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Interview: IAN WATSON

ONE WRITER AND THE NEXT WAR

BY JOHN BRUNNER

GENE DEWEESE - DAVE LANGFORD - DARRELL SCHWEITZER



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"HOW TO BE A SCIENCE FICTION CRITIC" BY ORSON SCOTT CARD

AN INTERVIEW OR TWO

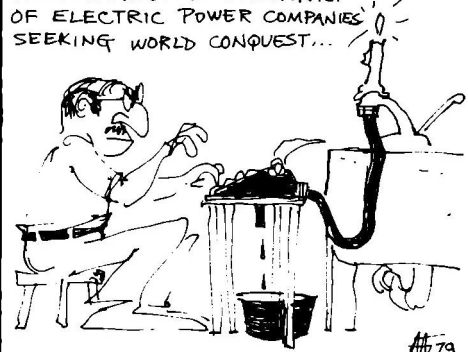
SOMETHING GOOD I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YET

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ALIEN THOUGHTS BY THE EDITOR

GUILT ACCUMULATES AFTER SEVEN DAYS OF RELATIVE SLOTH AND AVOIDANCE OF DUTY AND THE EXERCISING OF SKILLS, TO THE POINT OF FORCING ME TO BEGIN AGAIN...

Harry F. Leonard, after having discovered SFR and bought a copy of everything in stock, asked, "Do you cater to individuals foolish enough to be interested in lifetime subscriptions? (LOCUS has been charging 10X the one-year subscription price, including your current year's payment.) Please let me know if you do."

The offering of lifetime subscription rates is tempting. Raw greed raises its head.

Because the subscriber gets a ripping-off in that kind of deal.

For instance, if I offered a lifetime sub to SFR for \$70. I'd be able to sock that \$70. instantly into a money market fund and get at least 10% interest---\$7.00 per year. Thus the interest on the sub money pays the lifetime costs (plus the usual profit) and I'd still have the subscriber's \$70. whenever the magazine died.

No wonder lifetime subs are a good deal for a publisher if he can get any.

The subscribers would be far better off putting their "lifetime" sub money into a secure [govt. paper only] money market fund and going to the bother of using the interest to buy a subscription every year.

I guess I'm not ruthless enough.

It hit me while I was watching a movie on TV a few days ago: "My Ghod! The scenes are so short! The dialogue is minimal..." And as I watched a wild surmise blossomed in my mind.

I watched other movies and paid monitoring attention to the pacing. Aha! Ahaaa!

"Why don't fiction---text fiction writers---write like that?" I asked myself. "They're in direct competition--life and death competition--with The Tube and The Screen. And the story-telling virtues of the visual media are plainly action-action-action. Very few scenes of people sitting around philosophising or having long, obvious internal conflicts.



There is always danger, suspense, movement, lusts, violence..."

I pondered this revelation. Visual fiction media, admitted, have an advantage in that with a few seconds of picture they can show a city, an alien, a spaceship, a terrible wound, a peaceful countryside, all in vivid color.

But I also know damn well a skillful writer can create such images and atmosphere with a few words, and can weave more and more images into action and dialogue.

There is no reason why a word-fiction creator cannot match the images, the action, the pacing, the dialogue of the visual fiction creator.

And I suspect very strongly that unless text fictioneers begin to write more visually and adopt the pacing of The Tube and The Screen fictioneers, they will find themselves in an entertainment ghetto which will shrink and shrink every year until it is a vanishingly small segment of entertainment...a province reserved for eccentrics, diehards, and the idle intellectual.

Ahhh, I realize there are those in my readership who will recoil in horror. "You're talking reverting or returning to pulp writing, Geis! You're talking giving up all of our pretensions to Literary Quality! You're talking giving up Characterization!"

Yup. Adapt or die. Entertain or die. Stop boring the readers---or die. Stop suiciding with too-small typefaces [AMAZING is a classic case of that type of hara-kiri]. Stop dilly-dallying with "setting the scene" at the beginnings of stories and novels.

As for Characterization---a good writer shows character by actions and dialogue and in passing by showing how a character dresses, how the character speaks, how the character acts... A good writer doesn't stop the show to write long paragraphs about the character's childhood or traumas. A good writer chooses the specific detail to show character...as often did the pulp writers who used speech "tags" to identify characters, and often used specific details of body or face to remind readers who was who.

It's a challenge to do without interior monologues, without interior feelings. It's the cinema technique of staying out of the character's mind...using only spoken words, actions and brief exterior descriptions.

I've written a few novels using that technique. It's difficult, but it speeds up the novel and usually improves it by eliminating a lot of self-indulgent and purple prose. I recommend the technique; try giving the information the reader needs only with dialogue and action. It involves a lot of body language, facial expression, tone of voice...and probably recasting scenes, adding and subtracting scenes to compensate and adjust.

"Stylists" hate this kind of writing, of course; they want to be the show, and this kind of narrative discipline is more suited to literary carpenters than literary impressionist artists.

I'm not saying all sf and fantasy should be written in the high-tensioned cinematic style. Variety, change of pace, by all means. But to keep readers reading and even to expand the overall readership, writers must adjust to the realities of the on-going visual entertainment age.

Why are STAR WARS, THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK, and RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK such great movies as entertainment and as moneymakers?

Because they are superior pulp fiction in film format! And they even have subtleties of character and motivation, complicated pasts and promised futures embedded in them. Coherent, advanced technologies, or detailed historical fact. All this in two hours of breathtaking action, wonders, quests, battles, loves, deaths...

Who among the presentday sf and fantasy writers comes close to writing the equivalent in text?

In my judgement, only Roger Zelazny. Ron Goulart comes close, but he always has satire and farce in mind.

