN OF SHE

The current Pocket Books contract is creating a lot of unhappiness among SFWA members. More on the reasons why next issue.

Joe Haldeman has completed two short stories. He is also doing the screen play for THE FOREVER WAR. The movie'll be filmed in England, although the company is American.

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SPROCKET TO ME!!!

SF, Fantasy and Horror Film News

BY BILL WARREN

Science Fiction marches on. Saul David, one of the most unpleasant people I've ever met, continues his assault on the genre with THE RAVAGERS. Not content with having unleashed FANTASTIC VOYAGE and LOGAN'S RUN, he is apparently out to become the new Irwin Allen, and the old one hasn't yet completely reformed. (Allen's new film is also SF, a super-production of THE SWARM, about hordes of killer bees.)

THE RAVAGERS, just finished shooting, is about warring tribes of post-holocaust savages and stars Richard Harris, Ernest Borgnine, Ann Turkel, Woody Strode, Richard Egan (back from the dead?), and for crying out loud, Art Carney. I do not anticipate that this will be a good film.

A TV movie of BRAVE NEW WORLD is finally in production; in one form or another, it's been announced for years. Keir Dullea is the principal star. It's to be four hours long (including commercials), probably presented on two nights on NBC in the fall. It's being shot at Universal studios. I have no idea if it will be good, but don't hold your breath. However, I wouldn't have expected the six-hour version of Dashiell Hammett's THE DAIN CURSE to be good, but I loved that.

Another TV movie is THE THIEF OF BAGDAD again, sigh. This is being made in England with Roddy McDowall and Peter Ustinov. I doubt that either will be playing the title role, but you never can bet on the perversity of casting directors.

SPACEMEN SATURDAY NIGHT is a comedy about aliens bothering a small town, and may be set in the 1950s for some reason. (I seem to remember that that was the working title of INVASION OF THE SAUCERMAN.) A Santa Monica producer is after Sean Connery and Glenda Jackson to star in his SF film, THE COLFAX TREATMENT, but I'll bet he doesn't get them.

A new Japanese film, TERROR BEYOND THE STARS, has a cast of unknown but apparently American actors. And Roger Corman has again announced a multi-million-dollar space epic, currently called JOURNEY INTO THE

GALAXY. It'll probably never be made. Farrah Fawcett-Majors will star with a robot in SATURN THREE, to be directed by Stanley Donen.

One-word titles are again the vogue. NIGHTWING is based on the novel of the same name and is apparently about hordes of killer bats erupting out of caves. OVERLORDS is the picture that William Girdler, who directed the entertaining THE MANITOU, was working on when he was killed. It's apparently going to be filmed anyway. The ads are lavish, but the shooting schedule is so brief that I expect the picture will be a turkey. DEATHWORLD (hello, Harry Harrison) is Corman's third DEATHsomething film to be SF and he wants both his chase-movie stars, David Carradine and Ron Howard, to star.

I was midled; THE NAKED SUN, shooting in Brazil, is not based on Asimov's novel. I suspect it will never be shown under that name.

A flurry of Dracula films are being announced in the wake of the successful stage revival. When I heard that Ken Russell, king of the hypermovie, was scheduled to direct a new version, I didn't know whether to cry or cheer. Maybe both. Among Russell's other films are LISZTOMANIA, VALENTINO, TOMMY, THE BOY FRIEND and THE DEVILS.

Richard Attenborough is directing Anthony Hopkins, Ann-Margret and Burgess Meredith in a film version of William Goldman's very slight MAGIC. The story may have startled book reviewers, but to those who remember the Michael Redgrave segment of the old British chiller DEAD OF NIGHT, the story will hardly be surprising.

VORTEX is a mini-sfepic from the producers of LASERBLAST, END OF THE WORLD, MANSION OF THE DOOMED and DRACULA'S DOG. I suspect that it will be no better than the best of those. Steve Neil, a young makeup artist, evised the storyline which

... AND THEN OUT OF THE ALIEN
SPACESHIP, CAME A GREAT
SWARM OF FROGIVOROUS FLIES!



seems to deal with other dimensions. His makeups are neither particularly imaginative nor especially competent --but he's learning--so I'm not sure what to expect from the film.

The producer of the hit THE SPY WHO LOVED ME made the now traditional on-screen announcement at the end of the film that the next would be FOR YOUR EYES ONLY. Apparently someone pointed out that they had mysteriously skipped one Fleming 007 novel, MOONRAKER, so for the first time, the on-screen announcement was wrong. MOONRAKER it is. I suspect we can guess why the title was changed.

Stanley Kubrick began filming the movie of THE SHINING in early May. It stars Jack Nicholson and marks his return to the fantastic genre. He was a Napoleonic soldier suspicious of Boris Karloff in THE TERROR, Peter Lorre's son in THE RAVEN and the masochistic dentist in THE LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS. Kubrick's such a cold methodical director that the idea of his making a horror movie rather scares me already. He'll spare the audience nothing. King's novel was too long but had some brilliantly-frightening moments; I suspect Kubrick will get all the script has to offer.

On a lower level, a producer has announced KISS MEETS THE PHANTOM OF THE PARK as the first Gothic-Rock movie. I guess PHANTOM OF THE PARADE and ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW don't count? I understand that one of the four members of KISS, Gene Simmons, used to publish a fanzine. Does anyone know if this is so?

Although this is now just a guess, when I heard that John Landis had to delay his multi-million-dollar version of A CONNECTICUT YANKEE IN KING ARTHUR'S COURT in favor of making a fantasy picture for Universal that's been announced for some time, I surmise it will be the Lily Tomlin-starring THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING WOMAN.

I have heard that the Leigh

Brackett script for STAR WARS II, sometimes called THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK! is to open on an ice world, and in the first scene, Luke will use the Force to defeat a snowbeast. During the battle, he'll suffer a facial wound so that the real-life serious face injuries that Mark Hamill suffered after STAR WARS can be explained. According to local rumor, Luke will be distressed when Princess Leia and Han Solo fall in love, but they will each be too involved in their own escapades to do much about the love affair. When C3PO is accidentally blown up, the heroes are left without a way to communicate with R2D2, who again has some necessary information.

Luke will rescue Han and Leia from Darth Vader's fortress, an iron castle on a rock in a sea of lava, and later Luke and Vader will duel, using the Force to telekinetically toss things at each other. In this scene, Luke's anger is so great that it almost makes him turn to the Dark Side of the Force, which Vader has previously tempted him with.

A new character, somewhat like Gollum, will be introduced. Luke is supposed to be scornful of him to begin with, but when he discovers that all Ben Kenobi knew he learned from this beast-man, Luke becomes the new character's pupil.

In addition to the ice world, there may also be a bog world, the Wookie planet of huge trees, a gas world with airborne manta-like creatures and a lush, paradise world. Another character, handsome as a movie star, is supposed to be from one of the clone worlds, which resulted from the Clone Wars alluded to in the first film. Darth Vader may be dying. Luke may meet his sister. A thousand worlds may join the Rebel Alliance. Han's adopted father may be introduced, a man important in the guild of non-military space pilots which the Empire is trying to infiltrate.

And then again, perhaps none of this will come to pass. These are just some of the rumors I've been hearing from various quarters. I do know that the film is expected to de-emphasize space battles in favor of planetside conflicts, probably employing stop-motion animation and similar techniques.

And I also know this: Leigh Brackett had known for five years she was dying of cancer and at that time had been told she only had a year to live. I suspect that's one of the main reasons she re-entered the science fiction marketplace. I have also been told that the only thing that kept her going the last few months was the work on the draft of STAR WARS II, which she finished

only days before her final hospitalization. George Lucas is known to be an honorable man; I hope that his current revision of Leigh's script is not extreme and that she gets screen credit. She was apparently deeply fond of the first film, and like only a few, realized that its apparent shallowness covered a depth of meaning and ideas that no critic (save one in Australia) has yet begun to explore.

Filmex is the Los Angeles Film Exposition, and they usually show a fair number of fantastic films. This year, the number was smaller than usual, but there was one I considered to be a near-masterpiece, THE LAST WAVE. This is one of those films that in some ways it's almost futile to try to describe, because it works what it does with all the elements of a film, and it's hard to describe the impact of several different on-going elements. First, the plot is both simple and incredibly intricate; it advances linearly in a proper narrative fashion but in every other way as well. Images occur and recur in striking and unexpected ways, and the film seems to seep into your mind and soul like very, very few recent films have even tried to do. The director, Australian Peter Weir, has previously made THE CARS THAT ATE PARIS and PICNIC AT HANGING ROCK, the two Aussie films I've been most anxious to see. He's fascinated by the unconscious in man, and tries to deal with it and also to reach it by means of his films.

In Australia, an Outback town is pelted with hailstones during a freak storm and in Sydney, during a rainstorm a young lawyer (Richard Chamberlain) begins to experience hallucinations of a young aborigine showing him a strange stone. (The image of water constantly recurs in the film for a variety of reasons and in almost every possible way.)

