

# Alouette

## The Newsletter of the Canadian Region of SFWA

Editor: Robert J. Sawyer

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SCIENCE-FICTION AND FANTASY WRITERS OF AMERICA, INC.  
CANADIAN REGION

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### EDITORIAL #1

## The End of Alouette

This is the last scheduled issue of *Alouette*. When I began this newsletter, I promised six bimonthly issues paid for out of my own pocket. I've now more than fulfilled that promise.

Sincere thanks to all who contributed articles: Barbara Delaplace, Eileen Kernaghan, and Spider Robinson from British Columbia; Gar and Judy Reeves-Stevens from Los Angeles; J. Brian Clarke and Kathryn Sinclair from Alberta; Jim Gardner from Waterloo; Cory Doctorow, Terry Green, and Bob Hadji from Toronto; and John Park from Ottawa. Thanks, too, to Toronto's Robin Rowland and Ottawa's Charles de Lint for letters. Special thanks to my two columnists: Toronto's Andrew Weiner ("State of the Art") and Brampton's Edo van Belkom ("Market Reports"). Also, many thanks to my wife, Carolyn Clink, who, as in all my endeavors, was of great help to me. Finally, a very special thank you to Andrew Weiner, who donated the mailing costs for issue number three.

I think a lot has been accomplished in these pages. Through *Alouette's* interviews and profiles, you've hopefully gotten to know many of our members better: B.C. SFWAns Barbara Delaplace, Eileen Kernaghan, and Spider Robinson; Alberta's Brian Clarke; Ontario's Phyllis Gotlieb, Terry Green, Karen Wehrstein, John Park, Rob Sawyer, and Andrew Weiner; and Montreal's Don Kingsbury were all spotlighted in *Alouette*. And through our Fiction Showcase, you've had a taste of the work by writers from both Eastern and Western Canada: Campbell nominee Barbara Delaplace, *Writers of the Future* winner Jim Gardner, Clarion graduate John Park, and Aurora nominee Edo van Belkom. One of my goals for *Alouette* was to help build a sense of community amongst Canada's SF professionals through greater familiarity with each other's work.

Another goal, of course, was to put money in your pockets, through market information, business-related news, and so on. At least four *Alouette* readers registered for the Public Lending Right after reading my article on that topic in the first issue, several have begun registering with The Canada Council Public Readings Program after my mention of it in issue five, some of you have made sales to markets you first heard about through Edo's columns, and I hope several of you will heed the advice about registering for the GST presented in this issue.

I've had lots of fun doing *Alouette*, and I thank the great many of you who expressed your appreciation. I wish I had the time and money to continue doing this newsletter, but SFWA designates no portion of dues for regional activities, and, besides, I've got my own novels to write. Still, whenever the need arises, you can be sure that I, as your Canadian Regional Director, will be in touch. And remember — I'm here to serve you, so by all means contact me whenever SFWA or myself can be of help to you. \*

### EDITORIAL #2

## Domestic SF? You Bet!

I recently heard someone claim that there's no such thing as a domestic Canadian SF and fantasy market. That's nonsense, even if you set aside the large array of French publications. Consider what was published domestically in English just last year: 29 works in *Tesseracts 4*, 18 pieces in *Northern Frights*, 22 stories in *Ark of Ice*, and 28 pieces in three issues of *On Spec*. That's a total of almost 100 pieces, all paid for, all published domestically. Are there ten times that many open paying slots for short SF&F in the States? Perhaps. Twenty times? No way. On a per capita basis, we have a short-form market about the same size as theirs.

But wait: surely 1992 was a fluke, right? Wrong. A new volume in the *Tesseracts* series has been published every second year since 1984. *Northern Frights 2* is now almost full. Starting in January of this year, *On Spec* has switched to a quarterly schedule. Granted, *Ark of Ice* was a standalone book, but it was Pottersfield's third volume of short SF, and, anyway, *Shivers 2*, another Canadian dark-fantasy collection, is in the works for 1993.

Ah, but what about novels? Well, in 1992, McClelland & Stewart published Terry Green's *Children of the Rainbow*. Viking Canada brought out the worldwide first edition of Guy Kay's *A Song for Arbonne* (which debuted at #1 on the *Globe and Mail* bestsellers' list); Viking's edition was completely separate from the American Crown edition or the British HarperCollins one. And Beach Holme, which has been building a respectable line of SF titles, released *Passion Play* by Sean Stewart, and then sent the author on a three-city promotional tour, something U.S. SF publishers rarely do.

(Indeed, all three of these books made the Aurora ballot, meaning that, for the first time, there were more domestically published English novels nominated than there were American-published ones.)

More: Both Bantam U.S.A. and Ace proved the legitimacy of first publishing in Canada. Bantam brought out Élisabeth Vonarburg's *The Silent City* under their prestigious *Spectra Special Editions* imprint, and Ace bought U.S. rights to Sean Stewart's *Passion Play* — both books had previously been published here by Beach Holme. Likewise, Garfield Reeves-Stevens's novels originally published in Canada continue to be reprinted by Warner in the States.

Canadian SF&F also continues to appear in the little magazines that are the backbone of CanLit, journals easily as prestigious as a *Pulphouse* or an *MZB's Fantasy Magazine*. In 1992, Jim Gardner and Lance Robinson both placed genre tales with *The New Quarterly*, for instance. And then there are nascent markets, such as Alberta's *Senary* and Quebec's *Edge Detector*.

No, there can be no realistic question about whether a separate Canadian market for SF exists — which, of course, is *exactly* why we need a Canadian Region of SFWA. \*

## OPINION

# Speculative Fiction: Beyond The American Event Horizon

by Terence M. Green

Originally published in *Books in Canada*, March 1993

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I'm a Canadian, born and living in Toronto. My third book, *Children of the Rainbow*, was published by McClelland & Stewart in March, 1992. (My previous novel, *Barking Dogs*, had been issued by St. Martin's Press in New York.) Everything leading up to the publication of *Children of the Rainbow*, as well as the curious trajectory that followed its release, has certainly provided me with the proverbial front-row seat from which to view the confusion in space and time where Canadian publishing transects Speculative Fiction. It has, in the vernacular, been a slice, a buzz, a poke in the eye with a sharp stick.

And I think it's time somebody set a few things straight.

Admittedly, *Children of the Rainbow* utilized the literary conceit of Time Travel — a staple of the SF genre — by having two people displaced in time; nevertheless, to the editors at M&S who acquired and worked on the novel, the book had a distinctly different "feel" from traditional science fiction. I know this because they told me, and we discussed it often, trying to decide how to categorize it, how to present it — to both the book industry and to the readers. Because of this different "feel," and because of its clear anchorage in waters as diverse as those charted by Melville, Defoe, Swift and even Samuel Beckett, there was genuine concern on the part of the editors that it not sink beneath the deluge of American science fiction that rolls across the border in such regular, indistinct waves.

And so in our wisdom, we agreed that the term Speculative Fiction should do the trick — alerting readers, browsers, reviewers, etc., that something slightly different might be afoot. After all, the term already had much widespread acceptance, and many illustrious proponents. Why, even the Toronto public library system boasts the Merrill Collection of Science Fiction, Speculation and Fantasy — a collection of over 50,000 items. Its head librarian, Lorna Toolis, a teacher and editor in the field herself, tells me that there was a real desire, spearheaded by Judith Merrill herself, to retitle it the Merrill Collection of Speculative Fiction, but that in a vote of the library's patrons, the present name won out due to its wider recognizability. In Ottawa, the specialty bookstore dedicated to the field, The House of Speculative Fiction, has been in operation for at least the decade that I have been aware of it. And as long ago as 1957, Robert A. Heinlein, the avatar of American SF, said in a lecture at the University of Chicago: "the term 'science fiction' is now part of the language ... we are stuck with it ... although personally I prefer the term 'speculative fiction' as being more descriptive."

I could bore you with pages of examples attesting to the roots and the growth of the term, among writers, editors, librarians, publishers and booksellers alike. Clearly, many think it an interesting alternative.

But why have so many cast about for an alternative?

And where did this term Science Fiction come from? (C. S. Lewis, in trying to analyze stories calling themselves science fiction, broke the term down into four sub-species, acknowledging vast differences between their intentions and achievements; the highest of these, which is the area of concern here, dealt with the imaginative impulse as old as the human race: to visit strange regions in search of beauty, awe, and terror.) Certainly, H. G. Wells's novels of ideas needed no unique name to describe them when they first appeared.

The fact is that "science fiction" emanated from one Hugo

Gernsback, an American, in 1926. He founded the pulp magazine *Amazing Stories*, and coined the word *scientifiction* to describe its contents. The magazine became an immediate commercial success, and the label quickly evolved to become *science fiction*. He published stories that are virtually unreadable today — so poorly written and melodramatic are they — with the avowed intention of interesting young boys in scientific careers.