Text fictioneers have a tremendous advantage over the visual fic-

tioners---we can create visions which they cannot, short of two years work and multi-millions of dollars. And the only thing that is staving off the death of text fiction is the huge costs of creating wonders for filming.

If text sf and fantasy writers will learn to adapt to the pacing and higher skill levels required to write superior pulp fiction, they can survive and even thrive in the increasingly visuals-dominated entertainment world.

It is easier to watch than to read. write it on your walls: IT IS EASIER TO WATCH THAN TO READ! And sneering at TV and movies and pulp-pacing will not change that basic reality one jot or tittle.

If we want to survive and prosper, we'll have to give the TV audience the swift pace, the vividness, the color they get on TV and MORE! We'll have to give them what they can't get on TV or do get from Lucas every two years---bold, detailed, exciting wonders, thrilling, suspenseful action, heroic characters who are also human, and villains with a touch of humanity.

Ahh, but you ask, "Can't we also do something 'serious' like ORDINARY PEOPLE?" Sure---if you can write the short scenes, telling dialogue and acute gestures and expressions that make that film a winner.

What I'm calling for is an awareness of coming doom. An awareness that our reader base is eroding, an awareness that a radically different set of storytelling "rules" is called for, and a willingness by editors and publishers to look for and buy this new style fiction.

And publishers are going to have to remember to make it easy to read their books by using larger, blacker type. Reading skill levels are declining every year. Even college students don't read well! Readers will gratefully buy pocketbook novels of 40,000 words if the words are gripping, exciting, and easy to read.

With the ever-increasing cable access by watchers, and the ever-increasing cost of even paperbacks, (hardcovers are a luxury for the rich and/or fanatic) more and more readers will spend more and more time watching uncut cable offerings. The lure of cable is its presentation of more honest, more realistic, more sexy, more violent visual fiction.

Network TV has been the salvation of text fiction because its dishonesty, stereotypes, cliches and boring, sanitized formulas have driven away the easily bored and the intellectual. Reading was the only alternative short of getting into an expensive-to-run car and spending \$3-\$5 per seat in a theater to see a film.

With hundreds of cable networks seeking slots, willing to offer a full range of uncut movies, and made-for-cable fare, reading will suffer.

Science fiction and fantasy can survive if its writers and publishers face the realities of reading dynamics, write at a significantly higher level of skill, create high-tensioned, fast-paced adult fiction full of wonders and fascinating ideas, and present these stories and novels at reasonable prices.

Even the lowly sf magazine could survive and prosper if it adopted the pace/tension/adult formula and went to the text fiction equivalent of cable---subscription-only. Allowing the distributor and/or the supermarkets to dictate content or to impose taboos is the equivalent of the networks censoring themselves to keep advertisers and to placate "morality" pressure groups.

If people are spending \$25-\$30 per month for cable channels, they will pay for it by cutting back on books and magazines, as well as not going out to see movies.

All the tricky cover art and design will not be enough to save book/paperback publishing from a slow death in the coming decades. [Some publishers spend more on the cover of a book than they pay to the author for the ms.!]

We have been seduced by attention from academe and our new generations of writers have come---more and more---from the university/literature matrix. Science fiction and fantasy have tended to shift toward an elitist/intellectual orientation. The older "first generation" of pulp editors and fan-turned-pro editors are dying off, being replaced by university graduates who are not themselves (and never were) writers. They tend to edit for the college-educated person, and they tend to reflect the biases of their English Lit. education.

I suspect they are leading sf and fantasy into a worse ghetto than they think they are escaping.

And I believe the next ten years will prove me correct.

We have to give people what they cannot get elsewhere in the visual media, and we must make it as easy as possible for them to get us and read us.

We must learn to give our hardcore readership and above all the vast once-in-a-while readership stories told in the visual media style; they're used to it, and it is easier for them to read if we use that type of narrative technique.

Why throw roadblocks and tons of padding in their way? We only turn them off and gradually diminish our audience.

The printed fiction format has great advantages over The Tube and The Screen: portability, variety, accessibility. We can provide more of sf and fantasy than any watcher can find on Tube and Screen. We must make people want more. We must write so excitingly, so rivetingly, so well, that millions of people will choose to read rather than watch.

It can be done. It must be done.

Afterthought: I don't want to be absolutist in advocating a strict no interiors, no character-thoughts technique for science fiction and fantasy. For most writers the wrench would be too difficult, the recasting of plot and scene too alien and "unheard of". In real terms I'm advocating a shift, a reduction to a bare minimum of the easy-to-write thoughts-and-realizations which make fiction---especially Serious Literary SF & F---so easy to write.

No doubt there are writers who will accuse me of wanting to take away one of their most valuable and necessary tools. On the contrary, I'm asking them to throw away their most overused and unnecessary narrative crutch.

It's curious how naked our schemes and ulterior motives are, sometimes. Nakedly obvious to others, yet masked in our own minds.

Thus I was surprised and struck with terror when I noticed the short note Andy Porter



had penned on the December 1981 copy of his SCIENCE FICTION CHRONICLE that he sent me:

'Review SFC or be cut off!'

My guts turned watery. My breath hissed, my heart pounded. My Ghod! Not to receive SFC again? Never to read the latest sf and fantasy news that Andy Porter sees fit to print? N-never again to be able to contrast his coverage with ours? N-n-never again to smirk over the stories he's missed, the stories he's avoiding?

I tried to remember when last he reviewed SFR? It's been...years?

However, in spite of the 'Trade' indicated on the address, Andy clearly considers his sending me SFC a great favor, and that he expects an occasional review in exchange, and that he really only trades his STARSHIP with me, for SFR.