We had previously seen the design on the stone in rock carvings behind the credits.

We see a group of aborigines in the city follow another and stare menacingly at him; from a car window a strange ritual stick emerges and the pursued man drops dead. The lawyer is hired to defend the group of men, who are accused of beating the victim to death and when he discovers that one of the group, Chris, is the aborigine from his dream, he begins to suspect tribal magic is at work. So he prepares the defense of the men on that basis, for tribal magic is not answerable to Australian law.

He gradually learns that although contrary to what most Australians believe, there are tribal customs among the aborigines who live in the city, but the Blacks try to deny this. Even though the wise old man of the tribe (played by a real tribal magician) begins to find the lawyer fascinating and possibly dangerous because he has dreams of genuine prophecy.

I wish I could convey the hypnotic power of this film, for it quite overwhelmed me. Information is given to us in unexpected, extraordinarily carefully-developed ways. Snatches of dialog on a radio, children's prattle, snapshots in a family album, brief "dream" scenes, significant glances. This makes the film sound pretentious and arty, but I didn't find it so. I know that those who expect to be told everything will not understand what is going on, because we are shown so much that is important. A mosaic of meaning is built up both in terms of plot—we gradually learn that the lawyer is the descendant of an ancient, magical race—and in terms of ideas. He's without antecedents, yet is ancient; the racial memory may live within us all. Weir says he is definitely a Jungian. I wish I



could see the film again. It's powerful, it's unique. It is certainly not a film for everyone--I thought I often have, which I guess makes me an elitist?--but I wish that everyone could give it a chance. At this time, I think it does not have an American distributor.

During Filmax, I took time out to see DEATHSPORT, the latest Roger Corman-produced piece of futuristic claptrap. While not as sophisticated (if that's the word I'm groping for) as DEATH RACE 2000, I found this to be somewhat more fun in some ways. It makes utterly no sense most of the time. There are explosions that do nothing and which occur where they couldn't. It's hard to follow who's doing what to whom and why. The entire plot could be engraved on the head of a pin. Or perhaps it emerged from a pinhead.

David Carradine stars, in his first film after Ingmar Bergman's THE SERPENT'S EGG (which was science fiction, by the way). I wasn't sure why Carradine took this role after emerging into the Big Time--Joe Dante speculated that he must have Bela Lugosi's agent--but he seems to have fun doing it, so maybe that's what counts. The film rips off stuff from STAR WARS (the first released film to do so); there's a black-clad villain, and the hero dresses like Luke Skywalker. Transparent swords are employed for fighting among men of great forcefulness. However, this future is planet-bound with lots of motorcycles and ray guns and big booms and caves and all that there swell stuff. Apparently, everyone at New World--including Corman himself--took a fling at directing a few days of the film.

Everybody talks in the most ludicrously stilted dialog I've heard outside the voice-overs on "The Outer Limits". Profundity is equated with number of syllables and difficulty of comprehension. The movie seems to have been edited with a cleaver and assembled with Elmer's Glue-All and looks cheap as hell. However, it's also spunkily and self-spoofing (Carradine shoots a ray gun then blows--smoke?--off the muzzle), and has great energy and speed. It's silly as a comic book but also has most of the virtues of a good comic. Don't go out of your way to see it; it may be too late, anyway--but don't leave if it turns up on a double bill.

With this was another Sir Lew Grade disaster. So far, he has released several star-studded attractions, none of which I'd seen because all had received negative reviews. These include MARCH OR DIE, THE CASSANDRA CROSSING and VOYAGE OF THE DAMNED. With the MEDUSA TOUCH he ventures into SciFi for the first

time; I hope the second venture, CAPRICORN ONE, is better than this turkey. (He's also producing THE SHINING, but I don't think any mere producer can louse up Stanley Kubrick. Kubrick's films may not appeal to everyone, but you can only either like or dislike them. They are perfectly made films.)

The structure of MEDUSA TOUCH is cockeyed; the film takes place almost entirely in flashbacks until the end, which destroys any suspense or sense of revelation. We see someone enter writer Richard Burton's apartment, where he's watching a fatal space accident on TV. The mysterious intruder clubs Burton to (apparent) death and leaves. Enter inspector Lima Ventura, who is surprised to discover that despite literally having his brains beaten out, Burton's still alive. During his investigation, Ventura learns that Burton believed he has powers of telekinesis and can kill from a distance--he caused the space disaster. His psychiatrist, Lee Remick, at first disbelieves Burton but he eventually convinces her. Then, out of what seems to be perversity rather than megalomania, he decides to kill the queen from his hospital bed by bringing a cathedral down on her. Ventura frantically tries to convince superior Harry Andrews that Burton can do it.

There are some spectacular disaster scenes in the film, but it can't be saved from its basic stupidity. Burton walks through his role, and Remick overplays hers, which creates a painful contrast. Ventura and Andrews, as always, are completely satisfying professionals. The director, whose name I've forgotten, is unimaginative and prosaic

The script writer seems to believe that telekinesis simply means an ability to make stuff do things--never mind any other physical laws. That vague. Burton forces an airliner to crash in the middle of London simply to prove he can do it. The pilots scream that the plane doesn't respond to the controls, then bloopie. I don't think that's how telekinesis should operate. CARRIE treated it like science fiction; THE MEDUSA TOUCH, as with THE FURY, treats it like magic. The film is slow and confusing as well. In one flashback scene, Burton dashes out of his publisher's office to meet with a stranger in a nearby park. This is treated as being Very Significant, but we never hear anything more about the stranger at all.

The audience, which had mostly come to see DEATHSPORT, laughed THE MEDUSA TOUCH off the screen, as well they should. Avoid it.

The adline for DAMIEN OMEN II (yep, no punctuation or articles) claims that "The first time was only a warning". Apparently the second time is only vam-p-till-ready because essentially nothing new occurs. For those who came in late: In THE OMEN Gregory Peck slowly learned that his five-year-old adopted son is actually the son of the Devil, the Antichrist himself. At the end of the film, which was not intended as the first of a series, merely another ROSEMARY'S BABY EXORCIST rip-off, Peck, his wife Lee Remick, and almost everyone else is dead, and the little boy went home with the President of the United States. DAMIEN OMEN II dodges that rather interesting premise for a more conventional one. The boy, still unaware of his origins (he was born of a black jackal) has grown up with his uncle William Holden and aunt Lee Grant. He's been raised with their son Mark and the boys are now about 13 years old. The key element of the story is that Damien learns of his origin and decides to follow in his true father's footsteps.

Once THE OMEN proved to be such a big hit, largely because of the several brutal and grotesque deaths that occurred in it, the producer decided to make three more films, which would show the rise and ultimate downfall of Damien the Anti-christ. There's one problem with this idea--the first three films will of necessity have essentially the same plot, and Damien rises to power. At least, we must know that he can't possibly be stopped during any of the first three films; he can't even be slowed down. Hence, no suspense; the only tension is waiting for those who find out who he really is to die. So OMENS II and III might as well be skipped by all but the most fascinated--that is, providing there is an OMEN III or IV. Because if DAMIEN OMEN II is any indication, the audience is in for rough tough and dull time--and 20th Century Fox is in for lack of revenue. But then, even DAMNATION ALLEY made money.

DAMIEN OMEN II is directed by Don Taylor, a minimally talented hack who actually did one of the better APES movies, ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE APES. The rest of his career, which includes THE GREAT SCOUT AND CATHOUSE THURSDAY, a dinnilly unfunny comedy, and THE ISLAND OF DR. MOREAU, a steadfastly unimaginative treatment of the novel, is tedium. Why a producer hires a non-entity like Taylor to direct a picture which requires a sure grasp of the workings of the genre is beyond me, unless he has a reputation for getting things done on time and on schedule. The producer, Harvey Bernhard, who seems to be genuinely

enthusiastic about The Omen project, would have been better off to have hired a more imaginative director and perhaps spent a little less money on the rest of the production.

The script is lame, mainly being an excuse for more violent deaths. I thought during the first one that if these deaths were being engineered by the Devil himself, he would have done it differently to avoid calling attention to himself; in fact, this idea is stated explicitly in DAMIEN OMEN II. But like the first film, this one has some really hideous death scenes, most of which are painfully protracted. A doctor enters an elevator which plunges to the basement; when the safety line catches, he thinks he's saved, but then a part of the elevator slices through it and through the doctor as well, bisecting him at the waist. This is shown in graphic (but not bloody) detail, and dwelled on sadistically. Later, another person is caught between two railroad cars and coupled to death, after being carried what looks like a quarter of a mile before slamming into the second car, screaming all the time. A woman is blinded by a raven, and this also goes on much too long.

One death scene does deserve some praise, if that's what's called for. Lew Ayres falls through the surface of a frozen lake and is carried by a current under the feet of those who are trying to rescue him, and who can see him most of the time. There are point-of-view shots both from beneath and above the ice as the drowning man pounds on the underside of the ice. This is a genuinely eerie and unique death scene.