Do you feel the same shudder that I do?

It is difficult to discuss science fiction as a professional publishing field in Canada because it scarcely exists (sporadic forays from small presses: Beach Holme — née Porcépic; Pottersfield), and the Canadian professional writers continue to publish it in the States. But American publishing houses deal with it the same way that they deal with every other field: by categorization into genres. Science fiction, horror, fantasy, romance, mystery, western, men's action — even Best Seller is a category preordained by advertising and promotional budget (*à la* Ivana Trump). This is the American Way.

The commercial genre that fills the racks of the science fiction section at your local bookstore is Uncle Hugo's grandchild. Or, seen another way, it is like the family-owned business that has grown successfully by offering a specific formula, that caters to a target market in the manner of a fast-food franchise.

*Pizza Pizza*, anyone?

Fast food often hits the spot. But it is not the same thing as sophisticated dining. And reviewing who has the best donut shop in town, as opposed to determining where one might wish to linger three or four times a year over exotic cuisine, is quite a different process.

Consider: Margaret Atwood pens *The Handmaid's Tale*, set in the future Republic of Gilead — the former United States, now an intolerable theocracy.

In *The Memoirs of a Survivor*, Doris Lessing portrays a woman witnessing the end of urban civilization from her window.

Martin Amis writes *Time's Arrow*, in which a man awakens from death, recovers his health, grows stronger, younger, and lives his life backwards as time flows in reverse.

Likewise, there is a difference between American genre science fiction, and books like Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange*, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, George Orwell's *1984*, Hugh MacLennan's *Voices in Time*, and even Voltaire's *Micromegas*.

Walter M. Miller's *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, J. G. Ballard's *Memoirs of the Space Age*, Kingsley Amis's *The Alteration*, Paul Theroux's *O-Zone*, C. S. Lewis's *Out of the Silent Planet*, Walter Tevis's *The Man Who Fell to Earth*, Russell Hoban's *Riddley Walker*, Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, Brian Moore's *Catholics* ...

There is no label affixed to any of these books. They use time travel, the future, dystopias, alternate worlds, interplanetary travel — all the tropes and conventions of the genre — in telling their stories, and often end up in the science fiction section of your local bookstore. Yet books such as these, with significant literary aspirations, are clearly not within the commercial category known as Science Fiction. (Even John Updike, writing in *The New Yorker*, expressed puzzlement when trying to describe Martin Amis's *Einstein's Monsters*, finally settling on science fictionish.)

And although Atwood, Orwell or Amis's works can be recognized for what they are, it was never as easy for someone like Philip K. Dick, whose books were all labeled science fiction during his lifetime. Only now are they being reissued by Vintage Books in Mainstream format.

It's time to shake off Uncle Hugo's American publishing shackles.

A label is merely a convenience, often imprecise; but it is also an admission of distinction.

Speculative fiction, simply put, is a different stream, mixing pigments from various genres, borrowing conventions for metaphoric utility, cross-breeding, and ultimately moving away from formula fiction into Literature.

Call it fantastic fiction, literary fantasy, visionary fiction, magic realism. Call it speculative fiction. Call it whatever you like. Just don't force it to be science fiction as defined by the American publishing industry.

Things just aren't that simple.

And oh, yes ...

We were talking about my book, *Children of the Rainbow*, when we started this.

Back to front-row centre.

Review copies were duly sent out and duly received. And the sad truth is that a lot of book-review editors and reviewers are still wearing Uncle Hugo's American blinkers. At *Books in Canada*, to the credit of editor and reviewer alike, this was not the case (reviewer John Degen wrote: "the book is most definitely a work of speculative fiction.") *Quill & Quire* managed to find someone knowledgeable (reviewer R. John Hayes: "This speculative fiction is reminiscent of Arthur C. Clarke but is less grounded in science, more in metaphysics, mythology, and mysticism.") At *The Globe & Mail*, on the other hand, Uncle Hugo's victory over our perceptions must be deemed complete. The book was handed to Jack Bell, editor of the *Globe's* FAXsummary and InfoFAX, who, according to the copy accompanying a review, "finds science fiction a comfort in his declining years."

Rarely have I seen such a hatchet-job. The sneering and self-righteous vitriol were astonishing. The review ended with the baroque observation, "And after all, the publisher did label the work 'speculative fiction' — the literary equivalent of *caveat emptor*."

I licked my wounds, and life went on. Or so I thought. Within days, I had received two phone calls from fellow writers saying that "this guy has done this before". Done what? I asked. Gone on the rampage over the term "speculative fiction" in a previous review.

I checked for myself. It was true. Jack Bell, to the best of my research, has reviewed a total of three books — all handed to him by *The Globe's* book review editor as science fiction. He liked one, calling it a 1950s-style juvenile, and ranted about the other two, heaping scorn on the notion that anyone would even deign to stray from the term science fiction, using the books as stones to grind his own personal axe. ("Speculative ... that fat and disappointing word ... There is no such genre as speculative fiction ... CanLit bafflegab ...")

And thus is all our work as editors, publisher, and writer skewered in Canada's National Newspaper, by the shackles and blinders cited above.

M&S, in spite of its strong editorial enthusiasm for my work, decided that they couldn't sell "speculative fiction" by anyone much under the stature of an Atwood in Canada (even MacLennan's book didn't fare as well as hoped), and after the experiment with my novel — within a month of Jack's review in *The Globe*, (and prior to the *Books in Canada* review) — they decided to pass on involvement with my next book, which they had been sitting on for more than six months.

And so it goes.

Thus, born in Toronto, still living here, I've contacted an American agent and am returning, reluctantly, to the American market. We talk about a Recession. We have a recession of perception and understanding here as well. And we are all cheated: publisher, writer, agent, bookseller. And reader.

A slice, a buzz, a poke in the eye with a sharp stick. I think it's time somebody set a few things straight.

*Pizza Pizza*, anyone? \*

of poetry, and has co-authored two non-fiction books.

She and husband Patrick still live in Burnaby, where they operate the lower mainland's most obscure used bookshop ("Neville Books: farther out than most"). The kids are doing just fine. Michael and Gavin are working on their doctorates, Sue is a management journalist in England. Mom is still trying to make it as a writer.

## Eileen Kernaghan Bibliography

### BOOKS

*Journey to Aprilioth*, Ace Books, New York, 1980. (Prehistoric fantasy novel set in bronze-age Europe. Winner of a silver "Porgy" Award from *West Coast Review of Books* for original paperback fantasy.)

*Songs from the Drowned Lands*, Ace Books, 1983. (Prequel to *Journey to Aprilioth*. Winner of the Canadian Science Fiction and Fantasy Award for 1983/84.)

*The Sarsen Witch*, Ace Books, 1989. (Sequel to *Journey to Aprilioth*. Short-listed for the Canadian Science Fiction and Fantasy Award for 1990.)

*Walking after Midnight* (co-authored with Jonathon Kay), Berkley non-fiction, 1990. (Book on reincarnation and near-death experiences.)

*The Upper Left-Hand Corner: A Writer's Guide for the Northwest* (co-author). International Self-Counsel Press, North Vancouver, 1986 (3rd edition).

### SHORT FICTION

"Starcult" in *Galaxy*, November 1971.

"By the Skin of Our Teeth" in *Space and Time*, October 1979.

"The Devil We Know", *WomanSpace* (Feminist SF anthology), New Victoria Publishers (New Hampshire), 1981.

"Thieras" in *Room of One's Own*, Vol. 6, Nos. 1 and 2, 1981.

"The Sorcerer's Child" in *The Window of Dreams: New Canadian Writing for Children*, Methuen, 1986.

"Carpe Diem" in *On Spec*, Fall 1989; reprinted in *Tesseract's*<sup>3</sup>, Press Porcépic, 1990. (Winner, Canadian Science Fiction and Fantasy Award, Best Short Form Work in English, 1990.)

"The Tulpa" in *The Blue Jean Collection*, Thistledown Press, 1992.

"The Weighmaster of Flood" in *Ark of Ice*, Pottersfield Press, 1992.

"Couples" in *Tesseract's*<sup>4</sup>, Beach Holme, 1992.