Too, he may be stung by my comments in these pages last issue in which I gently suggested that he and other fan publishers charge too much for the value they give, printed-page-wise, not counting ads.

Surely, surely he knew that such a peremptory command/threat:

'Review SFC or be cut off!'

would get my back up and result in precisely the situation he (secretly) wished--no bloody possibility of a review of SFC? Counterproductive on the face of it, but exactly what he wants, I imagine.

I'm happy to oblige him, and make him happy.

As for me...have I brought him to this act by unconsciously refusing to review SFC lately? By throwing rocks at his publishing policies? Possibly.

So it goes.

Sickening confession of failure. Destroyed illusions falling dead to the carpet. Tears of frustration. Firm uplifting of jaw. Clenched teeth. Determination to face reality. Whimper. Cringe. Acceptance. Dry eyes. trembling smile. New joy....

What's it all about, Dickie? It's about my art career. I have had---lo, all these fifty years since I used to draw side-views of sailboats in kindergarten at Vernon grammar school---a Plan to turn to art as a hobby when I had time.

A week ago I had SFR #41 mailed off, bookstore orders filled, the decks cleared... I felt it was time to get out all those how-to art books I've been accumulating for twenty years, all those pens and pencils and pads of paper and spend an hour or two each morning happily drawing.

I did. I set up a corner of the diningroom and took up the charcoal pencil----

Oh, AAAAAARRRRGH!!

There was a reason I've delayed this "art time" all these decades. There was a reason I made promises to myself and kept putting off the hobby [after several abortive starts].

I can't draw.

I have no artistic talent.

Ahh, the subconscious knows!

That's why I developed my writing and editing skills. That's why I kept putting off facing the truth.

There is no fun in making ugly lines on paper. There is no satisfaction in hours of erasing, mending, starting over....

Persistence has proved that I can make distorted, malformed botches. Persistence has proved I don't have that magic ingredient---talent.

So, with a heavy sigh and clear eyes, I have put away the art books, the equipment, the supplies. Never again. No. Never. I'll stick with what I do have talent for---writing.

Writing this entry has been more fun than drawing. I smile. I function. And I realize how much work and talent is required to be a good professional artist. I realize that more than ever. And a small corner of my mind is filled with envy, salted with bitter regret.

Artistic Afterthoughts: Final solutions, final judgements, final conclusions...certainty...they're all very hard to come by.

After I had written the above sour observations on my artistic skills and talent I decided to give landscapes a try. My botches were of the human body and parts thereof. Why not, I decided desperately, try the wild outdoors where there is a certain amount of leeway inherent in the field? I mean, who will know the difference if a tree branch crooks this way or that? If a mountain is humped here or there? If a stream is a few yards wider than originally intended?

And so it came to pass that I turned to a book on how to draw old barns and buildings...and lo, and even behold, I managed, first thing, to draw [copy] a credible old grist mill...up to a point.

I used pen to make the stark drawing with some detail and used Pentel fine point felt-tip colored pens to fill in color.

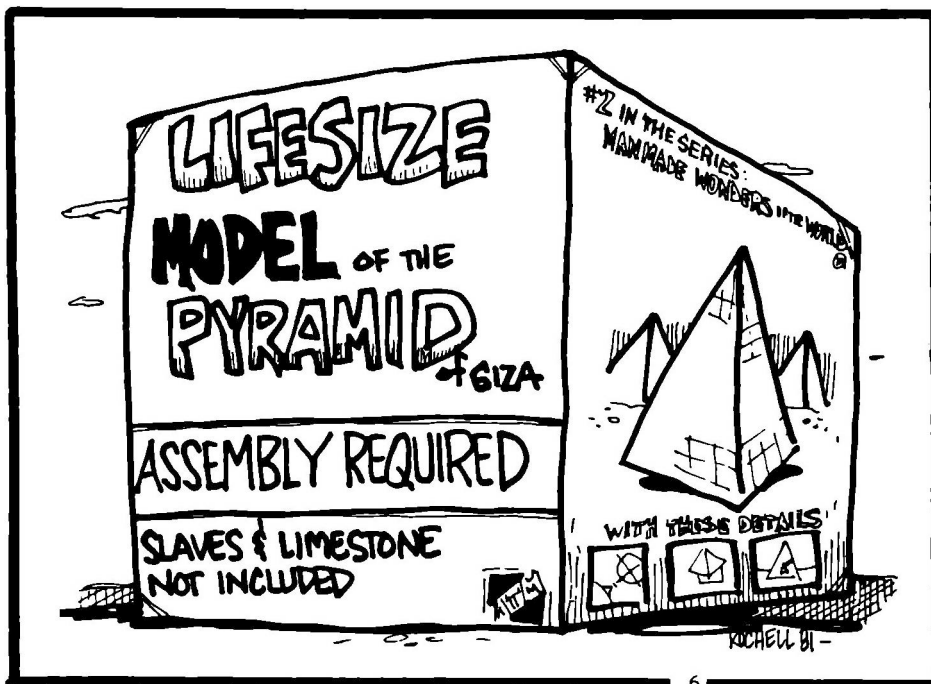
Very nice. Fun. But a worm in the apple of my content: those pens--in a 24-color set---cost a fucking fortune to a cheapskate like me. \$12.50 is ruinous. There isn't that much ink in the things. [And don't buy the K-Mart packs of same---they have about one drop of ink in each---a ripoff "bargain."]

So I considered: why not just stick to pen and/or pencil work? I began to realize I had vast oceans of technique to explore in the pen/pencil area. I went to Gill's [books-art-office-supply] and found the volume.

Paulette decided to buy me the book, Rendering in Ink and Pencil, for Christmas. I have a set of nibs and a few pens. I have lotsapencils of varying leads...and I have the prospect of many, many interesting, bemused, frustrated, happy hours ahead of me as I attempt to acquire the techniques I must have to accomplish the effects I want on paper.