But mostly the director's technique is hamfisted. Our first view of Damien (played very well by Jonathon Scott-Taylor) is through the flames of a bonfire. The audience groaned and I didn't blame them. Such obviously deserves scorn. And there's plenty of it in the film. The movie is perfunctory and plodding except for the gleeful deaths.

One primary flaw in the script for me is Damien's almost instantaneous acceptance of his origin, and promptly adopted desire to make use of his satanic powers. There was potential for some drama there, but it's dodged in just a few minutes of running time.

Despite an over-reliance on a belief that the audience has seen the first film and inconsistency with the rapidity of killing off people who learn who Damien is, the film is quite logical, given its premises. It's just that the premise is inherently hard to accept,

and it needs a powerful, imaginative director to bring it off; Taylor fails. The four-film set is going to make the working out of the idea too prolonged, which in a way is a shame since it's an interesting basic idea. I'm afraid that if the downturn in quality continues--and even the first wasn't very good--there will be no OMEN IV, and dammit I want to know what's gonna happen.

I really wish producer Bernhard would hire more competent people for the next film. I think he would find it pays off to use talent instead of reliability in a film where style is extremely important. The film looks very good, but it's tedious, predictable and absurdly presented. It's about the level of a fair TV movie, and I think a paying audience deserves more.

CONTINUED FROM P.47

6-7-78 MOVIES....MOVIES....MOVIES

We are seeing a steady stream of sci-fi/horror/occult films in the theaters. Ghod knows how much longer it will continue. DAMIEN-OMEN II is coming to Portland Friday, and last week CLOSE ENCOUNTERS folded its tent and slipped away. STAR WARS seems to go on forever...over a year now.

We saw THE MANITOU about a week ago. It seemed a ridiculous vehicle for Michael Ansara and Tony Curtis.

This time Indian legends were used as an excuse for gory and shock special effects.

I note with a wry smile that Tony has taken to dye for his gray hair.

The plot premise of THE MANITOU, that an ancient evil Indian medicine man was causing himself to be reborn by means of a "womb" growing from a young woman's upper spine, and that a combination of "good" Indian magic and computer power could defeat this creature.... My credulity crumbled to powder.

The "birth" scene was effective, though.

But for Ghod's sake, don't spend \$3.50 per seat to see this ridiculous film.

CAPRICORN ONE was a fair anti-government thriller. Seems the manned Mars shot was sent up unmanned because the life support system was known to be faulty, and NASA faked TV and voice transmissions. The astronauts went along with the fraud but then as they were supposed to "re-enter" tumbled to the fact that the govt. really planned to kill them and have the module heat shield fail, thus silencing them forever.

Anyway, they escape and are

chased. In the meanwhile a reporter has become suspicious, a NASA computer employee has disappeared...

It all makes for a fast, exciting story, and Elliott Gould is all right as the reporter. But looked at closely the plot shatters like a glass elf, and some of the "humor" and overacting is in retrospect a symptom that the actors knew they were in a turkey.

Wait for it to show up on TV.

[I wonder if the guy who wrote the book claiming that the Moon walks and such were faked---I wonder if he'll sue for plagiarism?]

6-8-78 We are down to the short-hairs time again, with as usual more material to put in than pages to put it into.

It's obvious to me now that I'll only get about 9-10 thousand words of ONE IMMORTAL MAN into this issue, when 15,000 is required to have a chance at finishing the novel next issue.

So the inevitable will have to be faced: the serial will go four issues...five.... GAAAAAAA!!!!

I was flattered today when a publisher called and sounded me out about working with him on a to-be-nationally-distributed new magazine of SF-type.

I had to say him nay. Too busy. And I don't want to move. I've got my life planned and I'm content.

A prozine editor or two have complained that of late there is a short shrift on commentary and review of the sf magazines. This is true. I hope soon to return to running a prozine review column. Probably when the pages taken by ONE IMMORTAL MAN are available next year. With SF bi-monthly such a prozine column would have much more relevance than before.



CONTINUED ON P.63



ONE IMMORTAL MAN

A SCIENCE FICTION NOVEL

BY RICHARD E. GEIS

In the year of 1989, some agency, some super-intelligence, some... aliens... for unknown reasons, caused a professional basketball player to become immortal.

SYNOPSIS—

VIK KUNZAR, the immortal man, has lived through the horrible Bio-War of 2205 that devastated America, Europe, and most of Asia.

He was a king for generations in the savagery and ruins of Europe, as a new ice-age swiftly brought terrible cold and forced the new barbarians southward...

Moving ahead of the human tide, in the 27th century, he triggered one last resurgence of science and technology in Egypt and caused to be planted a new, wondrous ecology of genetically altered and mutated plants and animals in the heart of Africa, in the Congo.

When the white savages finally overran Egypt, Vik became a black and journeyed south to live in his new world.

Now, 500 years later, in the 32nd century, the whites are pressing south from the Sahara, seeking their god--man they call Kun-Zar, whom legend says is immortal and whom their priests say will be their king of kings again and make them forever the favored people on Earth.

Vik has changed as the centuries have slipped past. He is now ever more devoted to sex and danger and the subtle manipulation of people and events.

Yet, for all of his self-indulgence, he has a compulsion to maintain learning and culture, to keep civilization from being extinguished.

As ONE IMMORTAL MAN began he was known as Mastil, Emperor Nola's First Minister....and secret ruler of the empire through vast commercial and banking power.

Computer-run sensor devices--secret remnants of 22nd century technology--alerted him to danger as he was enjoying a tryst with the young and beautiful Empress Punia. Someone was disturbing his medical re-

cord at the estate-tree of his doctor.

Vik sent Punia back to the palace trees and set off alone to investigate. He found two of Defense Minister Quebo's agents torturing the doctor for information about him. He killed the two and regretfully killed the doctor. He returned home unseen. Another alarm told him other agents were investigating his faked birth records in Nubia.

Obviously Emperor Ndola, dying of cancer, hopes that "Masi" is the immortal man---and can be made to give up the secret.

The following day in the gargantuan palace trees Vik had a meeting with Ndola and Quebo. Ndola offered Vik a visit by his Chinese girl who specialized in mouth love.

On the way home that afternoon, Vik and his party were attacked by disguised agents and Vik was deliberately wounded in the thigh.

He made it to his huge tree estate but was confined to bed. The Emperor's private doctor arrived and helped treat the wound while covertly testing Vik for signs of his true age.

The Chinese girl arrived later and also in her fashion tested him. Finally, she paralyzed him by injecting a drug hidden in a hollow tooth.

Signalled by the girl, the army attacked Vik's estate and took him prisoner.

He awakened in the army prison on the palace grounds. He was visited by Defense Minister Quebo and the doctor and three guards.

Using self-hypnosis, Vik lulled them into thinking him still paralyzed. At the right moment he attacked, killed the guards, and by holding Quebo and the doctor hostage, escaped unobserved into the underground sewer vines that serve the city of giant trees.

PART TWO

This was an inspection access to the main sewer vine. Probably no one knew it existed. The walls of the passage changed to living wood as he entered the strange and terrible world of the giant hollow vines that served the city underground.

The tube curved, and he slid for a few meters into cold, slimy muck. He emerged from the access tube to the six meter wide main vine.

There were luminescent green and purple puff bladders growing from the scummed walls of the living sewer. His eyes quickly adjusted to the macabre darkness.

Hundreds of small eyes watched him from the tangles of scavenger vines on the curving walls. The sewers were the cities of the rats. He was an invader.

Vik stood quiet, listening, letting his eyes adjust further. Gradually, in the pale, sick light, he could see the climbing, darting rats...the far side of the huge sewer...and above, the small holes almost obscured by the scavenger vines--the shit holes of the death cells.

He slowly waded with the flow, his sandals sinking into the bottom ooze. The black water lapped at his knees.

He estimated the distance to the Congo at about two kilometers. And he knew there were other people in the sewers. They were outcasts, criminals...the insane. The sewer was their last, impenetrable refuge. They could eat some of the plants, some of the insects, some of the snakes, and all of the rats, if they had the stomach for it.

There was an unwritten agreement--a protocol--between the sewer people and the surface government: the sewer people kept the large sewer clear and operative, and in exchange the government largely left them alone as far as minor theft, scavenging, and unimportant murder was concerned.

As Vik slogged through the muck he understood why soldiers and police detested entering this underworld. Every few yards a tributary emptied its flow of evil sludge into the main sewer vine. The maze of ever smaller hollow vines extended under the entire tree city.

A fugitive willing to walk and crawl into the smaller vines could not be found.

But Vik did not intend to stay in the sewers.

The luminescent puff bladders and a few gloleafs indicated a gradual bend in the sewer. A few rats followed him, hoping he'd collapse and lie still so they could feast on his fresh meat and bite out the delicacies of his eyes.

There was a rhythmic splashing somewhere ahead, in the purple gloom around the far bend...