### SPECULATIVE POETRY IN

*Anthology of Magazine Verse* (Monitor Book Company, 1989); *Golden Isis*; *A Labour of Love* (Polestar Press 1989); *Light Like a Summons* (Five B.C. women poets) Cacanadadada Press, 1989; *The Magazine of Speculative Poetry*; *Northern Journey*; *On Spec*; *PRISM international*; *Room of One's Own*; *The Rhydling Anthology* (SF Poetry Association, 1988); *Senary*; *Tesseract's* (1985); *Tesseract's*<sup>3</sup> (1990); *Towards 2000: Poetry for the Future* (Fifth House, 1991); and *Walpurgis Night: A Journal of Gothic Horror Poetry*. \*

## MEMBER PROFILE

# Eileen Kernaghan

Eileen Kernaghan grew up on a farm outside Grindrod, British Columbia, which does not, as far as she knows, appear on any map. She attended the University of B.C., taught school in the B.C. interior, got married, had three kids, moved to Burnaby, worked as an administrator for the local arts council, and in 1971 when *Galaxy* bought the second SF story she ever wrote (the first has been burned) she decided she should try to make it as a writer. Since then she's published three fantasy novels, the odd short story and a whole mess

## THE BUSINESS OF WRITING

## GST Registration

by Robert J. Sawyer

Canadian SF writers should think seriously about registering for the Goods and Services Tax. If, like me, you make almost all your sales to foreign markets, registering definitely makes sense: since sales outside of Canada are zero-rated (that is, you don't have to collect GST on them), registering for the GST means you'll receive a rebate check either quarterly or annually from Revenue Canada, refunding the GST you paid out on purchases related to your business. Since everything from paper clips to airline tickets for your trips to conventions has GST tacked on to it, it makes sense to get that money back. Registering for the GST is the *only* way to recover that money; you can't claim it in any other way as a business expense.

What if you make sales to Canadian markets? No problem: the law requires your Canadian publishers to pay you 7% GST; all you have to do is provide them with your GST registration number. Does this somehow make you less competitive, since you charge 7% more than non-registered writers? Not at all. The GST is a flow-through tax: your publisher *will* be registered for the GST, and will get a refund from Revenue Canada for the 7% paid to you. (A "flow-through tax" means everyone gets the tax refunded by the government *except the ultimate consumer*; the person who buys the book or magazine containing your work is the only one in the chain who doesn't get a refund.) Magazines such as *On Spec* ask for your GST registration number right on their contracts.

Let's look at a hypothetical case. Say in the first three months of this year you sell a novel to Bantam for US\$10,000, half of which is due on signing; you also sell a short story to *On Spec* for \$100; you spent \$300 on office supplies, books, and postage; and you took a trip to Convention in Nova Scotia, which, all told, cost you \$1,200.

The GST tax return (which you can choose to file quarterly or annually; more about that below) asks you four simple questions: How much money did you make during the reporting period? Answer for our example: \$6510 (US\$5000 converted to Canadian dollars at the current exchange rate of .78, plus \$100 for the *On Spec* sale.)

How much GST did you collect? Answer: \$7 (7% on top of the sale price to *On Spec*; remember the sale to the American publisher is zero-rated, and no tax is collected on it).

How much money did you spend on business expenses? Answer: \$1,500 (the \$1,200 for your trip plus the \$300 for your other business-related purchases).

How much GST did you pay out on those expenses? Answer: \$105 (which is 7% of \$1,500).

Finally, you subtract the amount of GST paid out (\$105 in our example) from the amount you collected (\$7). If the answer is a positive number, you send Revenue Canada that amount. If the answer is a negative number, *Revenue Canada will send you a cheque for that amount*. In our example, you'd receive a cheque for \$97, money that would have been lost if you were not a GST registrant.

The government offers a couple of options for GST filers. First, for small businesses (such as writing), instead of actually calculating how much GST you paid out on business expenses, you can instead use the "quick filing" method: you collect 7% GST on your sales in Canada, but pay only about 5% of it back to the government. The difference, about 2%, is supposed to compensate you for the GST you paid out on business-related purchases.

I don't recommend using the Quick Method. If we'd used it for our example, we'd have had to send Revenue Canada a cheque for \$5, pocketing \$2 out of the \$7 of GST collected from *On Spec*. In other words, you'd have lost \$103 (almost all of the GST you spent on business purchases). The Quick Method is only potentially a good deal if almost all of your self-employment income is from Canadian sources (and, therefore, you take in a lot of GST).

Your other option is quarterly vs. annual filing (this is a new option, introduced in January 1993). Filing quarterly means you get

your refund more quickly. Filing annually means you only have to fill out one GST tax form a year, instead of four. As Edo van Belkom would say, take your pick.

What about capital expenses? If you buy a computer for \$1,700, you'd pay \$119 in GST. Even though you have to depreciate the computer on your income tax return (it's what Revenue Canada calls a "class-10" item, and depreciates at 30% per year), you can claim back 100% of the GST immediately. (This is true regardless of whether you use standard filing or the Quick Method — under both systems you can immediately claim the full GST back for capital purchases.)

Of course, I recommend you discuss matters with your accountant before making any decisions. Still, I find the GST a lot easier to take knowing that I'm going to get it back whenever I buy a book or a magazine or a piece of software or a bookcase or ...

Note: Revenue Canada recently tried to discourage one Canadian SF writer from registering for the GST. The reason was obvious: the government didn't want to have to send this person refund cheques after every reporting period. It is your *right* to be a GST registrant; Revenue Canada has no discretion in this matter.

To request GST registration forms, call the Revenue Canada Excise office in your city. Also ask for a copy of the booklet *GST Information for the Arts and Entertainment Industry*.

Montreal: (800) 361-8339 Toronto: (416) 954-0514  
Ottawa: (800) 465-6160 Calgary: (800) 661-3498  
Edmonton: (800) 661-0005 BC (all cities): (800) 561-6690 \*

Rob Sawyer has written about personal finance for *The Financial Times of Canada*, *Report on Business Magazine*, and *Your Money*.

## THE CRAFT OF WRITING

## Scene Lengths

My mother is a statistician and my father is an economist, so I guess I'm naturally predisposed to data analysis.

I recently outlined my sixth novel, *Hobson's Choice*, coming up with 77 scenes for it. I got curious about how many scenes had been in my other novels. Here's what I found:

Book	Total Words	Number of Scenes	Average Scene Length
<i>Golden Fleece</i>	60,000	37	1,620
<i>End of an Era</i>	70,000	46	1,520
<i>Far-Seer</i>	84,000	46	1,830
<i>Fossil Hunter</i>	93,000	105	890
<i>Foreigner</i>	83,000	99	840
Average	78,000	67	1,170

I don't know if there's anything profound in this or not. Starting with my fourth book, I doubled the number of scenes, but halved the number of words per scene.

The big change between my first three books and my fourth and fifth was in narrative strategy. The first three were essentially single-viewpoint, single-plotline books. Numbers four and five were multi-viewpoint, multiple-plotline books; presumably that explains the more frequent scene changes.

*Hobson's Choice* will be a pretty intensive character study, focusing mostly on one individual. In that way, it's like my first three books. On the other hand, it has multiple plotlines, making it more like my more recent novels. Given that mix, it's perhaps not surprising that my outline for it ended up containing a total number of scenes intermediate between my first three and last two books. \*

## MARKET REPORT

## Sell Those Words!

by Edo van Belkom

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We begin this column with a word from Pottersfield Press publisher Lesley Choyce. He's pleased that Pottersfield's latest SF project, *Ark of Ice*, received good reviews from *Quill & Quire*, *The Toronto Star*, *The Calgary Herald*, and *The Vancouver Sun*, as well as from *Asimov's*, *Analog*, and *SF Chronicle*. That success bodes well for future SF publications from this Nova Scotia publishing house.

Says Choyce: "We've had a commitment to SF since way back in 1979 when we published an anthology called *Visions from the Edge*, which I co-edited with John Bell. And we published Terry Green's first book [*The Woman Who is The Midnight Wind*]. I'm pretty much a one-man operation, so that limits the number of books I can publish, but I would be very interested in seeing SF novels or short-story collections from Canadian writers who have a reasonable track record (published books, or stories in literary and/or SF magazines)."

Choyce says writers should query first, but *not* by registered mail or Priority Post because he's on a rural post route. Pottersfield's book advances are \$500 and up. (A similar query for market info sent to Victoria's Beach Holme Publishers went unanswered.)

There's another new SF magazine paying pro rates, and it's called *Advanced Warning*. Published in New York by Graphic Images Press, *Advanced Warning* pays up to \$300 per story, plus five contributor's copies. According to an author who has sold to the magazine, it responds quickly and contracts are favourable to writers. Also, stories get plenty of illustrations.

Alice Alfonsi, senior editor at Zebra Books, is putting together *Terror on Summer Vacation*, to be published in June 1994. It's an open anthology. Submissions should be 5,000 to 10,000 words. The uniting theme: horror stories that take place during the main characters' summer vacations. Your protagonist should be between the ages of 18 and 25 — a college student is fine or a young person who is just getting out in the world. Beach stories are especially welcome. Submit your stories with a cover letter listing writing credits and relevant facts about your background. Payment is a flat fee of \$150.