Maybe my artistic future will come to pass after all.

I'll keep you posted.



Elton Elliott and I were lounging around the house a month ago (or so) speculating on ways to save the book business and science fiction in book/magazine form.

The problem [aside from style and technique in narrative---discussed earlier] is in the spotty, halfhearted, unfair, maladroitness, clumsy book/magazine distribution system in this country.

Even if you are a reader you often can't find what you want even if you make heroic efforts to go where it should be available. And that's in a city! If you live in a small town or a 100,000 people city you are shit out of luck. You order by mail and wa-a-a-a-i-i-i-t, or you do without.

Till now most distribution systems involve putting books and magazines in stores and requiring the readers to come to the stores.

An awful lot of readers don't bother very often. They're probably the majority of readers. They'd be willing to buy a book or two, especially a new one by one of their favorite authors, but....

Elton and I speculated on ways to bring the books to the readers. These methods surfaced:

1. Bookmobiles stuffed with new releases which stop on a regular schedule at various high-density areas---colleges, downtown lunch hours, even close to various sports events.

This involves retailing books like junk food, and the volume would be lower, at least in the beginning.

2. Bookstores could advertise and announce via leaflets a "we deliver" service. Phone orders could be delivered the same day. A small delivery fee would be acceptable as reasonable by those who want home delivery.

3. Door-to-door book salespersons who would carry a stock of new releases in their cars, or who would accept orders and deliver next-day. The salesperson could leave a book-listing sheet/leaflet at each door which promises home delivery of phone orders. A commission would be paid on each sale via phone.

4. The establishment of thousands of special interest sf/fantasy bookstores in small cities. The overhead would have to be very low and the use of unused garages, basements with outside doors, etc. would be appropriate. A setup kit of suggestions, do's and don'ts would have to be developed by the franchise organization. There are all kinds of local ordinances which might limit this home bookstore approach.

I can see all kinds of problems

with each of the above "solutions" to poor book distribution. The obvious one is low profit margins and high overhead. The individuals involved would make very low wages in the beginning, until a clientele was built up.

In any event, something, some radical change in the distribution system will have to be tried, and will have to succeed if reading, book publishing, and authoring is to be saved from slow death at the hands of the electronic media. I am convinced the answer is providing a unique, exclusive product and personal delivery service.

Those moral racketeers called The Moral Majority who through sophistry and rationalization convince themselves (and are convinced by their "leaders") that they have a right, a duty and an unmitigated permission from their god to use force, threat, and intimidation to achieve their superficially masked lusts for power and punishment [Ah, for the Good Old Days of the Inquisition!] should read their money-begging mailings with the eye of a trained psychologist.

What would such a mind conclude from the underlined messages in that literature?

'Our grand old flag is going down the drain.'

'I believe that the overwhelming majority of Americans are sick and tired of the way the amoral liberals are trying to corrupt our nation from its commitment to freedom, democracy, traditional morality, and the free enterprise system.'

'But how can I be silent about the cancers that are destroying the moral fiber of our nation?'

'But as God gives me strength ---I must do more. I must go into the halls of Congress and fight for laws that will protect the grand old flag...'

'Will you join me in this bold venture? Will you help me save our grand old flag from going down the drain?'

This fund raising circular is signed by Jerry Falwell. He asks for a contribution of \$10, \$25, or \$100.

The cancers he's worried about are homosexuals in classrooms and pulpits, smut peddlers selling pornographic books, X-rated movies allowed in almost every community, television channels showing R-rated movies and sex and violence, and, legalized abortion.

His problem is that his narrow-based ignorant, lower class, es-

entially inflexible followers rarely read books (excepting the Bible) of any kind, do not believe in freedom, democracy, true morality or the free enterprise system.

And those that do believe in the above are smart enough to avoid him like the plague.

A psychologist would shake his head in disgust at the blatant use of symbol and smear words and exaggeration to motivate those who might read this literature.

Falwell is on a power/ego trip masked by his "crusade" to "do God's work."

Falwell and his ilk are using the vast pools of envy, hate and inferiority which lie in 90% of the emotionally rigid, insecure, terrified minds who make up the lower-class, under-educated, women and some men who feel themselves helpless in a world they know is too much for them to understand or cope with. They are desperate and angry. They want control! They want simple! They want to stop people from liking and enjoying sex!--and getting away with it! They want 1840 A.D. brought back and frozen in time. They want to burn witches and books and homosexuals and abortionists.

They don't have a chance.

But they are a governor on the rate of social change, and probably a necessary one. Irresistible forces are killing their remnant culture and religion and they're crying out in pain and outrage.

There will always be a segment of our society who can't handle change who will organize to stop the world. There will always be intelligent men and women who will use that pain and terror for self-promotion. Big frogs in little puddles live very well indeed, as they croak. They wrap themselves in the Flag, in the Home, in Mom, and the way things were when they were kids...and they have a fine time being Spokesmen and Leaders, being paid attention to, catered to, wine and dined...and often well laid.

Instead of riding the wave they are resisting. They sure make a lot of noise as they drown, don't they?

(Metaphors and similes courtesy FIGURES OF SPEECH LTD.)

You had to have noticed that "The Affair of Logical Lunatics" by Philip Jose Farmer is not with us this issue. I am coming to the reluctant conclusion that Phil doesn't want that piece reprinted in a fan-

ALIEN THOUGHTS CONTINUED ON P. 21

IF I HAD A HAMMER,
I'D HAMMER IN THE MORNING,
I'D HAMMER IN THE
EVENING
ALL OVER THIS LAND...