Vik stopped and listened, his sword and dagger ready. Then he waded to the curving left wall and jabbed a few rats from his vicinity. The others edged away, watching. He eased behind thick, broad-tendriled scavenger vines.

In the murky light two people

kneeling in a small punt poled toward him against the sluggish current. As they slid closer he saw one was a young woman. They wore lionhide loin cloths. The woman's large black breasts swayed as she worked. They didn't talk. He saw no large weapons.

Vik eased out of the vines. He displayed his sword menacingly. "I want your boat. Get out."

The young man was astonished. He saw Vik's army tunic. "What are you doing up here? What's going on?"

The young woman was wide-eyed. She licked her broad lips nervously.

"Why you army raiding?"

Vik waded closer. They had stopped poling and their craft was slowing. In a few seconds it would begin to drift with the current. If they were quick-witted and began poling backward as hard as they could...

He reached them and grabbed the punt's square bow. He said, "We need your boat. We're looking for a murderer. I have to get to the sewer's end at the Congo before he does."

They looked around for other army men. The man said, "We haven't seen anybody. He must be up-sewer. You don't need our boat."

Vik put steel into his voice. "Get out! Drop your daggers into the water."

The young woman pleaded, "This is all we got! We going to find singela bulbs to trade and sell." She noticed the jeweled dagger Vik had taken from Quebo. A look flashed between her and her man. A soldier would not own a high blade like that!

The youth said, "You get in and we'll pole you quick down to sewer end. We'll never get our boat back if you take it." His fingers drifted to his loin cloth.

Vik saw the dull, shaped handle of an ironwood dagger. It was a lower-class weapon--sharply pointed, strong, but no edge.

The girl was tense. She probably had a dagger, too. They knew that Quebo's very expensive weapon, the fine elite guard's sword, and perhaps the money Vik might be carrying represented more wealth than they would probably ever see.

Vik was sleepy and tired. His thigh was hurting more and more because fatigue was undermining his self-hypnosis. He was hungry, too. He needed a big meal to keep him going, to provide nutrients for the fast-healing and for his mental effort.

He pricked the young man's chest with the sword. "Throw your dagger into the water." He dented the girl's full left breast with the sword point, for a second. "Your dagger, too."

They both obeyed quickly. Many corpses floated, half-eaten, out of the sewer every month.

Vik told the boy, "You get out." To the girl he said, "You stay." He waved the young man up-sewer. When the youth was four or five meters away, Vik told the girl, "Take off that hide and give it to me."

She looked surprised, then angry. Then her brow smoothed as she guessed his intent. She stripped naked and stayed in the punt.

Vik checked the garment for long ironwood pins or other small weapons. He handed it back to her. He said to the young man, "Stay here, or walk down-sewer if you like. She's going to pole me down to the sewer mouth. After that she can return to you."

The boy said, "Consi, you better come back!"

She smiled and nodded as she wrapped and tied the loincloth around her hips. But Vik caught a subtle falseness in her smile.

He climbed carefully into the youth's end of the narrow little craft. He faced the girl but kept a wary eye on the young man. He said, "Let's go now."

She turned the boat awkwardly in the channel and poled with the current. They moved swiftly. She was kept busy.

Vik studied her in the gloomy, irregular, purplish-green radiance. She was younger than he had first estimated, and prettier. Her hair was short, singed artfully in a sculptured bas-relief flower pattern, undoubtedly by a beauty specialist. The technique was avant-garde, very new, and only now beginning to be adopted by the middle classes. Ndola had forbidden Punia to have her hair sculpted by the smoldering sticks and pieces of rare metal used by the beauty specialists.

So this girl had been surface at most a ten-day ago. Judging from the clearness of line and form of her sculpted hair. And she had had money.

Vik yawned and relaxed. He watched the tantalising swaying of her ripe breasts. He asked, "Why are you down here? What did you do?"

"Imber stole some nets and we were going to join and fish for a living. But the nets were recogniz-

ed--the knots were special in some way--and we had to run. He is known now as the thief. The fishermen will spear him if they see him."

"Did he steal this punt, too?"

"Yes."

"Why stay with him? The sewer is awful."

"I love him." She didn't sound convincing.

Vik was tempted to keep her with him for a while. He sensed she would agree. She was a rebellious personality, selfish, and probably spoiled. She didn't like the sewers, obviously.

He would need a lookout, a messenger, an intermediary to arrange for shelter and food. He would have to be careful, but she could be very useful.

By now, he was sure, Quebo was conscious and struggling up the stairs to the first below-ground level of the prison and was desperately trying to free his mouth to shout for help.

With luck the search of the prison hadn't yet begun.

CHAPTER FIVE

They glided along silently. Vik watched Consi, and kept his ears tuned for different sounds. There was a small leaf-wrapped bundle in the bottom of the punt. He picked it up and opened it.

It held scraps of cooked meat--probably rat--and a few large red pompo grapes. He ate everything. It wasn't enough.

Consi said, "Who are you?"

He considered for a moment. "I am Masil, the Emperor's First Minister."

Consi's face went through changes--incredulity, amusement, puzzlement, eye-widening recognition, and awe.

"I was First Minister until last night. Defense Minister Quebo is taking over the government. Ndola is dying of cancer. Quebo doesn't want any rivals, so his men attacked my tree and took me prisoner. I have just escaped."

It suited Vik's purposes to have that version of events circulating the paths.

She whispered, "Masil!" She was dazzled. She licked her lips. She couldn't take her eyes from him.

"I need your help, Consi." He held out his big hand, palm up.

"What can I do?" She took one hand from the pole and touched palms. She shivered and darted her eyes this way and that. "I'm just a sewer woman, now."

"You know what I face down-sewer. You can tell me how to get past the sewer men...the clusters."

Her amazement and awe were passing. She nodded. She said, remembering empire news and gossip and rumor, "You're the richest man in Kinshasa...in the whole world."

"Not so much now. But I can reward you for helping me. I will."

"Unless...maybe you're just a running army deserter who stole that dagger."

"Look at my hair. I'm far too old to be in the army."

She shook her head slowly, examining him in the purplish gloom. "I don't see an old man."

Vik smiled ruefully. "I'll pay you five gold emperors to help me." His smile faded as he added, "Or you can get out and wade back to your young thief."

She made a face. She said, "You can't wear that army tunic down here. And you can't show anything valuable. There's a cluster about five minutes down-sewer. They're mean and they make everybody pay something to go past, up or down."

"Are all the clusters like that? They all charge tolls?"

"No. Just the one farthest up. They're the poorest and the most wanted." She added as an after-thought, "You should have given Imber your tunic and taken his hide."

"Stop here. I'll take your hide."

Without objection Consi nosed the punt into the vines and locked the pole into a notch in the side. She quickly stripped off her lion-hide.

Vik pulled off the army tunic and removed the attached gold pouch. He kept his weapons close to his hands. He asked, "What will you wear?"

Consi had seen the heavy pouch. She smiled and pulled a length of broad-leaved bladder vine from its intertwining with the scavenger vines. "This will do for now." She inspected the vine for insects, then wrapped it around her hips and waist and thighs several times. She knotted and tucked the ends.

Vik tied the pouch to the lion-hide and in turn wrapped the garment

around his hips, cupped his genitals and tied it with the narrow cut strips at the ends. It had been a long, long time since he had worn something like this.

He asked, "What weapons do they have? How do they operate?"

Consi inched closer, kneeling. "They have spears and ironwood swords. Ironwood daggers. Bows and arrows. There are platforms on each side, and a gate between them that is raised to let boats come and go."

"How many men are there?"

Consi edged still closer. "Seven or eight. Four or five women and girls." She studied his face in the lavender radiance of a nearby puff bladder. "I've seen you coming and going from the palace trees, on that great lion. You seemed old then. You don't act old now."

"I took zizu and ginis before I escaped. I feel very young and powerful."

Ginis was a powerful stimulant. To further convince her he reached and palmed one of her heavy breasts. The flesh was warm and silky, yielding and firm. The nipple surged against his palm.

Consi arched her back slightly and pressed against his gently squeezing hand. Her eyes met his. "The great Masil's pole would be welcome."

"I look forward to ecstasy." A polite acceptance of the invitation, but recognition of current impossibility. He took his hand from her flesh. "How do we get past their gate?"

Consi shrugged. "I don't know. Imber and I came up-sewer only an hour ago. Now I am with a different man. A huge man. I wear vines. Imber is not with us. They will wonder and ask questions. They will see your sword and maybe your dagger, and maybe they will try to kill you."

"Is there a way for me to sneak past while you go through alone?"

Consi frowned in thought. "I could tell a story and be loud... Yes, if you keep to the vines and sneak under their platform while I attract their attention."

"That's what we'll do. Let's go. Tell me when to go to the vines."

Consi pushed the punt away from the vines and resumed poling the small boat with the current. "It won't be long."

The huge sewer became imperceptibly wider. The dim light became gloomier in the center of the flow as the luminescent puff bladders and glow leafs receded with the walls.