*Wonderdisk* is a new electronic magazine on Macintosh disks. Payment for stories is \$25 and a year's subscription for stories under 5,500 words; \$35 and a two-year subscription for stories from 5,500 to 8,500 words; and \$50 and a three-year subscription for stories over 8,500 words. *Wonderdisk* is a HyperCard-format stack in the form of a literary magazine. Submissions should be as HyperCard stacks on 800K double-sided disks, or as MacWrite or TeachText files on 800K disks, or as standard hardcopy manuscripts.

Finally, *On Spec's* hard-SF theme issue closes August 31. Payment is two cents a word; 6,000 words max. Submissions should be in competition format, with title only on the manuscript and your name and address on a separate cover sheet.

Take your pick —

- Pottersfield Press, Lesley Choyce, publisher, RR 2, Porters Lake, Nova Scotia BOJ 2S0.
- *Advanced Warning*, Neil Feigeles, editor, Graphic Image Press, Murray Hill Station, P.O. Box 1109, New York, NY 10156-0604.
- *Terror on Summer Vacation*, Alice Alfonsi, editor, Zebra Books, 475 Park Ave. South, New York, NY 10016.
- *Wonderdisk*, Walter Gammons, editor, P.O. Box 58367, Louisville, KY 40268-0367; GENie: W.GAMMONS.
- *On Spec*, Box 4727, Edmonton, Alberta T6E 5G6. \*

## MEMBER NEWS

## Who's Doing What

Lynne Armstrong-Jones (London) did a reading/workshop about shared worlds at the London Central Library, on April 26.

"Tipi Ganoo and Tyler II" by Scott C. Cuthbert (Windsor) will be in the June *Amazing* (under his pseudonym of Andrew Scott).

Charles de Lint (Ottawa) is now vice-president of HWA.

Both Barbara Delaplace (Vancouver) and Michelle Sagara (Toronto) are nominees again for the John W. Campbell Award.

Dave Duncan (Calgary) was interviewed in the April 1993 *Locus*.

Ruth O'Neill (Ottawa) will be attending Clarion East this summer.

*Far-Seer* by Robert J. Sawyer (Thornhill) was chosen by the New York Public Library as one of 1992's "Best Books for the Teen Age," a reference published annually since 1929. Rob will be writing the entry on Canadian SF for Prentice-Hall's *Encyclopaedia Galactica*. A caricature of him appears on page one of the May *Quill & Quire*.

Edo van Belkom (Brampton) has sold 12 short stories so far in 1993, plus two reprints, and an article to *The Report*. His "Baseball Memories" will be reprinted in *The Grand Slam Anthology of Canadian Baseball Literature* (Pottersfield, October 1993). Other stories will appear in *Deathport* (Pocket, September 1993); in *Shock Rock II* (Pocket, January 1994); and in *Fear Itself* (Warner, early 1994). \*

## STATE OF THE ART

## North American SF

by Andrew Weiner

In 1990, Andrew Weiner was invited to provide a comment on the state of Science Fiction for the Polish SF magazine *Fantasyka*. Here's what he had to say:

North American SF continues to move in two directions. On the one hand, commodification and on the other, dissolution.

Conventional genre SF has evolved into a sometimes profitable but basically uninteresting form of packaged goods: writing (and art direction) become adjuncts to marketing formulae. As you have surely heard, it becomes more and more difficult to sell a book that does not (a) have a spaceship on the cover; (b) form part of a trilogy or other sort of series; (c) deal with absolutely conventional generic SF materials. The occasional innovation (e.g., so-called "cyberpunk") is quickly co-opted and reduced to the same formulae. Short SF is in somewhat better shape aesthetically, but has probably never been in worse shape as a commercial proposition.

If there is any reason to feel optimism for the future of SF, it is at the very margins of the genre, where the field begins to dissolve and merge itself with certain elements of what we know as the "mainstream:" "magic realism," surrealism, postmodern narrative strategies and so on. I think of such writers as Martin Amis, Margaret Atwood, Kurt Vonnegut (once mistakenly labeled as an SF writer), Michael Ondaatje, Garcia Marquez and the other South Americans, and so on. Within SF, the writers who seem most capable of joining with them to create a new form of speculative literature include John Kessel, William Gibson, Pat Murphy, Lucius Shepard and of course J. G. Ballard. This convergence is only just beginning. It will accelerate as the death of conventional SF becomes more apparent (the body of SF is brain-dead already, but the limbs keep twitching ...) \*

## TOOLS OF THE TRADE

## WordStar

by Robert J. Sawyer

Many Canadian SFWans — including myself, Charles de Lint, Terry Green, Don Kingsbury, Robin Rowland, and Edo van Belkom — use the MS-DOS word-processing program WordStar. Other SF writers using WordStar include Roger MacBride Allen, Mike Capobianco, Jeff Carver, Arthur C. Clarke, David Gerrold, Jack Haldeman, Vonda McIntyre, Kevin O'Donnell, and John Stith.

Still, many of us have endured years of mindless criticism of our choice, mostly from WordPerfect users, and especially from WordPerfect users who have never tried anything *but* that program. I've used WordStar, WordPerfect, Word, MultiMate, Sprint, XyWrite, and just about every other MS-DOS word-processing package, and WordStar is *by far* my favourite choice for creative composition at the keyboard.

That's the key point: *aiding creative composition*. To understand how WordStar does that better than other programs, let me start with a little history.

## AN INTERFACE DESIGNED FOR TOUCH TYPISTS

WordStar was first released in 1979, before there was any standardization in computer keyboards. At that time, many keyboards lacked arrow keys for cursor movement and special function keys for issuing commands. Some even lacked such keys as < Tab >, < Insert >, < Delete >, < Backspace >, and < Enter >.

About all you could count on was having a standard QWERTY typewriter layout of alphanumeric keys and a Control key. The Control key is a specialized shift key. When depressed simultaneously with an alphabetic key, it causes the keyboard to generate a specific command instruction, rather than the letter. The control codes are named < Ctrl-A > through < Ctrl-Z > (there are a few punctuation keys that can generate control codes, too). Control codes are frequently indicated in text by preceding the letter with a caret, like so: ^A.

WordStar's original designers, Seymour Rubenstein and Rob Barnaby, selected five control codes to be prefixes for bringing up additional menus of functions: ^O for On-screen functions; ^Q for Quick cursor functions; ^P for Print functions; ^K for block and file functions; and ^J for help.

Now, the first three of these are alphabetically mnemonic. The last two, ^K and ^J, might at first glance seem to be arbitrary choices. They aren't. Look at a typewriter keyboard. You'll see that for a touch typist, the two strongest fingers of the right hand rest over ^J and ^K on the home typing row. WordStar recognizes that the most-often-used functions should be the easiest to physically execute.

To serve as arrow keys for moving the cursor up, left, right, or down, WordStar adopted ^E, ^S, ^D, and ^X. Again, looking at a typewriter keyboard makes the logic of this plain. These four keys are arranged in a diamond under the left hand:

```

      ↑
      E
    ← S D →
      X
      ↓
  
```

Such positional, as opposed to alphabetic, mnemonics form a large part of the WordStar interface. Additional cursor movement commands are clustered around the E/S/D/X diamond:

```

      ↑
      W E R
    ← A S D F →
      Z X C
      ↓
  
```

^A and ^F, on the home typing row, move the cursor left and right by words. ^W and ^Z, to the left of the cursor-up and cursor-down commands, scroll the screen up and down by single lines. ^R and ^C, to the right of the cursor-up and cursor-down commands, scroll the screen up and down a page at a time (a "page" in the computer sense of a full screen of text).

^Q, the aforementioned quick-cursor-movement menu prefix, extends the power of this diamond. Just as ^E, ^S, ^D, ^X move the cursor up, left, right, and down by single characters, ^QE, ^QS, ^QD, and ^QX move it all the way to the top, left, right, or bottom of the screen. ^W scrolls up one line; ^QW scrolls up continuously. ^Z scrolls down one line; ^QZ scrolls down continuously. And since ^R and ^C take you to the top and bottom of the screen, ^QR and ^QC take you to the top and bottom of the document. There are many more ^Q commands, but I think you can see from this sampling that there is an underlying logic to the WordStar interface, something sorely lacking in many other programs — *particularly* WordPerfect.

Now, for many of these functions there are dedicated keys on IBM PC keyboards. WordStar allows you to use these, if you're so inclined. But touch-typists find that using the WordStar control-key commands is much more efficient, because they can be typed from the home row without hunting for special keys elsewhere on the keyboard. Because of this, many applications, including dBase, SuperCalc, SideKick, CompuServe's TAPCIS and OzCis, GENie's Aladdin, Xtree Pro, and the editor included with MS-DOS 5.0, have adopted some or all of the WordStar interface.