"British SF in the 1970s belonged to Ian Watson", says David Pingle of FOUNDATION. "Watson may not be the best writer in British science fiction, but he is probably the best thinker", enthuses Peter Nicholls of ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF SF fame. "There is no other writer in the field who provides such a bold challenge to the imagination", insists Brian Stapleford. It was with fear and trembling that SFR girded itself for this interview....

Ian Watson was born in North Shields in 1943, and twenty years later escaped our educational system

IAN WATSON

INTERVIEWED BY DAVID LANGFORD

with a degree in English from Balliol, Oxford. Subsequently he lectured on English in Tanzania (1965-7) and Tokyo (1967-70), meeting his most terrifying challenge teaching Future Studies at Birmingham Polytechnic (1970-6). Since then he's been a full-time author, though his career began in 1969 when his short SF story, "Roof Garden Under Saturn" was published in NEW WORLDS and his educational book JAPAN: A CAT'S EYE VIEW in Osaka.

Fame and power came with his first science fiction novel, THE EMBEDDING (1973), a runner-up for the John W. Campbell Memorial Award and Nebula finalist. Its French translation L'ENCHASSEMENT won the 1975 Prix Apollo. Then came THE JONAH KIT (1975) whose paperback won the 1978 British Science Fiction Association (BSFA) award; THE WOMAN FACTORY, a collaboration with his wife Judy though not their daughter Jessica (published only in French translation as ORGASMACHINE, 1976 ---- but see below!); THE MARTIAN INCA and ALIEN EMBASSY (1977); MIRACLE VISITORS (1978); THE VERY SLOW TIME MACHINE (1979) ---- the title story of this,

his only collection to date, reached the final Hugo ballot; GOD'S WORLD (1979); THE GARDENS OF DELIGHT (1980); and UNDER HEAVEN'S BRIDGE, with Michael Bishop (1981). His latest novel is DEATHHUNTER (Gollanez, October 1981). Forthcoming are two Watson-edited Science Fiction anthologies: PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION (Grey-stoke Mobray, November 1981) and ---- co-edited with Michael Bishop ---- CHANGES (1982).

Ian Watson was British Guest of Honor at the 1981 British National Science Fiction Convention (where his short "The World SF Convention of 2080" was a runner-up for the BSFA Award), and is Features Editor of the respected critical magazine FOUNDATION, British representative of the Science Fiction Writers of America, deviser of the forthcoming Channel 4 TV series, MINDPROBE (to which he's also contributing the first and other scripts), and active in local (Labour) politics. He lives in Moreton Pinkney, Northamptonshire, and talks very fast.

* * * *

Your intrepid reporter approached Ian Watson at work, crouching 1,000 feet beneath Moreton Pinkney in the deep structure of the semantic mine where this skilled artisan hacks out his novels in an atmosphere of sweat and toil. Still weary from a long shift wielding his meta-cleaver at the reality interface, he brushed loose concepts from his soiled coverall before squatting to share a traditional chip butty with me. The typically proletarian surroundings suggested an obvious first question ----

SFR: In his book of interviews, DREAM MAKERS, Charles Platt describes you as an Oxford academic. I gather you objected rather forcibly to this? Indeed, within hours of his visiting you, you and Judy and Jessica quit Oxford forever, for the fair village of Moreton Pinkney untold miles away.

WATSON: Charles was unloading his own hang-ups about Oxford and Cambridge onto my head. His hang-ups were about the "horrors of academia". The reason why we ended up hating Oxford was because of the privileged frivolity of the place, its narcis-

sism and power, and its brain-twisting grip upon the arteries of British life and thought. The only reason I would like to go back to Oxford is to demolish those colleges stone by stone and distribute the building materials around the land. Apart from their intellectually numbing effect, and their social hegemony; the Oxford colleges came out in their true colours as rich exploiters towards the end of our stay. Which is why Judy and I were both arrested for criminal damage, shortly before Charles called.

SFR: Eh? You were arrested? I mean, I blew up a pillar box at Oxford, but ...

WATSON: I don't know if you know this, but in that pillar box was the first letter I ever wrote to John Brunner. Only the charred fragments of the envelope were left, but the post office delivered them to John, and he sent them back to me. When I opened the envelope and burnt scraps of my own letter to him fell out, I thought, "My God, I've really offended him!" You nearly ruined a beautiful friendship with John Brunner.

SFR: I grovel utterly. But why were you arrested?

WATSON: The Oxford colleges are huge landlords. (You can walk all the way from Oxford to Hyde Park, or down to Southampton docks, without ever leaving Oxford-owned soil.) The property boom was on at the time, and St J---'s college went crazy with greed because of the rise in central city house prices. The pressure was really on for the old tenants to get out -- even if the houses just stood empty, while they coasted upward in value. The old street community was being wrecked, and replaced by rich middle-class property owners -- which hardly helped the students or the academics of Oxford, whom the colleges nominally ought to have cared about. "Dons" were being forced to take out punitive mortgages in their middle years. A highly-regarded Professor next door to us was squeezed far out into the suburbs while all the money he had spent on the house and garden vanished into the coffers of his own college.

In this way, the house next door to us got sold -- to a small-time exploiter, who packed it with rowdies who kept people awake night after night, while he was living somewhere else. He also hired in people to bang and thump after working hours, "improving his property". Our whole end of the street was going mad with the unceasing disturbances. The surrounding ten households signed a petition to the owner calling on him



to stop wrecking their living and working conditions. There were complaints to the Public Health, etcetera. Without result. I was losing sleep. I couldn't think to write.