Soon Consi stopped poling. She listened. Vik heard voice sounds--faint, distant--from the semi-darkness ahead. She said, "Get out now." She poled to the right wall. "I'll count to one hundred ten times, and then I'll go through."

Vik climbed out of the punt into the cold, evil water. His feet crushed down on tangled vines and accumulated sludge. He took both the sword and the dagger. "When you get through, continue on until they can't see you, and wait for me on this side."

She nodded. Vik saw her lips move as she began to count. He watched the syllables formed by her lips and timed his own count with hers. He used the tough scavenger vines for handholds as he waded along the slippery edge of the sewer river. It was tiring. His thigh ached severely again.

He kept counting in the back of his mind.

When he reached six hundred he could make out the dim outline of the cluster. As he worked closer he saw that the platforms were made of thick wood poles grown to the bottom and sides of the great hollow sewer vine, interlocked with each other, supporting small huts that were serviced by water and small sewer vines, lit with many glow leafs, no doubt with living rugs and beds.

The two platforms left a three meter gap in the middle of the sewer. This gap was bridged by a walkway and filled by a killed wood gate which could be raised or lowered. It was up, now.

Three men worked on the probably never-ending job of keeping the platform supports from collecting too many dead vines, too much caked sludge. They clung to cross braces and notched handholds.

Women worked on the platforms at cooking and other tasks. There were no children Vik could see. Two men worked on braiding thick cables from stripped ironvines.

He hid in the scavenger vines, fought off curious and hungry rats, and knew he couldn't get closer without being noticed. Even creeping slowly along behind the vines would produce a bulge, a ripple. Those men at the water level would discover him.

The only way to get closer was to slip into the foul water and swim beneath the surface. He could do it easily but it was dangerous. There were dangerous snakes in the water. And his mental control was cracking. The horrible stench was getting through.

His count reached one thousand. He looked up-sewer but couldn't see Consi. Then he heard her. She was sobbing. Now she appeared out of the gloom.

She had stripped off the vine and was naked as she poled the punt frantically toward the gate.

The cluster people saw her. The workers turned to watch as she approached. Two platform men scrambled to lower the gate.

Consi screamed, "Let me through! There are soldiers up-sewer! They killed Imber! They---" She ducked barely in time to avoid the sharpened stakes at the bottom of the descending gate. She was through. She used her pole to stop and to steer the punt to a ladder on the left side platform. The cluster's boats were tied up there.

Everyone converged on her. The piling workers scrambled to the platform and ran across the gate walkway. The entire right side of the sewer was clear of people.

Vik vowed to reward her handsomely. She had performed to perfection.

He risked exposure for speed. Emerging from the vines, he ran through the tangled shallows toward the platform. He held the sword in his left hand, the dagger in his right. He almost tripped over submerged vines. He splashed awkwardly.

One of the women heard and saw him. She screeched and pointed. Heads turned.

He entered the darkness of the pilings and dodged through the closely spaced columns. He hoped Consi had sense enough now to pole free and get down-sewer as fast as possible.

There was running overhead. Shouting. They thought he was a soldier. "Is he alone? I don't see any others." "They never come up-sewer!" "Maybe he's a deserter." "He didn't wear a tunic." "He's big! He was a giant!"

Vik moved to the down-sewer side of the platform. He saw Consi disappearing in the purple gloom. She was looking back.

Men swarmed down the ladder to his left. And down the ladder on the up-sewer side of the platform.

Vik moved back into the darkness of the center pilings. He edged deeper into the rippling sewer water. His wounded thigh made movement increasingly difficult. The pain sent shards of agony through his mental shield. He touched the jop membrane bandage and found it torn in several places. Infection was certain.

The men of the cluster called back and forth. They peered down through cracks in the platform.

One man called, "Hi, big one! You give up your weapons and we'll let you go on." Another called, "Watch out for the eaters!"

Vik leaned against a piling. He was waist deep in the black water. He turned and saw his way toward the center of the river blocked by two men in a boat, next to the gate passage. One had a bow. The other a spear.

Vik knew the risk he was taking in the deep water. He called, "I can kill you all if I have to. One by one. Give me safe passage and I'll pay you ten gold emperors."

The man who had called out before, apparently their leader, shouted, "I'll have to see the gold."

"Come down here alone, and I'll pay you."

The men came together overhead and argued. A few were not shy about wanting to kill the big stranger and take the weapons and all the gold he possessed.

Most criminals, Vik knew, were dominated by greed and laziness, and handicapped by stupidity.

As they argued he let himself drift with the current. When he reached the outer row of down-sewer pilings he sheathed the dagger and sword in his loincloth and took deep, quick breaths of the fetid air.

He submerged, and used the intertwined bott vines as handholds. He pulled himself swiftly along beneath the surface, angling to the left, to the center of the small river.

Vik counted fifteen seconds and then, as best he could judge, straightened his course with the current, and headed directly down-sewer.

A few seconds later his left hand encountered a thick, twisting form in the bottom vines. An Eater snake feeding on the heavy offal. Disturbed, frightened, it lashed about blindly. In its fury it would eat into live flesh.

Vik reacted instantly. He veered up and to the right in a quick swimmer's maneuver. He managed not to break the surface. The water was so loaded with wastes that it was impossible to see in it. He didn't try to open his eyes. The snake was as blind as he.

But the sudden exertion has used up precious oxygen.

He stayed submerged until his lungs burned, until his abdomen flexed with the need to draw breath,

until his mind swirled in red haze.

Vik knew his limits. Finally, he let go of the vines and forced himself to remain still, to drift slowly to the surface. There must be no splashing, no loud gasps for air.

He turned underwater to be face up. He spread his arms and legs.

It seemed to take forever. The weight of the gold, and the heavy dagger and sword made his rise torturously slow. Only his steel will kept him from flailing upward.

Finally! His face broke the surface. He exhaled through his nose and drew stinking, welcome air. He did not lift his head to look back up-sewer. He continued drawing careful, deep breaths.

When he did lift his head slightly, he could see only purplish gloom. There was faint shouting.

Vik doubted they would set out in their dugouts and punts to search for him. It might take a half an hour for them to be convinced he had escaped.

Now to find Consi.

He used a slow breast stroke with minimal kicking. His thigh was hurting more.

She was farther down than he expected. She smiled when she saw him swimming toward her. "I'm glad they didn't get you."

Vik nodded, limped through the shallows and carefully got into the punt. He noticed she had fashioned a new vine and leaf loincloth.

Grim-faced, he examined his thigh. "Let's go. Fast. I want out of this shitty sewer!"

She nodded and poled the boat out into the current.

Vik rested in the bottom of the punt and covered the sword and dagger with his body. After a few moments he asked, "Why are you really down here in this filth?"

Consi hesitated, then said, "I helped some boys rob a tree. Two of the servants were killed. I didn't do any of it! But I was caught and my parents didn't have enough money to pay the judge and all the other people..."

"How did you get out of the holding cage?"

"They had enough to bribe the guards. I'm a fugitive, but at least I'm a free fugitive."

Vik laughed. They both knew that fugitives, if caught and identified, could be killed or tortured with impunity by anyone in authority.

Ten minutes later they passed a cluster of huts built on dozens of huge gourd floats, located along each side of the sewer. Consi waved and called greetings to the few men and women visible. Vik waved, too.

He noticed patches of pale white Hytta squash vines growing on the huts, their roots in the incredibly rich mud at the shoreline. Glowleaf vines had been gathered and transplanted to provide concentrated light for the tiny colony and for the food plants.

He saw mostly women. There was even a child. "Where are the men?"

"Out-sewer, fishing or stealing small. We're almost at sewer-end now. It will be more crowded."

Shortly, the clusters became more frequent and more elaborate. The air was better this close to the mouth of the sewer, and far ahead...there was a small circle of daylight.

Consi suggested, "We could stop here and rest and eat, if you still have your gold."

"No, not here. The sewer'll be swarming with soldiers in an hour. Maybe two hours. Do you know another place we could stay? It can't be around here."

"Yes, I know a place. We could go to the bulbhuts, in the flats."

"More mud. But at least those people don't like any government, or anyone connected to government." Vik kept his eyes on the imperceptibly growing circle of daylight ahead.

CHAPTER SIX

Two hours later, Consi had to rest. They were miles to the east of the giant sewer outlet into the Congo.

Vik took the pole from her and eased the punt through marsh and swamp along the mighty river. Ahead he could see the fringe of the bulbulut communities in the more firm mudflats.

The huge, room-size gourds appeared to be giant yellow eggs in clusters of ten or more.

As they came closer he saw the meter-thick vine plants that had grown the gourds. Each plant bore new gourds as the ripe ones were cut into, scraped out and eaten out and used as shelter.

Bulbulut clusters were the slums of Kinshasa. Vik and the Egyptians had thought of everything, five hundred years before.

