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the right-at-the-end-of-July issue of the Low Density Writing Project from Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berks, RG1 5AU. If you get this you are invited to the not very fabulous Langford 'Let's Celebrate Not Being At The Worldcon' party on Saturday September 1st, 8pm onward, bring your own crate of booze, copious crash space by arrangement via telephone (0734 665804), usual vile elitist constraints (no smoking in house, no tiny tots by Hazelian decree), usual elitist people (FRANK'S APA & local fandom & Really Special Fans [you]). The Abigail Frost Memorial Feu-de-Joie may or may not be lit in the back garden. Giggling toasts will be drunk to the thought of unfortunates Chris Atkinson, Malcolm Edwards, Colin Fine, Rob Hansen, Paul Dormer and Peter Wareham, suffering thousands of miles away in LA as—reportedly—Britain's total fannish presence at the 1984 Worldcon. Tee-hee. 31 July 1984 (honest).

DUST STORM HORROR: Hazel has been having a redecorate of her den up at the top of the house today, while I hacked out another review column (I'll spare you the blow-by-blow analysis of Benford's *Across the Sea of Suns*, Holdstock's *Mythago Wood*—rilly triffic, nice one Rob—Geraldine Harris's *Children of the Wind* and T.Lee's *The Castle of Dark*, all forced through the failing forelobes between 4pm yesterday and 10am today). First she painted all sorts of things, then she thought of the jammed flap in the fireplace where last year's builders toppled quantities of chimney down the hole rather than go to the effort of dropping it into the garden, and she asked if I could give a little push on the flap in the fireplace to see if... Afterwards, when we'd stopped coughing, and the enormous heap of rubble in the fireplace and three feet around it has ceased to grow, and Hazel had complained "there must have been half the Sinai peninsula up there", we tried very hard to convince ourselves that her new textured-surface paintwork—somewhere between white gloss and dung-coloured sandpaper—was really extremely chic. Visitors may view the Home of the Future by appointment. (Next: Hazel's Decorating Lessons #2, How To Use Polyfilla On Electrical Wiring.)

IN THE GREAT TRADITION OF STEPHEN DONALDSON: yes, yes, it's happened, I've found it on a book, "In a class with Donaldson's *Chronicles of Thomas Covenant*" (quote from Marion Z.Eradley). I only need a blurb saying "Comparable to Terry Brooks at his best" and I can die happy. The Donaldson thingy is *The White Hart* by Nancy Springer, first of (of course) a trilogy, plastered all over with raves from not only Bradley but Norton, McCaffrey and Evangeline Walton. Gorblimey. The book seems to have been stuck together out of lots of little bits prised out of lots of other fantasy books: a Faceless Arch-Fiend (Tolkien, Brooks, Donaldson) whose magic Cauldron (the Mabinogion, probably via Walton) generates undead legions which the High King, an Elf Who Has Accepted The Doom Of Men (guess who) must battle with an Invincible Magic Sword (passim) which must be Wrested (plot coupon) from a Dragon-Guarded Hoard (passim) by someone Tempted To Use Its Power Wrongly (Tolkien: Samwise), and later of course someone (having formerly played Denethor in being unkeen on the new High King) does indeed do a Boromir/Saruman and start Using It Wrongly, while... but enough. Is there a single element in the wretched book which appears to be original invention rather than permutation of old fantasy books? Not that I noticed. Some incidental felicities cropped up, though: like, the hero is called Bevan, which may sound exotic and elvish in America but hardly in or near Wales, while (oh joy) the Arch-Fiend lives in cursed 'Blagden'

and is named Pel Blagden—breathes there a fan with soul so dead as not to remember the Cloggies and the Blagdon Amateur Rapist? Best moment of bombast: "But it was not for cowardice that Ellid was called daughter to Pryce Dacaerin." (In fact it appears that it was because she was his daughter.) Best doubletake: "The stranger lifted a thick green limb for Ellid to creep beneath." (Thoughts of randy lepers and the Incredible Hulk are reluctantly dispelled when one checks back a couple of sentences to find the scene includes some trees.) Best closing sentence I've met in some while: "Well might bode the begetting of a King amidst the regal gold and russet leaves." Well it might.

For some weird reason the good books stay less well in my memory: bad prose drives out good, or something. This is why I usually sound like a gibbering wreck who reads nothing but dreadful skiffy and fantasy for review... Let me think. Lately I've enjoyed Eco's *The Name of the Rose*, lots of things by M.F.K. Fisher (chiefly *The Art of Eating*, which Auden used to plug tirelessly and which I fancy mighty Gregory said nice things about in a recent Frank), Rudy Rucker's *Infinity and the Mind* (second reading inspired by appearance of Granada paperback), Martin Gardner's *The Whys of a Philosophical Scrivener* (birthday present from Hazel, whoopee), a lot of Edmund Wilson and for some weird reason the complete theatrical criticism of Bernard Shaw, a very silly and forgotten novel by Harry Stephen Keeler called *Thieves' Nights* (read more than 20 years ago, attempt to insert baroque Arabian Nights structure into pulpoid mystery novel), James Branch Cabell's *The King was in his Counting House* (unaccountably the only Cabell novel I'd never read until quite lately—evilly funny intrigues in 16th-century Italy, with murder, betrayal, buggery and simony everywhere), Gray's 1982, *Janine* of course, some amusing Ellis Peters mediaeval detective stories (odd, looking back at this offhand list, to think that I generally consider historical fiction as "something I don't like much"), Gore Vidal's *Collected Essays* (one of the best things I found at Seacon), A.K. Dewdney's pulpish-but-fun *The Planiverse* (another in the 2D tradition of *Flatland*, *An Episode of Flatland* and *Sphereland*—the 'ideas' that should be turning up in SF keep appearing in these more offbeat spots), Amis's *Stanley and the Women* (shut up, everyone, one needn't agree with the old misogynist to like his writing), A.G. Macdonnell's *England Their England*, John Fowles's *Mantissa* (expected this to be awful from the reviews but found it bloody funny, if a bit in-jokey), all three belatedly acquired volumes of *Yes Minister*, and—I forget the rest.

The Plain People of Fandom: What about those Piers Anthonys then?

Me: They were In The Line Of Business, for review, honest...

TPPOF: Another thing, why is it you always go on about bloody book reviews in this thing, is there nothing else in your tedious life?

Me: No. I mean, yes, of course there is. It merely happens that I always end up rushing for the first-of-the-month FRANK'S APA deadline and also the first-of-the-month review column deadline, and we get what in electronics circles is known as crosstalk.

TPPOF: What in fannish circles is known as getting twice the mileage from the same gags about Nancy Springer books and things.

Me: If you're going to be like that I'll start a new paragraph.

ACKERMAN TEDIUM HORROR: As the dynamic, up-to-the-minute editor of *Ansible*, next issue real soon now, I was given an official, handwritten Press Release by dear old Forry Ackerman at Seacon. Being a famous fan had at last gone to his head—it was even less exciting than those hot news items inserted by unbiased Alan Dorey into BSFA mailings ("NEWS NEWS NEWS! ANOTHER INTERZONE IS GOING TO BE PUBLISHED!!! IT WILL BE VERY VERY VERY GOOD!!!!!!"). With the obsessive minuteness of a Court Circular, FJA chronicled for me his every step in Europe over the next several months, apparently assuming that (eg.) his planned visit to P. Barbet was Headline News. Er... stop me if I ever get like that, eh?