Some keyboards have the < Ctrl > key to the left of the letter A. This makes using WordStar commands very simple. Other keyboards instead have < Caps Lock > next to the A and place the < Ctrl > key below the left < Shift > key, making WordStar commands a bit of a stretch. Because of this, WordStar comes with a utility called SWITCH.COM to optionally swap the functions of the < Caps Lock > and < Ctrl > keys. One of the problems with other word-processing programs is that many commands can only easily be issued through function and dedicated cursor keys, and the locations of these keys changes radically from keyboard to keyboard (for instance, function keys are sometimes arrayed as two columns of five on the left-hand side of the keyboard and sometimes as a continuous row across the top of the keyboard; cursor keys are sometimes clustered in a diamond and sometimes laid out in an inverted-T shape; on laptop computers you may have to press a special < Fn > key in combination with the arrow keys to access < PgUp > and other functions, making using these programs an exercise in contortion). But all one has to do to make *any* keyboard an optimal WordStar keyboard is run the < Caps Lock > / < Ctrl > switcher, if necessary. The locations of the other keys are irrelevant, because you don't need them for WordStar.

On the other hand, WordPerfect's interface forces touch typists to constantly move their hands from the home typing row, slowing them down. To issue a WordPerfect command, you must first press a function key, either separately, or simultaneously with a < Ctrl >, < Shift >, or < Alt > key. Then, for many functions, you must select a sub-function. Now that your hands have moved to the bank of function keys, can you select your sub-function using them as well? You cannot. Rather, you must next reposition your hands to the numeric keys and select your sub-function by number. Finally, you must reorient your hands on the home row before continuing typing (recent versions of WordPerfect attempt to smooth out this tortuous interface, but it's still difficult to use).

## THE LONG-HAND PAGE METAPHOR

Now, I'm a big fan of the WordStar control-key interface: for text applications, it lets me interact with my computer more efficiently than any other interface I've yet seen. However, I don't think it's this interface that's got me hooked, at least not at the keystroke level. I've written published reviews of all major DOS word processors, and I've concluded that there are other specific strengths that bring me back to WordStar time and again.

Let me speak generally for a moment. I've concluded that there are two basic metaphors for pre-computer writing. One is the long-

hand manuscript page. The other is the typewritten page. Most word processors have decided to emulate the second — and, at first glance, that would seem to be the logical one to adopt. But, as a creative writer, I am convinced that the long-hand page is the better metaphor.

Consider: On a long-hand page, you can jump back and forth in your document with ease. You can put in bookmarks, either actual paper ones, or just fingers slipped into the middle of the manuscript stack. You can annotate the manuscript for yourself with comments like “Fix this!” or “Don’t forget to check these facts” without there being any possibility of you missing them when you next work on the document. And you can mark a block, either by circling it with your pen, or by physically cutting it out, without necessarily having to do anything with it right away. The entire document is your workspace.

On a typewritten page, on the other hand, you are forced to deal with the next sequential character. Your thoughts are focussed serially on the typing of the document. If you’re in the middle of a line half-way down page 7, your only easy option is to continue on that line. To go backwards to check something is difficult, to put in a comment that won’t show when your document is read by somebody else is impossible, and so on. Typing is a top-down, linear process, not at all conducive to the intuitive, leaping-here-and-there kind of thought human beings are good at.

Now, a word processor that uses the typewriter metaphor — WordPerfect is one — might be ideal for low-level secretarial work: proceeding top-down through a document that has been created in content and structure by somebody else. But for one who must start with absolutely nothing and create, from scratch, a coherent document with complex and subtle structures, the long-hand-page metaphor is the way to go.

WordStar’s ^Q (Quick cursor movement) and ^K (block) commands give me more of what I used to have when I wrote in longhand than any other product does. WordStar’s powerful suite of cursor commands lets me fly all over my manuscript, without ever getting lost. That’s because WordStar is constantly keeping track of where I’ve been and where I’m likely to want to go. ^QB will take me to the beginning of the marked block; ^QK will take me to the end; ^QV will take me to where the marked block was moved from; ^QP will take me to my previous cursor position. And, just as I used to juggle up to ten fingers inserted into various places in my paper manuscript, WordStar provides me with ten bookmarks, set with ^K0 through ^K9, and ten commands to jump to them, ^Q0 to ^Q9.

Other WordStar cursor-movement commands, some of which were mentioned earlier, make life extraordinarily easy (left and right end of line, top and bottom of screen, top and bottom of document, forward to specified character, backwards to specified characters — all touch-typable, all issued without ever taking my eyes off the screen). And its robust find commands run circles around WordPerfect’s (for example, WordPerfect can’t find a single word without also finding that same string of characters if it’s embedded in another word).

If I want to make a note to myself, WordStar lets me simply type it in my document. WordStar will not print a line beginning with double periods, like so:

.. check the length of Jupiter’s year

However, there’s no way I can miss such a comment when I re-edit the document. Until recently, WordPerfect didn’t allow that — again, it tripped on the typewritten-page metaphor: if you put something in the document, it assumes you must want it in the final printout. (Hidden comments, another feature provided by both WordStar and WordPerfect, don’t provide this same functionality, although they do have their uses.)

The typewritten-page metaphor is a machine-in-control situation: you must do what the machine wants you to do. Block marking is a perfect example. In WordPerfect, if I want to mark a block, I am forced to think through a serial sequence of steps, and execute them in turn. Now, that’s fine for straight secretarial work, but when one is *creating at the keyboard*, one wants to capture the most fleeting of thoughts, the most complex of ideas, before they evaporate into the ether, lost for good. The human-machine interface must let me stop

and get a thought down, not force me to hang on until the computer is ready for me to go back to thinking.

WordPerfect requires that I decide whether I want to cut or copy a block, then immediately mark the beginning of the block, then immediately mark the end of the block, then immediately position the cursor at where I want the block to go, then immediately move the block, and then find my way back to the place where I was originally working. From the moment I decide I might, perhaps, want to do something with a block of text to the moment I actually finish that operation, WordPerfect is in control, dictating what I must do.

WordStar, with its long-hand-page metaphor, says, hey, do whatever you want whenever you want to. This is a good spot to mark the beginning of a block? Fine. What would *you* like to do next? Deal with the block? Continue writing? Use the thesaurus?

After another half hour of writing, I can say, *ah hah!*, this is where I want to end that block. And two hours later I can say, and *this* is where that block should go. I’m in control, not the program. That’s clearly more powerful, more intuitive, and more flexible than any other method of text manipulation I’ve yet seen implemented in a word processor. That WordStar lets me have separate marked blocks in each of its editing windows multiplies that power substantially: imagine doing a cut and paste job between two versions of a paper document, but being told that you could only have one piece cut out at a time. Madness! Yet that’s what WordPerfect, Microsoft Word, and others would force you to do. (In WordStar 7.0, you can even, in essence, have two marked blocks per window, toggling between them with the “mark previous block” command.)

Over the years, it’s become clear to me that writers work in unique ways. Little things make a big difference to how effectively they can interface with their machines. WordStar provides a vast suite of customizability options — hundreds of things ranging from which specific punctuation characters are jumped over when moving the cursor by words, through how much help to provide the user, to whether the inches/columns indicator in the status line should update instantly as you type, or (in case you find that visually distracting) should wait quietly until you pause for a length of time you specify before updating. It’s important that the writing tool adapt to the writer, not the other way around. WordStar is strong because it can fit me like a comfortable old shoe, and then make itself over completely to fit somebody else just as well.

Finally, to come back to the keyboard interface, I think WordStar is the least *modal* word processor I have ever used. On long-hand paper, writing and editing are one fluid task: there’s no barrier to discourage you from switching between adding new material and modifying existing material. On a typed page, these tasks are quite distinct, especially with non-electronic typewriters. To change a word is a completely different spectrum of activities, and, therefore, a completely different mindset, from simply adding new words.

Many word-processing programs hark back to the decidedly modal days of Liquid Paper: they have me input new material from the main typing area, but for editing make me move my hands from that area to the cursor pad, the function keys, or a mouse, and then step through layers of menus (as WordPerfect and Microsoft Word do) or switch to a command line (as XyWrite and Nota Bene do). These typewriter-metaphor programs compartmentalize writing and editing in an unnatural fashion. The human mind does not distinguish between these activities in any gross way; neither should the program.

WordStar’s adoption of the long-hand-page metaphor provides its strength in this area, too. On a WordStar-friendly keyboard (one with < Ctrl > adjacent to the “A” key, or one that has been remapped using the SWITCH.COM utility mentioned earlier), changing between writing and editing modes is as simple as pivoting one’s left pinkie. It’s effortless and does not cause a switching of mental gears. The distinction between the modes is no more distracting than the lifting of ball-point from paper to reposition one’s pen. Writing and revising are a continuum. WordStar supports that, whereas, again, competing programs demands that I adapt to their method of doing things, instead of the other way around.