The swamp changed quickly to mud. They had to pull and push the punt through ankle-to-knee deep mud. Gradually, the footing shallowed. It had not rained for a few days and the mud was hard near the bullock-huts.

Vik and Consi had to carry the boat the rest of the way. He lurch ed continually with a severe limp. His eyes glared with pain and concentration. His reserves of strength were almost gone. He said, "I can't go much more."

They came to an outlying cluster. Adults and children, half naked and in rags, had watched them approach.

Vik had wrapped his weapons in leaves in the bottom of the punt. His pouch of gold was wrapped in his hide loincloth. He had a few silver and copper coins in his mouth.

He shifted the coins to his cheek and said to one of the men, "We need a hut for a while." He spat the coins into the palm of his free hand. "I can pay."

Two of the children who had come close held their noses. "Sewer! Sewer rats!"

The man said, "I will get my father." He ducked into the largest gourd. The oval entrance was decorated with beadwork and paint. The decorated oval door plug leaned against the gourd next to the entrance. An older woman peered at Vik and Consi from a cut window.

Blood trickled down Vik's leg from his thigh.

The man and an older man emerged. Vik and the elder dickered.

It was agreed that Vik and Consi would stay in one of the vines' recently abandoned bulbs. The price for a ten-day was a silver empress. Also included were six large vonda bladders of hot water, and soap.

A few minutes later, at Vik's insistence, he and Consi pushed the boat into the old, dried, cracked gourd. Consi settled down on the fresh leaf strewn floor. Vik lay in the punt.

Vik said, "Don't tell anyone I am Masil. Not even if they say I am."

"Who are you, then? Who are we?"

"I am Nal Hunda, a nubian who has served long and well in the Emperor's army, in the north. Because of my wounds and age I have been discharged. I am looking for a place to live out my days."

Consi asked, "Am I your wife?"

"Yes. You are Consi Hunda. You

will inherit my property in the north, and my possessions here. This is our arrangement, to anyone who must know."

She put a hand on his scum-dried skin. "Why were we in the big sewer?"

Vik appreciated her wanting an agreed-upon cover story. It showed intelligence and perhaps a commitment to stay with him for a while. "He said, "We were attacked by thieves from the sewer and our possessions were stolen. We pursued them into the sewer and managed to get back only our small boat. I was wounded in the fight."

She smiled. She nodded.

Three men and one woman of the family came with the heavy bladders of hot water. A little girl pranced with them, carrying a bar of crude yellow soap.

When they were alone a moment later, Consi said, "If I am your wife I must serve you." She helped him out of the boat. He sat on the leaves near the cut drain hole in the lowest area of the bulbous floor, and he took off his loinskin.

She took up one of the hot, water-swollen bladders and punctured it with her teeth. She showered him with hot water. Then she took up the soap and lathered him.

She was very careful with his wound. It had stopped bleeding. She washed everywhere. As she lathered and handled and rinsed his heavy genitals he slowly erected, to her smiling satisfaction.

Vik asked, "Is your curiosity satisfied?"

Consi laughed. "Yes, but now my yoni aches to be filled."

He shook his head. "Not tonight. I need a lot of food and a lot of rest for my thigh. That must come first."

She pouted.

Vik took up a bladder, tore it with his teeth, and wet her from head to toes. She moved and moved again to give him access to every part of her body. He soaped her... The silky-slick feel of her flesh was a delight, especially her large, pointed breasts.

Her breathing deepened as his hands lingered. Her hand crept to his loins.

"No. Maybe tomorrow. As soon as you're rinsed I want you to buy things for us."

Consi pouted again.

He made her lie flat as he pour

ed warm water over her soapy brown body.

A few minutes later she wrapped a fresh vine-and-leaf covering around her hips.

Vik said, "Go to the nearest market and buy good food. I need meat and fresh fruits. Get some blankets and clothes." He gave her one gold emperor and the rest of his minor coins. "And buy a jop scab and some zizu."

Consi said, "I'll have to pay a cluster boy a copper to come with me and help carry."

Vik nodded.

Twilight began coloring the sky. Vik lay quiet, watching the extended family who occupied the bulbs of this one vine. They were all related.

He mused at the territoriality instinct in humanity. This family claimed this gourdvine and would defend it to the death. It was their estate. It had probably been theirs for generations.

The vine was continually sending runners below ground to begin other vines a hundred or so meters away, but families often destroyed shoots until they needed a new vine ...or until they could control the gourds of the new vine by force of arms.

The government by tradition kept out of the bulbous areas except for recruitment of youth for soldiers. Any attempt at taxation cost more than it was worth.

A small boy appeared in the gourd's doorway. He carried a zumbi shell full of steaming gourd-meat. "Master sent this for you and your woman. We have plenty. We are into a ripe bulb this month." He entered cautiously, awed by Vik's size and obvious strength.

Vik smiled and said in gratitude, "Please thank the family Master for this food. He is a good man. You are a good child."

The boy grinned. "Do you want a glowleaf?"

"Yes. Thank you." Vik accepted the shell and put it on the floor. He dipped two fingers into the hot squash-like food and tasted it. It was seasoned with wild onions and pepper. There were other, herb flavorings. Small pieces of fish had been added. It was delicious.

The boy darted away to relay Vik's ritual thanks to the Master.

The beauty of these giant gourds was that when ripe their inside meat--about three feet thick--could be cooked and eaten. An en-

tire vine-family could eat for a month or more on the vitamin-rich, protein-rich yellow meat.

After all the meat was gone the gourd could be scraped further and used as a house for three or more years before it finally dried and cracked.

Each new gourd contained dozens of vine seeds in its center, as well.

The bulbhut culture was spreading into the orient. It was flourishing in southern India.

Vik wolfed down a large portion of the flavorful food. He estimated enough time had passed since Consi had left. He donned the loinskin. It was almost dark outside. It was time to--

The boy returned with an orange glowleaf with its roots in a pot. Vik thanked him for the thoughtful gift.

When the boy left, Vik waited a moment, then took the wrapped sword and dagger and painfully slipped out through one of the small windows. His thigh hurt, but he had learned to be very cautious in situations like this.

He limped away from the cluster and knelt in the dry mud and scrub bushes. He kept his eyes on the old bulb. A flow of pale orange light came from the window. He listened for sounds behind him in the mud and swamp. The cluster came alive with glowleaves of various colors.

An hour later he saw Consi and a boy, both laden with goods and leafwraps, as they entered the cluster from the far path. They entered the old bulbhut.

He waited five minutes, alert, scanning the surrounding flats and the adjoining bulbhut clusters in the deep twilight. There was the possibility that Consi had arranged for an attack on him for share of the gold and the price brought by the jeweled dagger and metal sword. But with the boy along that might have been difficult.

Vik knew he was paranoid, yet he had learned to trust absolutely no one, ever, where his life was concerned.

He saw Consi come out of the bulbhut and look around. Now she was probably thinking he had abandoned her, if she had not betrayed him.

He saw her dark figure move to a nearby bulb to ask about him.

Vik moved closer to the cluster. He saw her go from bulb to bulb. Finally, slumping, she returned to the old gourd.

Vik let more time go by.

Strength was returning to him. The gourdmeat was a nearly perfect food. He was able to diminish the pain in his thigh almost completely.

Consi did not leave the bulb again. There was no sign of armed men in the area.

Finally, in full darkness, Vik decided it was fairly safe to return He limped back to the bulb and ducked silently inside.

Consi was sitting cross-legged, head back, eyes closed. She wore a rough cotton shift dyed yellow and brown and green. On the leafed floor were various fruits and cooked meats. There were two corked bottles of wine, and a bladder of water. He spotted the tell-tale shape of a packaged jop scab. There were three heavy cotton quilts and on the punt lay a simple blue workman's sash with a wide leather belt and pocket apron. There were sandals.

He said, "You did very well."

Her large eyes snapped open. She bobbed her head and smiled. "Thank you. I thought--"

"I had to see a friend nearby. He'll watch for army patrols and searchers."

She did not react. She said, "I heard in the market that a great search is on, around the palace trees. All the police and hundreds of soldiers. They are looking for someone very tall and very strong." She grinned. "You are Masil."

"I am Nal Hunda." He settled down on a quilt and opened the jop scab package. "Did you get some zizu?"

"Yes. I know all about zizu. I've used it myself." She reached into her shift through a slit to an inner pocket. She handed him a seal ged grain bulb.

Vik quickly poured some wine into his thigh wound, sprinkled in the whole bulb of zizu, and stretched the adhesive jop scab over it. He pressed the edges down to insure a good seal.

Consi said, "That much zizu..."

"No lovemaking tonight. Drink some wine and go to sleep. We--" He thought better of telling her his immediate plans. "We need the rest."

Vik took two of the quilts and slept in the punt. He concentrated on tuning his system to the fast-healing process. He didn't bother to hinder the zizu's side effect. He simply ignored his massive erection. He kept it covered.