An 84-year-old, one-eyed woman living over the road hobbled across one night waving her walking stick, threatening to push in a window, she was so distraught. We deterred her, and ... we did it for her. When the row started up one evening after daughter Jessie had gone to bed, and we were eating supper, we said, "Okay, that's it", and in a co-ordinated 45-second operation Judy and I took out all his windows, front and back, with bricks and a hammer, and went back to get on with our supper.

SFR: That reminds me ... have another chip butty?

WATSON: Thanks ... Soon police boots were pounding around the block, hunting the assailants. And eventually a couple of passing police knocked on our door, and said, "Do you happen to know anything about?"

"Yes, we did it", said Judy and I.

The policeman staggered back, amazed.

"Then ... then ..." he gasped, "I arrest you for criminal damage."

So off we were hauled to the cop shop, and Jessie too, pulled out of bed by a sudden infusion of police-women, and even her Rupert Bear.

We explained what had been going on, and they said they'd lock us up for the night unless we promised not to go back and do it again. Judy refused, but I pointed out that since all the windows were already broken, we couldn't possibly do it again. So they phoned for a taxi for us.

Presently the case came up in court. We hadn't been in a court before, so we sat in on the previous case to observe procedure, then I defended us. We were let off with no fine and no court costs, and the police prosecuting officer came over afterwards and said, "I should like to congratulate you on your lucid presentation of the evidence, and, what's more, on having done the deed in the first place." But we did have to refund the damage. So I claimed it from the Inland Revenue as a tax-deductible business expense, since the disturbance had been interfering with work and lowering my income, and I had taken action to defend my business. While pointing out that there are grounds in law for disallowing this sort of thing, the Revenue agreed to accept it this time.

But Oxford was Poison City now, because what had happened had direct economic roots in the behaviour of the colleges. What had always been latent, in happier times, now became manifest. When we left, the street was like a row of gaping rotten teeth, about to be crowned with gold. It's educational, becoming a criminal. Immediately one joins the majority of the population.

SFR: I know, I know. Later on, they got me for blowing up my college ... But if we could diverge wildly, onto the subject of writing? Let's try the traditional questions -- like why do you write, and why write science fiction?

WATSON: I reach a larger audience than by talking to people individually. So I can disseminate ideas more widely. In the past, maybe I would have been a traveling preacher or a peripatetic philosopher.

Why science fiction? Because it's a thinking literature. (Or at least it can be.)

SFR: By "a thinking literature" do you imply that (as an "ideas" man) you find complex ideas can be put over without so much gift-wrapping-- so many concealing layers of metaphor, as would be necessary outside science fiction?

WATSON: To answer with a metaphor: at the Annual Horticultural Show in Moreton Pinkney this year, one of the table flower arrangements was censured for having the "mechanics showing" if you squinted closely enough; I don't agree with this way of judging flower arrangements.

SFR: Your fans will all be aware that at that very show, you were awarded the Winifred Jackson Memorial Perpetual Challenge Cup for the

Best Front Flower Garden, yet another coming amendment to your ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF SF entry! But, SF ... actually your first book JAPAN: A CAT'S EYE VIEW, wasn't SF, was it? I also had the impression you'd written some odd things to keep the, er, thoat from the door -- when we first met in the early 70s, you remarked with a curled lip that a certain Priest who shall remain nameless had written soft-porn potboilers, but aristocratic Watson wouldn't lower himself to write less than hard porn.

WATSON: I didn't write A CAT'S EYE VIEW to keep the wolf from the door. I was being well-paid by the Japanese Ministry of Education at the time. The project was suggested by a Japanese educational publisher. Their Government had actually paid (!) to fly our tabby cat out to Tokyo with us -- and a Japanese classic of daily life in the Meiji Era (just after Japan was forcibly opened to the West) is I AM A CAT, by Natsume Soseki: contemporary life seen through a cat's eyes. So I decided to write a 1960s version of Tokyo life, seen through a British cat's eyes. The book has gone on selling ever since.

I wrote another one for the same publisher in 1977: JAPAN TOMORROW -- a science fiction storybook for the same high school market, about alternative futures for Japan.

SFR: Now, let's hear the bit our readers are waiting for.

WATSON: Hard Porn, ah ... In a toyshop in Tokyo called Kiddyland, which catered to the American army, we picked up almost all of the innovative Essex House novels -- innovative in the sense that they were an attempt to produce speculative, intelligent, artistic, satirical, socially critical pornography. (So of course the series was squashed, as soon as the controlling company realized what was going on -- subversion through sex.) This was pornography as attack, not as wank-fantasy. As in my THE WOMAN FACTORY, a novel of woman's liberation. A contract is being signed right now, with Playboy Paperbacks, for a new and improved edition, with a totally rewritten storyline. In the retrospect of 10 years, the book could do with rewriting. This will be the first English language edition.

And if I might say so, THE WOMAN FACTORY is one of the reasons why I don't have a literary agent. Arriving back in the UK, and believing that all real writers have agents, though knowing that this novel was a dead cert for Olympia Press, I got an agent (who shall be nameless) to market it. (He did, incidentally, occupy the floor beneath Olympia

Press, in Soho.) About a year later when I wanted to know what had happened, he revealed that he had submitted it unsuccessfully ... Well, not exactly to the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge and to Oxford University Press, but almost. Had he popped upstairs with it, to Olympia? Not likely. So I sent the book myself to Olympia; they said, "Great!" and zoomed it straight over to the New York office -- and a couple of weeks later we saw a newspaper article about how Olympia Press had just gone bankrupt.

Your remark about my aristocratic mien is interesting, since this can only be a product of inner grace. The only aristocrats I resemble are Swinburne and Toulouse-Lautrec, both of whom were dwarfs. (As am I, due to my Northern working class origin.) A la lanterne, les aristos!