For me, it’s clear: WordStar offers a more productive approach *at its most fundamental design level* than does its competition. \*

## MEMBER PROFILE

## Phyllis Gotlieb

by Andrew Weiner

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Phyllis Gotlieb has the longest track record of any SF writer currently working in Canada. "It might be argued," wrote David Ketterer in John Robert Colombo's anthology *Other Canadas*, "that Ms. Gotlieb is Canadian science fiction." And yet she remains much better known in Canada, if she is known at all, for her poetry (four books have appeared to date) and CBC radio plays.

Actually, Gotlieb stopped writing poetry some time ago. She can even tell you the exact date she completed her very last poem, "Was/Man" (included in her short-story collection, *Son of the Morning*). It was April 4, 1977. "The poetry came unasked for," she says, "and it went unasked for, too. It was getting nearer and nearer to science fiction, and finally got absorbed in it."

It was poetry that led her into science fiction in the first place. It was 1949, and she had writer's block. She was not, at the time, a great SF reader, although she had read her fair share as a child. Born in Toronto in 1926, she had grown up in and out of the movie theatres her father managed in the east end, reading leftover copies of *Weird Tales* and *Doc Savage* from the theatre candy store. Still, her husband, Kelly Gotlieb (now a professor of computer science at the University of Toronto), suggested she try her hand at writing SF.

It didn't come easily. She "plugged and plugged away at it" for years, in between raising three children. She would wipe the Pablum off the Babe-Tenda feeding table, wheel it into the kitchen, put her typewriter on it and hammer away. It took until 1957 to sell her first SF short story. By then, her poetry, unblocked, had already appeared in such leading Canadian literary magazines as *The Canadian Forum* and the *Tamarack Review*.

It might seem a jump of more than a few light-years from the *Tamarack Review* to *Amazing Stories*, the granddaddy of the U.S. pulp magazines. But Gotlieb finally managed it with the help of a New York agent, acquired on the recommendation of another magazine editor. Her first short-story sale brought her \$85 (U.S.), less \$8.50 for her agent's commission.

More short stories followed, and in 1964, her first SF novel, *Sunburst*. But still it didn't come easily. "I really made my agents run for their money," she says. It took two and a half years, in fact, before *Sunburst*, the story of a group of mutant children with fantastic mental powers, found a publisher. "Who wants to read about a bunch of psychopathic kids?" one asked. It earned her a \$2,500 (U.S.) advance, which was quite good for a first SF novel in 1964, and has since sold more than 300,000 copies around the world, making it by far her most successful book.

There was a twelve-year gap before the appearance of her next SF novel, *O Master Caliban!*, in 1976. Those years were occupied with poetry, plays, and short fiction and with her one and only conventional novel, *Why Should I Have All the Grief?* A well-reviewed story about Holocaust survivors, it achieved only dismal sales. "Everybody said, 'Phyllis, why don't you do a mainstream novel?'" So I spent four years writing it, got a \$400 advance, paid my agent off, paid to have it re-typed twice, and I must have cleared a good \$19."

Not that her science fiction has been that lucrative, either. Her U.S. advances have risen steadily from \$3,000 for *O Master Caliban!* to \$5,000 for *A Judgment of Dragons*, published in 1980; \$7,500 for *Emperor, Swords, Pentacles*, published in 1982; and \$9,000 for *The Kingdom of the Cats* (1985). But each of these novels represents a year or more of work. Moreover, these are advances against future royalties. And with typical sales of about 2,500 copies per book, she rarely "earns out," or makes any extra money over and above, her

advances. (She does receive additional income from foreign sales.) "Editors like me, but readers don't necessarily," says Gotlieb of her densely written work. "They want an easy read for the plane, and I don't write the easy stuff. I attack it as an art form."

Since *Sunburst*, all of Gotlieb's novels have been set within the same future universe, a universe of far-flung planets administered by a sometimes shambling bureaucracy known as the Galactic Federation, of "GalFed." A galactic federation is a classic cliché of the old pulp SF, but in Gotlieb's hands, it becomes something quite different. Where the pulps showed us a galaxy run by white male middle-class Americans, Gotlieb's GalFed is a polyglot melting pot of weird and wonderful alien species. Among her most appealing creations are the intelligent and sometimes telepathic cats of the planet Ungruwarkh, which form the thread linking her last two novels and the forthcoming *Kingdom of the Cats* into a loose trilogy.

Although she is by no means, then, a hard science-fiction writer, she does a surprising amount of research, reading about "geography, geology, weather, cloud formation, genetics, geophysics" and talking at length with scientists in creating her aliens and their worlds. "Most of the time, I want them to be just like they would be if they were that kind of people. But sometimes I'll say, 'Phooey, I'm going to have fun with this.'" She goes into great scientific detail, for example, when describing the bioengineering of a group of human frog-people in *Emperor, Swords, Pentacles*, but in the same book invents a species of alien shape-changers who "have absolutely nothing to do with science at all."

Phyllis Gotlieb has fun creating these wonders, and she hopes that her readers have fun with them, too. "But primarily," she says, "I'm a moralist. Although that's a terrible thing to say." The fast-paced battles and chases in her books lead toward the solution of her characters' moral dilemmas. Her characters are very often adolescents, whether in body or mind, coming to grips with what it means to be a responsible adult. And even the nastiest of her villains typically turn out to be spoiled and misunderstood children at heart.

So her books have very little to do with predicting the future. "I consider science fiction a mirror of the present, a mirror of people's fears. When people ask, 'Where do you get your ideas?' I say, 'From real life.'"

She could, of course, write about real life in more conventional ways. And she has, particularly in her early poetry. "Science fiction allows me to explore things," she says, "to figure out what's going to be in the heavens. I live one of those sober middle-class, middle-aged, bourgeois lives in a dull suburb. But there's a lot of wildness in my head, a lot of darkness, and I can get that out there in a disciplined way."

As she wrote in her book *Doctor Umlaut's Earthly Kingdom*:

"I sell phantasmagoria  
... I am the stranger  
the fate-arranger  
the visionary under glass"

\*

## CANADIAN REGION NEWS

## Annual Meeting

This year's Annual Meeting of the Canadian Region of SFWA will be held at Ad Astra 13, Scarborough, Ontario, probably on Saturday, June 5 at noon; check with Rob at the con to confirm time and place. (A quick survey showed that Spider Robinson was the only Canadian SFWA definitely planning to attend this year's Convention in Nova Scotia, so I've opted for a more central location. Since Dave Duncan is one of the Guests of Honour at Ad Astra this year, at least one representative of Western Canada will be able to attend.)

Next year's Annual Meeting will be held in Western Canada, at Conadian, the World SF Convention in Winnipeg.

\*



## OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

## Ontario Hydra

by Robert J. Sawyer

In October 1992, so that I could concentrate on other projects, I stepped down as coordinator of Ontario Hydra, Canada's oldest association of science-fiction professionals. I'd held this position since the group's founding eight years previously, producing recruitment brochures, mailing labels, and three editions of the organization's annotated membership directory. D. Larry Hancock is temporarily serving as the group's coordinator until a long-term replacement can be found. As my final act, I prepared this history of Hydra, which I'm sharing now with Canadian SFWAns in hopes that perhaps similar groups might someday exist across Canada.

Hydra was founded by Judith Merrill, famous for the 13 "Year's Best" SF anthologies she edited. Early in 1984, Judy sent a memo to a bunch of what she called "good SF heads," inviting us to join her for "the First Night of Hydra North," Sunday, April 29, 1984, beginning at 5:00 p.m.

Said Judy: "The Toronto area 'SF Pro' population has reached a sort of critical-social mass." She proposed what turned out to be Canada's first association of SF professionals, a group patterned after New York City's Hydra Club, founded in late 1947. That Hydra's members included founders Lester del Rey and Fred Pohl, plus Judy, Harry Harrison, Willy Ley, Fletcher Pratt, and George O. Smith.

Of the original Hydra Club, Judy said, "The word *networking* was not yet current, but that's what it was, and more — supplying pleasure and stimulation, as well as useful contacts, for many of us for many years." Our own Hydra has tried to provide these same things.

Our first gathering was held at The Free Times Café, 320 College Street. Judy's original invitation went out to 21 people, and my recollection is that 15 or so showed up. A good time was had, and we agreed to meet again.

After much discussion, we decided to hold future gatherings on Monday nights, various other nights being ruled out for a variety of reasons (I remember Thursday nights being scratched off the list because Terry Green was a big *Cheers* fan — ah, the days before VCRs were common).

I was given the job of being the group's coordinator, charged with organizing gatherings, inviting new members, and so on. At the outset, I did all the mailings myself, but in Hydra's second year I got the individual hosts to take care of sending out their own meeting invitations on mailing labels that I provided.