He closed his eyes but did not

permit sleep until he heard Consi's breathing change to sleep rhythm. He slept one hour, awakened, listened, then slept another hour. During his fifth hour he came alert to a not-right sound in the bulbhut. He saw Consi squatting over the drain hole, relieving herself. She had not hoisted the orange glowleaf. He waited until she had returned to sleep, then permitted himself more sleep.

An hour before dawn he awakened and carefully examined his thigh. The wound felt a lot better, and appeared significantly smaller. The lips of the previously raw opening had closed.

He called Consi awake. She was cranky. She objected when he told her they were moving to another cluster.

Vik said, "Then we'll walk different paths from now on. I'll give you your gold."

"No...no...Tell me what to do."

"Pack food for two meals after we eat now. We will leave one quilt and the rest of the food. We will take the punt. When the cluster stirs you will go out and buy a loaf of bread from one of the bulbhut women, and tell her we are going downriver to look for a good place to settle. Tell her we will be back by night."

"But downriver will take us past the sewer."

"I know that. Tell her as I say."

Consi obeyed.

But when they reached the swamp and Vik climbed into the small boat with her, he said, "Pole us out to the river, and then upriver."

Her mouth opened, then shut. She poled the boat toward the mighty Congo, and upriver.

They passed many clusters of bulbhuts wherever there was land unused by the government or businesses. But Vik was checking shipping activity on the wide river. He didn't see anything unusual. There were no army patrols in boats. His ruse in the prison seemed to have worked. Quebo, Ndola and their advisors and technicians must be going crazy trying to figure out where he disappeared to.

He enjoyed a three hour boatride in the sun. They ate a meal in the boat. At random, Vik chose another fringe bulbhut cluster and they made their way through a narrow marsh of tall reeds to the slightly higher, firmer ground.

Vik walked bent and old. He pleaded stomach sickness.

As before they rented an old,

abandoned gourd for a ten-day, and as before Consi walked to the nearest market for supplies and gossip and news.

Vik stayed in the bulb and, for the benefit of cluster children who peeped into the gourd, used his body control to vomit up what was left of his last meal. He yelled an old man's curses at the children. They ran screaming and laughing. They would spread what they had seen.

He ate again. His thigh was healing well. The joj scab had sealed perfectly and the zizu had killed all infection.

Bored, Vik took up the boat pole, feigned a crippled hobble and meandered slowly through the cluster and the close-by clusters. Everything seemed normal, and his presence did not cause any perceptible tension or odd looks.

He saw an old fisherman mending a net made of thin young ironvines. He settled down beside him. He admired the nimble fingers and the intricate knot. He said, "Fishing is soothing in these times."

The old man cast him a wise look and nodded. His nap of hair was white. His limbs were thin.

Vik sighed. "I'm glad to be out of the fighting. The whites are beasts."

"All men are beasts."

Vik laughed softly. "Yes, I have seen that in the fighting and in the looting and the rape. I think all a man really wants in life is a safe way to rob another man, a safe way to kill his enemies, and a safe way to take the women he wants."

"Two of those become more important than a man ages." The old fisherman cackled. "I value gold and revenge, now. But I haven't the means or the will for the two, and haven't the power in my pole for the third. So I mend nets for my sons, who sometimes manage the two and regularly enjoy the third."

"If we could tell Ndola where Masil hides...then we'd have gold, at least."

The wizened old man snorted. "My sons tell me soldiers were thick on the river this afternoon, in boats they took from honest fishermen, and that Ndola is offering one thousand gold emperors to anyone who insures Masil's capture."

Vik grunted. "Masil has places, friends, secrets...He won't be found around here."

The old man spat. "Even if I knew, I wouldn't betray him. Ndola is a stupid goat. I hope Masil can

take the palace. He'd run it better."

Vik sat and talked with the old man for a while longer, then said, "I need a packet of yanya repellent. I want to fish tomorrow, and I want to live if I fall in." It was a precaution. He might have to swim in the Congo or a tributary, in an emergency.

The old man nodded and left his nets for a few minutes. He returned with a rolled leaf packet of thick salve.

Vik paid him a copper, said goodbye, and hobbled back to his bulb.

When Consi returned laden with their needs, she unconsciously signaled tension, and Vik observed the signs from his nearby hiding place. The basics of body-language, he had discovered over the centuries, do not change with a change in society or culture.

When he crept into the bulb an hour later after dark, she said, "The soldiers are taking down the palace prison. Stone by stone."

Vik laughed. "Poor lionfuckers"

"The great Masil is wanted. He is accused of plotting to overthrow the Emperor and of conspiring with the Egyptians."

"I expected a story like that."

Consi licked her lips. "And the Emperor has taken all of y--- all of Masil's companies. And all the companies and properties that are owned by the companies. All the gold. Everything."

"Ndola always was greedy." Vik smiled and shrugged. another major fortune lost. Once he got clear of the empire and into India he could begin the ever-fascinating game of amassing another.

Consi stared at him. "And there are whispers in the vines..."

Vik could guess. He drew her to him and cuddled her. He kissed her to prove he was flesh and blood. He fondled her body through the new, multicolored shift she had bought for herself. "What do the vines say?"

She swallowed nervously. She was still tense. She whispered, "That you're really Kun-Zar."

He chuckled. He whispered, too. "They want me very bad if they're willing to spread that story." He moved his hands under her garment to the warm, silky flesh of her thighs.

She breathed, "I would be honored beyond my dreams if you were...if I could say the great, the immor-

tal Kun-Zar entered me and gave me a child." Her dark eyes glowed in the lavender glowleaf light.

"Consi, I'm an aging man. Only a man. Perhaps tonight you'll feel my pole and take my seed. According to the legends Kun-Zar is so big he'd split you like a stick opens a yam. His eyes would glow fire and his hot seed would burn your womb. He would roar and the sky would crack when he knew his ecstasy."

Vik stroked her inner thighs and urged them open. "You should thank your lucky stars I'm not Kun-Zar. You'd never survive."

She was sidetracked. "Do I have lucky stars?"

"Oh, yes. Everyone does. That's an old nubian belief." She was still tense. And he had noticed that she hadn't mentioned the reward.

He said, "We'll leave this cluster early in the morning."

"But we... We waste so much pretending we'll be back."

"It's a good tactic." He stroked her inner thighs and soon felt the tell-tale muscles begin to twitch. He urged her to nakedness, and removed his tunic. He hoisted the glowleaf.

Naked, they kissed and touched. Consi said nothing as she discovered him with curious fingers. She pressed herself forward. Her hot breasts spread on his massive chest, and she bit his neck as a mock tiger to signal her readiness.

He silently arranged her in the age-old kneeling position and carefully entered the delicious world of pleasure.

Consi caught her breath. After a moment she began to tremble.

Vik moved slowly, savoring the sensations, guarding his thigh from too-violent flexing. He closed his eyes. Unbidden, myriads of women's faces and bodies flashed in his memory. Women of a long-dead America...Italy...Egypt...Asia...Africa... He never tired of the act, of giving and receiving pleasure. And the danger now made this pleasure with Consi even more intense and exciting.

He was rocking her forward, wringing soft cries from her, causing a spasming in her depths. Vik held himself in control until she panted and shook and whimpered in her coming. Then he let the molten pleasure take him and for a few precious seconds he was savage and greedy and merciless in his plunges.

Afterward he lay awake, listening for her sleep-breathing. But

Consi didn't sleep. She was restless.

Vik thought he knew why. He feigned sleep-breathing and waited.

After an hour Consi rose from her quilt and stood watching him in the darkness. Finally, she crept from the bulb.

Vik opened his eyes and watched her leave. He sighed and reached in the darkness for his tunic and weapons. He first tied the loin-cloth in place, then loaded it with his pouch of gold and the packet of yanya repellent. He donned the tunic and attached the jewelled dagger in a plain leather scabbard. He put on tough, thong sandals. And he deposited the fine metal sword in the boat.

He listened intently, then carried the punt out of the bulbulut. He made his way quickly and quietly out of the cluster. So far as he could tell he had been unobserved. His thigh did not bother him.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Vik paused and looked back. The cluster boasted paths and glowleafs outside almost every bulbulut. He saw a line of soldiers appear on the far, inland side of the cluster. At least fifty men began threading silently among the huge gourds.

Consi had valued the reward very high. He smiled bitterly. Then he shrugged and shifted the heavy little boat to a better position on his shoulder. He glided swiftly toward the marsh.

Moments later he entered the tall reeds and sucking mud. He heard shouting behind him, turned and saw soldiers lighting pitch torches and spreading through the cluster, entering bulbs in search of him. He thought he saw Consi, pointing toward the river.

And there! A party of ten soldiers with torches was trotting in his direction.

Vik slogged deeper into the marsh. He began to feel a few twinges from his thigh, but nothing to worry about.

When he entered an area of water about ankle deep he put down the punt and pushed it along toward deeper water. The reeds thinned and he saw occasional boatloads of soldiers on the river, patrolling close to shore, coming closer in, attracted by the uproar in the cluster and by the torch-led column of soldiers.