SFR: Turning with an immense effort back to science fiction ... One of the impressive things about your first novel THE EMBEDDING is the display of expertise in numerous areas -- the traditional space flight and alien contact, yes, but also politics and anthropology and underdeveloped countries and, especially, linguistics. Was all this part of your existing intellectual furniture, or was some swotted up for the novel?

WATSON: The politics "began" after I left the gilded pleasaunce of Oxford University life for the Socialist Republic of Tanzania. The possibility of writing something meaningful began then too -- since my greatest dream in Oxford as a student had been to write decadent beautiful prose: a mixture of Beardsley, Huysmans, Walter Pater and Ronald Firbank -- though the necessity of writing science fiction only became fully apparent when we got to Japan. I began writing science fiction, deep in future shock at the Japanese 21st Century landscape of high-tech toys and eco-horror, as a survival mechanism. The anthropology and

linguistics came largely when I was teaching future studies back in Birmingham, in the company of a psychologist and semiotics fellow, and a social anthropologist. I was self-taught, since Oxford didn't teach me any language theory, but only Lit. Crit. and the history of sound changes from Anglo-Saxon onwards, and how to translate Middle English texts about nuns' underwear. THE EMBEDDING grew out of my own discovery of the "soft" sciences at the time, plus the political impetus of having lived in a developing country in the third world

SFR: So that's what you brought from outside the science fiction genre? What about influences from outside, if any?

WATSON: While I was lying about on Oxford lawns reading Ernest Dowson with one hand, with the other I was schizophrenically clutching van Vogt. But science fiction seemed a bit like masturbation, a furtive pleasure which must be kept secret. I only got my head together about science fiction in Tokyo, where it was a tool for survival -- though I had been reading the genre since I was eleven or twelve. I tend to have been influenced by the genre as a whole, rather than by a short list of books and authors.

SFR: But if you had to draw up a short list of authors you admire?

WATSON: As of now: Michael Bishop, Barrington Bayley, Philip Dick (middle period), John Brunner, for example. My very favourite book is David Lindsay's A VOYAGE TO ARCTURUS, and indeed I wanted (and it's still my ambition) to write the sequel to this. I wrote two chapters of the sequel, but Gollancz deterred me from continuing -- and they own the copyright. To me, my chapters seemed like Lindsay reborn, though not, alas, to Gollancz. I was told that my idea of Lindsay wasn't their idea of Lindsay. Lindsay is atmospheric; I am philosophical, said they. Ac-



tually, this shows a thorough misunderstanding of Lindsay, and as far as I'm concerned, what I wrote is still Lindsay Reborn. This is a project that I will take up again one day, such as when ARCTURUS goes into public domain in about 1990....

SFR: Watson and ARCTURUS, good grief! Sounds like your earlier novels with their yoking together of wildly different elements. We've mentioned THE EMBEDDING -- in THE JONAH KIT there's whale communication plus mind transfer plus extremely far-out cosmology, and of course, the unlikely connection shows up right in the title of THE MARTIAN INCA. Any profound comments?

WATSON: It wasn't a deliberate trick. It's just the way I think. Possibly, as regards narrative interweaving, I was influenced by Graham Greene, possibly by the structure of Wagner's music dramas with their leit-motifs. I read a lot of Greene and listened to a lot of Wagner, once.

SFR: Let's have a look at the Themes of your work to date, your Messages for Mankind, all that. The obvious theme is the examination of reality, starting with mere different viewpoints in the earlier books, through a kind of transition period in ALIEN EMBASSY (various official realities for various levels of enlightenment), to the sequence starting with MIRACLE VISITORS where the ground gets treacherous underfoot and objective reality becomes more and more dubious. In VISITORS people can't grasp the "higher reality" of strange phenomena like UFOs without becoming part of it and thus strange, non-objective phenomena themselves. Later, in GOD'S WORLD and GARDENS OF DELIGHT, whole realities have to be created from scratch by an act of imagination before they can be explored ... I remember you saying those last two were essentially mirror images of each other because -- but you put these things much more beautifully than I could hope to.

WATSON: You're right about the "transition period" in my books, though I myself would tend to say that MIRACLE VISITORS marks the transition. The books up to then had been about the nature of reality, consciousness and perception, yes, but they were in a sense "innocent" books. They proceeded quite spontaneously (albeit plotted in advance). I, the author, was safely outside the reality problems confronting the characters. By which I mean that I was involved in my characters' destinies, but my own destiny wasn't in danger. Whereas in MIRACLE VISITORS (which the themes of the earlier books led to) I myself was embroiled, as author,