We decided that meeting in a restaurant really wasn't the atmosphere we were looking for, and adopted a policy of getting together instead in members' homes. We'd originally tried monthly gatherings, but soon found that a quarterly schedule was more to people's tastes. We agreed as a general rule to get together on the second Mondays of January, April, and July, and the first Monday (because of Thanksgiving) of October, with meetings usually beginning around 7:30 p.m.

Of those who Judy invited to that historic first gathering at Free Times, only John Robert Colombo, Phyllis Gotlieb, Terence M. Green, Robert J. Sawyer, and Andrew Weiner remain members to this day (I, in fact, have the honour of being the only person to have attended every single Hydra meeting). Members who joined in the early years and still attend regularly include short-story writer Gustav A. Richar, who comes all the way from Pointe-au-Baril for our meetings, and horror expert Bob Hadji.

Lots of interesting people have shown up at Hydra gatherings, including anthologist Alberto Manguel, Montreal author Donald Kingsbury, American SF writers Roger MacBride Allen and George Alec Effinger, University of Toronto SF professor Peter Fitting, author Robert Charles Wilson (prior to his move to B.C.), authors Garfield and Judith Reeves-Stevens (prior to their move to Los Angeles), *Cosmos* artist Jon Lomborg (in whose house we once held a

meeting, even though Jon wasn't there), Ottawa writer John Park, and animation expert Reg Hartt (who also once hosted a meeting, along with a special showing of cartoons). Sadly, two Hydrans have passed away since the forming of the group: SF novelist Edward Llewelyn-Thomas and fantasy poet Gwendolyn MacEwen.

Our membership has grown slowly, and not always steadily. I remember our July 1987 meeting at Andrew Weiner's home at which the turnout consisted of Andrew, Terry Green, and myself. Still, I worked hard over the years to increase our numbers (including sending letters of invitation to all Canadian Members of SFWA and all members of SF Canada, as well as to every previously overlooked or emerging pro I could find in the Toronto area). For the January 1988 meeting, Terry Green produced a four-page mailing in hopes of rustling up more interest in the group.

Our membership evolved as time went on: gradually, we lost most of those who didn't actually write SF — the booksellers, critics, teachers, and so on began to drift away, whereas more and more members of Toronto's burgeoning community of SF writers started to come out. Judy's original group of "good SF heads" had become almost exclusively professional writers and editors.

Early on, Hydra had been largely ignored (although Taral Wayne did make snarky comments about us in one of his fanzines, decrying the notion that pros should want to get together socially without fans present). But by 1989 we were attracting a lot of attention, and I often got requests from fans and aspirant writers for permission to attend Hydra meetings. A formal membership policy seemed to be in order, so I coined one: Hydra was to be exclusively for established *professional* science fiction and fantasy writers, editors, and critics; it would be open only to people who have been paid money for their work in these areas. Of course, we were still a social group and all of our current members would always be welcome.

And still Hydra grew: In 1989 we averaged 12 attendees per meeting; by 1990, that number had grown to 18; in 1991, average attendance surged to 34; and last year we averaged 30 people. In the fall of 1985, our mailing list had 26 names on it; by the end of 1991, it had grown to 49 names. Some of those, though, hadn't been to meetings for years. After written notice of my intentions, I dropped 15 names who hadn't attended at least one gathering during the previous year.

Despite our growing size, the same four people ended up hosting the vast bulk of our meetings: Rob Sawyer (eight times), John Robert Colombo and Andrew Weiner (seven times each), and Terence M. Green (six times). They also bore the costs of mailings, beer, wine, soft drinks, and munchies. Of course, those costs were minor when we were a small group, but starting with our January 1992 meeting, we introduced a policy of asking attendees to each kick in two dollars.

Over the years, Hydra members have been invited to several special events (including a book launching on April 26, 1989, for Gar Reeves-Stevens's *Nighteyes*, held at *Tour of the Universe* in the basement of the CN Tower). We've also all been offered free admission to some area SF conventions. And at our January 1991 meeting at John Colombo's place, the crew of TVOntario's *Prisoners of Gravity* recorded interviews with Hydra members.

Judy's original name for our group, Hydra North, lasted for a long while, but several of us objected to its branch-plant sound, so we changed it in 1987 to *Toronto Hydra* — Andrew Weiner's suggestion, and a pun on the name of the electric-utility company.

By 1992, we had a lot of members coming from outside Metropolitan Toronto, and so we changed our name again, this time to *Ontario Hydra* (still a utility-company pun, and, incidentally, an anagram for "Hardy Oration"). Hydra generated a spin-off in 1991: Freelance, a similar association for comic-book professionals. If you're interested in that group, contact D. Larry Hancock, who runs it as well.

Hydra has been great fun, with 40 meetings held to date, including the most-recent one on April 12, 1993. Canadian SFWAns: if you're ever going to be in Toronto on one of our regular meeting dates (again, the second Mondays of January, April, or July, or the first Monday of October), by all means come out to one of our gatherings. Hydra coordinator Larry Hancock can be reached at: 153 Woodington Ave., Toronto, Ontario, M4C 3K7, (416) 696-7275. \*

## THE BUSINESS OF WRITING

## What's in a Name?

by Edo van Belkom

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What's in a name?

If you're a science fiction writer, it's probably a middle initial.

Science fiction, more than any other genre, seems to be teeming with writers who use middle initials in their bylines.

The simplest explanation for the popular use of the middle initial is that two of the genre's greatest writers — and biggest names — both used them: Robert A. Heinlein and Arthur C. Clarke.

Whether the use of middle initials by Heinlein and Clarke alone caused the proliferation of middle initials is arguable, but there is an undeniable trend in SF for new writers to expand their names to include middle initials and middle names.

In the January 1993 issue of the Science-fiction and Fantasy Writers of America *Forum* (#129), three of the four SFWA members who had their membership status upgraded to Active had middle initials. A random opening to a page of the 1991-92 SFWA Directory (page 13, which, as it turns out, is the page on which the address of Heinlein's estate appears) shows a total of 38 names listed of which 17 have a middle initial. Of the rest, one has a first initial before a proper name, one uses two initials instead of a first name, and four use two proper names. Just 16 members use first and last names only.

Canadian Robert J. Sawyer, author of *Fossil Hunter*, says Heinlein and Clarke's use of the middle initial was precisely the reason he decided to use one when he began selling SF at the age of 19. It was a decision he has come to regret.

"My favourite SF author, then and now," says Sawyer, "was Arthur C. Clarke. Since Clarke used a middle initial, I thought I would too. In retrospect it's been a mistake. I've got over 200 publications to my credit, and in about ten per cent of those the middle initial was dropped by accident. You end up sounding anal retentive if you're always telling people not to forget the middle initial, or making a fuss if they leave it out."

A classic case of a publisher getting a name wrong can be found in John Gregory Betancourt's 1988 Questar novel *Johnny Zed*. Betancourt is listed as John Gregory Betancourt on the cover, John G. Betancourt on the spine, and John Betancourt on the inside title page and page headers.

Of course, everyone has had their name misspelled at some point. Even someone with a name as simple *Manhattan Transfer* author John E. Stith has had his name mangled by those who think it was *already* been misspelled. "The most consistent error I see is misspelling of Stith, with Smith leading the pack," he says. "Since that most common error results in people seeing my name as John Smith, that, too, helped me decide to use the middle initial."

But even authors whose names are so distinct that they could do without any excess baggage still use the dread middle initial. However, while Jefferson P. Swycaffer, author of *Warsprite*, and Sydney J. Van Scyoc, author of *Deepwater Dreams*, both use middle initials, their use has been more out of necessity than a blatant decoration to an already baroque *nom de plume*.

"Why the middle initial?" says Swycaffer. "Well, it helps distinguish me from my father, whose name is L. Jefferson Swycaffer. I had several letters published in the opinion section of the local newspaper without my middle initial and his neighbours all thought he'd written them. I've been careful not to let him take the blame for my novels."

Van Scyoc went through life as Joyce until her first day of school in the mid-1940s when her teacher decided she'd be called Sydney because the class already had a Joyce. Years later, when she began writing science fiction, the use of the name Sydney seemed like a perfect way to enter the SF genre on a level playing field with the male writers of the day.

"When I began submitting stories to the science-fiction magazines in 1959, it was obvious that I should present myself as Sydney. Joyce might never get a fair reading, much less a sale. There were not many identifiably feminine bylines in the genre magazines of that day, but I have no idea now whether the perceived gender of my name made a difference."

Whether it's made a difference or not, women have been changing their pen names to obscure their gender since English author Mary Ann Evans used the name George Eliot for her 1859 novel *Adam Bede*.