Vik was in a pincers.

He veered downriver in the reeds, bent low, working gradually into deeper water. When the water reached his knees and the bottom mud slowed his too much, he pulled off his tunic, knelt in the narrow boat, and wiped off his legs.

As a precaution he smeared the yanya repellent over his body. It was precious time well spent. If he had to swim for his life, or dive, this slimy goo would keep the flesh-eating yanya fish away.

The yanya were part of the ecosystem planned for the Congo. They were part scavenger, part food fish. They ate whatever fell, or was thrown into the mighty river. They were thick in the Congo where it flowed through Kinshasa. Dead animals, dead men and women, unwanted infants, garbage...it was all food for the yanya. And the yanya couldn't resist a meat-baited hook. A strong net would bring in five or six per cast, in the right places.

Fishing families used their dead---the old, the still-born, their accidental dead---to bait their fishing spots. They even bought the dead of other cluster families if they had to.

Vik didn't put his tunic back on. Naked but for the dark lion-hide around his hips and genitals, he was a blackness in the reeds. The punt had been made from a ronga log and was almost as black as he.

The soldiers were moving along the marshline, calling for penetration of the marsh by the patrol boats. "Masil" was shouted back and forth. There apparently were special awards and bonuses promised to the soldiers who captured him.

Nola and Quebo wanted him in the worst way.

Vik kept easing through the reeds, careful not to bend them very much. The night breeze covered his movement.

His goal, now that he was in shape to travel and to fight if necessary, was to make his way further down-river to one of his plantations where he had, over the decades, cached gold. With this wealth and with those people loyal to him, he had alternatives.

But now the only alternative was to stay free and stay alive at any cost!

The reeds were thinning. Ahead in the night darkness lay a series of floating docks for private pleasure craft. Small sailboats and oared yachts jostled each other.

Should he try for the center of the river? He didn't have a paddle.

He would have to either leave the punt and take to the docks, or use one of the small sailboats.

The soldiers behind him were venturing further out into the marsh, and the river patrol canoes---six-oared and three meters wide, were plowing into the reeds.

Now the soldiers were firing the dry reed tops to create more light and to deny him cover. The wind whipped the flames swiftly from clump to clump, cutting off retreat, surging toward him. The dry fibres snapped and crackled as they burned.

Vik heard a distant drum and knew it was calling reinforcements. There were flag messages being relayed, illuminated by torch and intense glowleaf.

Soon the entire riverfront on this side of the Congo would be swarming with searchers.

Suddenly a troop of soldiers clattered onto the docks ahead of him. They, too, carried torches.

Vik cursed under his breath and slipped into the shallow water and mud. He took the sword from the punt and pushed the small boat toward the open river.

He slithered and crawled toward the docks.

He slipped into the deep, dredged passage between the reeds and the moorages. He swam mostly under the surface. The heavy gold pouch and the dagger and sword offset his natural buoyancy.

The soldiers were pounding along the nearest dock toward him, looking into the boats, peering at the water between. They carried spears and bows. Only squad leaders possessed swords. All had ornately carved ironwood daggers in scabbards.

Vik clung to the vines that bound the great floating logs which supported the killed wood platforms. He noticed that head-sized cork bumpers were used to protect the boats and the docks.

With Quebo's fancy, razor-edged dagger he quickly cut one free from the dock and hollowed it roughly to fit over his head. He poked two unobtrusive holes to see through and to provide air.

When the soldiers reached the end of the dock they paid no attention to the free-floating cork bumper bobbing gently a few feet from the end of the moorage.

They talked about the one thousand gold piece reward waiting the man or men who captured Masil. They scurried to obey when their officer yelled for several of them to jump into the water and look between the

huge logs supporting the docks.

But by then the free bumper had floated further away, taken apparently by an eddy or current and was almost into the greater darkness beyond the radiance of the dock glow-leafs and the flickering light from the torches of the soldiers.

The hollowed bumper fitted Vik's head tightly. Breathing was almost impossible. He held his body quiet. He became inert. He slowed his heartbeat. Only his brain and his eyes seemed to live. He peered through the small, rough holes in the cork and let the vagaries of eddies and gentle current take him. With tiny moves of his hands he kept the soldiers in view.

He was in subtly cooler water now. The current was carrying him toward the dredged downstream exit from the basin.

In a few moments he'd be out into the main body of the Congo. It would be only a matter of time, now, before he attracted the attention of a few hungry yanya. He hoped the repellent the old fisherman had sold him was fresh.

If fast action was necessary, he'd have to yank off this cork helmet in order to breathe.

He saw a boatload of soldiers paddling toward him in the channel. If one of the paddles hit him he'd be in trouble.

He heard shouting from the docks...They'd found the pieces of cork he had cut from the bumper and had figured out what they meant. An officer was shouting to the patrol boat to look for a cork bumper! It was a cover for Masil's escape! **Masil!** **Masil...**

Almost instantly the torch holder in the bow of the boat yelled, "I see it! There!"

With iron discipline, Vik grasped the bottom of the bumper and eased his head down out of it, beneath the water. The tightly fitting cork had helped him float.

He didn't have much air in his lungs, little underwater maneuvering time. He had to attack.

There were eight men in the boat. Four paddling, two with torches in the bow, one torch holder in the stern with the soldier-in-command.

Vik swam deep underwater toward the boat as it approached. He saw its position clearly from the torch-light. He shot up from the water next to the stern and seized the tunic of the torchholder.

The youth screamed, flailed, and went overboard. The torch arc-

ed away, splashed, sizzling, and died.

Vik ignored the thrashing soldier. He let himself submerge again, took two powerful kicking strokes after the boat, and with dagger in hand, surged upward again, one hand over the canoe side, to plunge the dagger into the mouth of the shouting commander. The blade sliced through the back of the man's throat to the vital brain stem.

As Vik pulled the dagger free the man slumped, almost instantly dead.

Vik submerged again. It had taken only a few seconds. He had a vivid memory of shocked, surprised, fearful black faces, paddles halted, confusion, some spears being raised.

He wasn't finished yet.

He swam underwater after the drifting canoe. He surged from the water yet again and seized the high, decoratively carved stem post. His heavy weight and the flexed power of his legs in the water caused the canoe to roll onto its side.

The six remaining soldiers yelled and screamed as they were pitched into the deadly water.

Vik instantly righted the half-sunk canoe and climbed in. One soldier had clung to the ornate bow and two others were trying to climb back in. The canoe was rolling and tilting dangerously.

Vik pulled his sword and mercilessly slashed arms and hands and heads. The screams were terrible.

When he stopped two men were dead in the bottom of the canoe and the rest were in the roiling, frothing water, shrieking as the frenzied ravenous yanya stripped away their flesh.

Vik quickly rescued a paddle and drove the canoe back out into the broad Congo.

Other patrol canoes had seen and heard the turmoil and were converging. Many shouts rang out across the water. The soldiers on the docks behind Vik were climbing into private boats and canoes, and setting out in pursuit.

Vik hunched low and put all his strength into his paddle strokes. But the canoe was sloshed with water and was slow. His only hope was to disappear in the darkness.

He angled for the shore---more marshland---and looked back to see the nearest canoe gaining rapidly; two torchmen in the bow were calling instructions to the man at the steering paddle.

There were three spears floating in the canoe with the two corpses. Vik took one up, stood, and cast it long and hard. It buried its ironwood point in the bow of the pursuing canoe.

The torch holders dodged reflexively and the paddlers paused, missing three beats. If that spear had been thrown a few millimeters higher... It had appeared virtually out of nowhere, obviously having been thrown an incredible distance.

The second spear, a meter higher and half a meter to the left, arrived with such force that it took a paddler in the sternum, shattered his spine as it passed through, and pinned a second man's foot to the bottom of the canoe.

The torch holders threw their torches into the river. The canoe drifted as hysteria and fear overwhelmed the other soldiers.

Vik quickly resumed paddling along the shoreline. He was invisible now. The other boats and canoes stopped to help the wounded. Also, they had no stomach for further pursuit. Nine men dead, one wounded.... This incredible old man---this **Masil**---was a devil!

Vik knew he had only bought a little time. By dawn both sides of the Congo would be thick with heavily armed soldiers in ten-man squads.

Ndola and Quebo knew how he was in this area. They would, if necessary, commit the entire strategic reserve. They would hunt him relentlessly.

TO BE CONTINUED

6-14-78 I received a call from a salesman for the new NOVA science/fact-fiction zine due out soon, from the publisher of PENTHOUSE. He wanted to sell me advertising space.

Out of a perverse curiosity, I asked him (he was calling from San Francisco, by the way) how much an inch of display space would cost. I was told they don't sell such small bits and pieces; the smallest ad accepted was one-sixth of a page, and that would cost a mere \$1500. for a black and white.

I blandly told him that was out of my league and the conversation ended.

Now I've got to make up the contents pages, put the numbers on the pages and get this issue to the printer. See you all in September.

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