For years, the most common gender-neutral moniker in SF had been the use of two initials instead of a first name: A. C. Crispin, R. A. McAvoy, M. K. Wren, and C. L. Moore. However, while two of today's most prolific female novelists, C. J. Cherryh and S. N. Lewitt, use initials rather than their first names, neither uses initials to hide her femininity.

"I use initials," said Cherryh, author of *Yvgenie*, "because it makes signing things easier. After about the fiftieth time writing Carolyn Janice Cherryh, the fingers begin to go. I started this back in my teaching days and just carried it over into my writing. The final 'H' was added at the request of my first editor. He felt that Cherry sounded too much like a romance writer."

Editors are to blame for a lot of bylines that authors aren't happy with. "I had always planned to write under my full name," says Shariann Lewitt, author of *Cybernetic Jungle*. "On my first book, they misspelled my name on the cover. I then got a call from my editor saying that Marketing didn't like my name. They weren't trying to hide the fact that I was a woman; if my name were Kate or Liz I would be fine. But since they didn't like Shariann, we had to do something — in twenty minutes.

"In twenty minutes there really isn't much you can do about it. The editor suggested initials. I was not happy with that, but I wasn't prepared with any alternative. Then the editor sprung the next surprise. Apparently, you're not permitted to have only one initial. There must be at least two. My parents neglected to give me a middle name. So the 'N' stands for 'Nothing' because that's what's there — nothing at all."

Plenty of men use initials instead of their first names and, as one might suspect, this has caused its fair share of gender confusion. *Marching Through Georgia* author S. M. Stirling never gave much thought to the use of initials instead of Stephen.

"I decided to publish under S. M. Stirling because that's the way I always signed my name. Quite a few fans have mistaken me for a female writer — as much because I often use female protagonists as the initials, although I think they were also a contributing factor. It doesn't bother me; in fact, I was rather flattered — it showed I was getting the voice right."

Robin W. Bailey has also been mistaken as being a woman as much for his gender-neutral name as for the fact that his early novels all featured female protagonists. It's a misconception he's been trying to correct for much of his career. "When I sold my first book, a lot of my readers thought I was female. Critics and reviewers all used the 'she' pronoun. I got a lot of reactions from fans I met at conventions that amounted to 'You mean you're a guy?' That reaction, of course, was coloured by the fact that my first three books involved female protagonists.

"Enter Robert Asprin and Lynn Abbey. They asked me to join the group of *Thieves World* writers. Well, my *Thieves World* character also turned out to be a woman, reinforcing the idea that Robin W. Bailey must be a woman. By this time the 'Robin W. Bailey — female fantasy writer' was beginning to grate a little bit. So in the next *Thieves World* volume, I changed Robin W. Bailey to Robin Wayne Bailey, figuring that half the readers would think Wayne was my maiden name, but the other half might actually catch on that I was a guy."

Like S. N. Lewitt, *Guns of the South* author Harry Turtledove is another writer who has an interesting middle-initial story. His was in the pseudonym given to him by his first book editor. "The name Eric Iverson wasn't my idea. I had the pen name foisted on me by my editor at Belmont-Tower books, to whom I sold a sword-and-sorcery

novel in 1979. He said no one would believe ‘Turtledove.’ I kept the Iverson name — with a middle initial of ‘G’ for ‘goddamn’ — afterwards for a couple of reasons: (1) I was labouring under the delusion someone had read a Belmont-Tower book, and (2) I was publishing academic non-fiction under my own name, and thought a pen name might be useful.

“I became Harry Turtledove again when Lester del Rey bought my four fantasy books that make up *The Videssos Cycle*. He said that if I wanted to stay Iverson, he wouldn’t publish them. Since I didn’t think he was bluffing, I reverted to my own name. I am, I dare say, one of the few writers who has had both a pseudonym and his own name imposed on him.”

To be fair, editors aren’t always pushing pen names on authors. When Canadian T. S. Huff sold her first novel, *Child of the Grove*, to Donald A. Wollheim, he convinced her that Tanya Huff was an infinitely better name for a writer of fantasy.

Of course as Shakespeare once wrote, “A rose by any other name would smell as sweet,” and *Starship Troopers* would have read just as well had it been written by Robert A. Heinlein, Anson MacDonald, Lyle Monroe, Caleb Saunders, or John Riverside.

Perhaps the biggest consideration an author should make regarding his or her name has nothing to do with middle initials or the gender it intimates to the reader. Perhaps the answer to the question of ‘What’s in a name?’ is much less philosophical.

“If I had to do it all over again,” says Sawyer, “I’d write as simply Rob Sawyer. The shorter your name, the bigger the letters it will be written in on your book covers. This may seem an egotistic concern, but you can’t succeed in publishing without building name recognition, and the bigger your name is on the bookrack, the more likely the consumer is to notice and remember it.” \*

## HUMOUR

# Light Bulb Jokes

by the staff of Tor Books and Mike Resnick

*How many writers does it take to change a light bulb?*  
“Change it? I’ll move to another publisher first!”

*How many editors does it take to change a light bulb?*  
Only one — but first she has to rewire the entire building.

*How many art directors does it take to change a light bulb?*  
Does it *have* to be a light bulb?

*How many copy editors does it take to change a light bulb?*  
The last time this questions was asked, it involved art directors. Is the difference intentional?

*How many marketing directors does it take to change a light bulb?*  
It isn’t too late to make this neon instead, is it?

*How many proofreaders does it take to change a light bulb?*  
Proofreaders aren’t supposed to change light bulbs; they should just query them.

*How many cyberpunks does it take to change a light bulb?*  
Only one — but he thinks he’s an army.

*How many Old Wave writers does it take to change a light bulb?*  
All of them: one to change it, the rest to sit around complaining that the old bulb was better.

*How many agents does it take to change a light bulb?*  
Just one — but he has to stand on the shoulders of 80 downtrodden writers to reach it. \*

## AWARD NEWS

# Canadians hit HOMers

On May 1, 1993, the winners were announced for the third-annual HOMer Awards, voted on by the 7,000 members of the SF Forum on CompuServe, the world’s largest commercial online service.

The award for Best Novel of 1992 went to *Far-Seer* by **Robert J. Sawyer** of Thornhill, Ontario. The award for Best Short Story of 1992 went to “Black Ice” by **Barbara Delaplace** of Vancouver, B.C.

(And **Andrew Weiner** of Toronto was one of five finalists in the Best Novella category for his “Seeing.”) \*

## GOLDEN FLEECE

# Mexican Introduction

by Robert J. Sawyer

*Mexican rights to my Golden Fleece recently sold to the University of Guadalajara. I was asked to provide a new introduction for the book, and I used that opportunity to say a few words about the global nature of SF — words that, perhaps, also provide a fitting closing to Alouette.*

Damon Knight, the founder of the Science-fiction and Fantasy Writers of America, once observed that the most unrealistic thing about SF is the preponderance of Americans. “Almost no one,” said Knight, “is an American.”

Nonetheless, science fiction continues to be thought of as a largely American genre, mostly published in New York, with stories full of American heroes fighting to save the American way of life.

Because I object to this, I’m particularly excited that there’s now a Mexican edition of *Golden Fleece*. I am a Canadian writer, and, as you’ll find as you read this book, my main character, Aaron, is also a Canadian. In this era of global thinking, and particularly as Mexico, Canada, and the United States are involved in North American free-trade negotiations, I think it’s wonderful that a science-fiction novel written by someone at the northern end of North America is being published by a press situated at the southern end, bypassing the United States for this edition altogether. Americans often try to lay claim to having invented modern SF (H. G. Wells, Jules Verne, and Mary Shelley notwithstanding), so it’s important to note that we Canadians and Mexicans can apparently produce the stuff, too, and without their help.

Canada’s seventh prime minister, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, observed in 1904 that “the Twentieth Century belongs to Canada.” I’ve long been fond of saying that he was a hundred years premature. Few would argue against the notion that both Canada and Mexico — which I had the pleasure of visiting in 1989 — are coming into their own on the world stage. To me, the book you are now holding in your hands is, in a very small way, a symbol of this.

Even so, I suppose I haven’t missed the American influence altogether. *Golden Fleece* is, in large measure, a parable about the American Strategic Defense Initiative — Ronald Reagan’s proposal for computer-controlled orbital weapons systems. One of the key American scientists involved with the Strategic Defense Initiative Research Organization, Dr. David Parnas, resigned his post because he came to believe that SDI was fundamentally impossible. He felt no computer system could ever be made sufficiently free of programming bugs so as to perform properly the first time it was used — and yet defending against a nuclear attack is a task that you don’t get any second chances at. I heard Parnas speak about this when he was visiting the University of Toronto, and his warnings, all but unheeded in the United States, gave rise to the very buggy character of JASON, the computer from whose point of view the tale of *Golden Fleece* is told. I hope you enjoy his story. \*

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