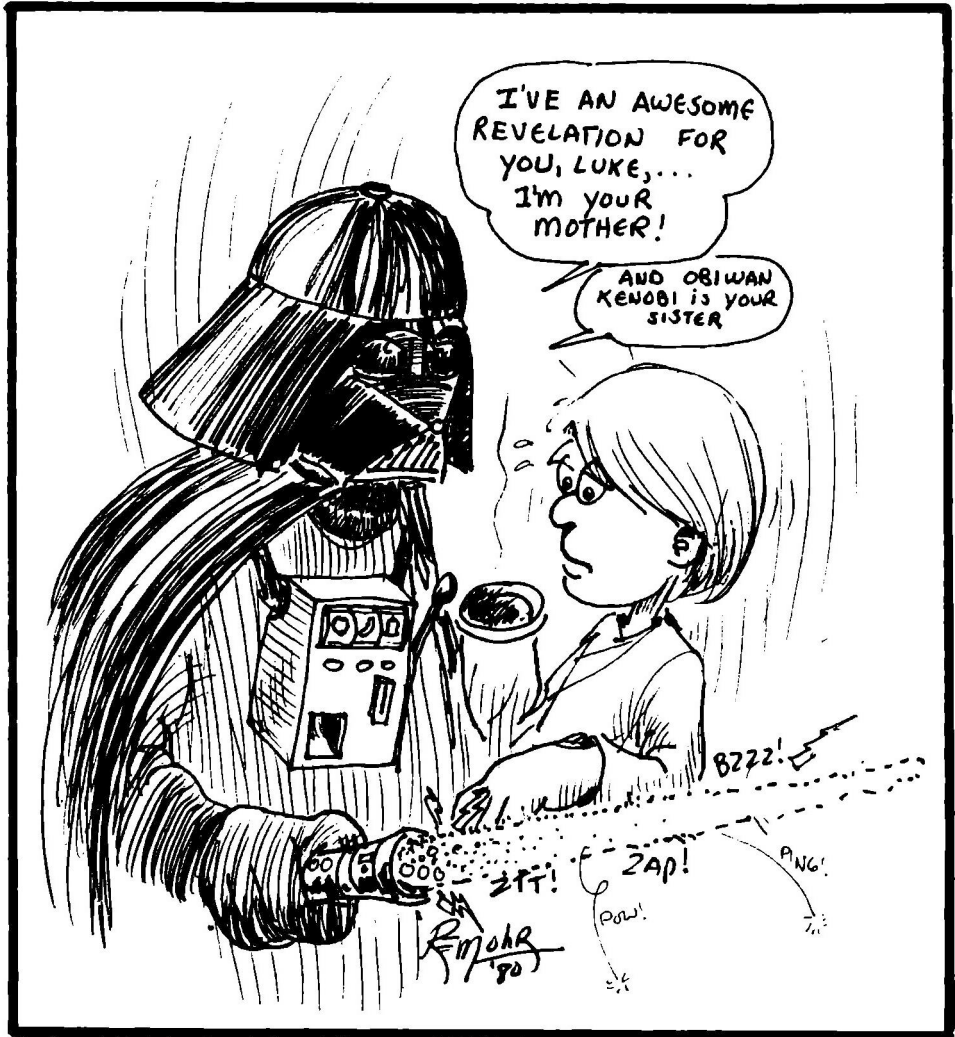
in the problem of "the reality of reality". And if I hadn't solved it, by completing the book, I feared that I wouldn't be able to write anything honestly again. In a sense, this is a problem that confronts any author who begins to worry about the nature of the reality that he or she is creating in a book. One answer is to begin writing "meta-texts", fiction about fiction, meta-literature. But in my case the problem of the reality, and explicability, of the universe itself.

So, as you say, in GW and THE GARDENS OF DELIGHT, the whole caboodle

ing there, in order to understand their own reality.

SFR: The "transition period" also seems to mark a division between books dealing with social and political reality, and later ones where this emphasis vanishes in favour of metaphysics -- more and more abstract

WATSON: This isn't really true, because the books form an evolutionary sequence (or at least I hope so!). It would have been quite possible to dish up another third world/conscious-



has to be created from scratch -- hauled up by its own bootstraps. (Just as physical existence itself is hauled up, perhaps, by its own bootstraps.) GW and GARDENS are mirror images in the sense that, in the former, the journey to an objective alien world is presented as a journey through imaginative space, the physical starship journey being also a journey through the imagination -- whereas, in the latter, the creators (who are also the inhabitants) of the alien Bosch-world have to imagine (and create) a human starship arriv-

ness novel -- but this would have been just repetition; it wouldn't have been an honest exploration of the themes inherent in the earlier books. It would have been the mere production of a "politically correct" commodity. By taking my themes off Earth for a while, into the outer space "laboratory", I've worked my way round ("by a commodius vicus of recirculation", as James Joyce put it) back to the triple theme of the nature of reality, power and its misuses, and utopia/dystopia, in DEATHHUNTER. Also, the flip-side of political commitment and criticism

of abuses is, in fact, the yearning for utopia. (Politics may be the art of the possible, but Socialism is at heart the striving for utopia.) Insofar as GW and GARDENS represent two very different, and not necessarily trustworthy, utopias, they are part of the earlier progression, the search for the earthly paradise.

SFR: These two in particular also contain fairly complicated expositions of "God" and the universe, which take up a good many words. Do you think this is why some critics accuse you of being arid, of simply lecturing?

WATSON: Well, I've been accused of that -- but on the other hand I've also been praised for precisely the opposite. I think it all depends on the level of ambition of the reader, or critic. There's also such a thing as fixed ideas among critics and reviewers. For example, in a THRUST interview with J.G. Ballard, when they happen to discuss my books in passing ... now, where is it?

(He searches through his tool kit, tossing thanatoscopes and eschatometers out onto the ground.)

Oh, yes, here we are. The interviewer says to Ballard: "So you're still, to put it crudely, an 'ideas' man rather than a 'style' man? Some people have faulted Watson as a literary stylist". And Ballard answers in puzzlement, "He's got a good style, hasn't he? He's a good descriptive writer ... He can set a scene. I think he's got a good style..." The point being, that Jim Ballard didn't know till then that I was supposed to have an "arid" style, or lack of it. He'd just been reading the books themselves. No one had told him. No one had injected this bit of critical colouring into his appreciation. So maybe it isn't true at all.

SFR: But how does a "fashionable" judgment like that become fashionable?

WATSON: Well, I've spoken out in favour of "ideas-fiction", and have written several polemical essays about science fiction as a "didactic" literature: It's assumed that I'm simply making a virtue of my own "faults" and it's assumed furthermore that my characters must be different from the warm, breathing personae one is conned into accepting into one's bosom, elsewhere. People associate ideas with dryness, and oppose this in a simple binary way to warm human emotion, characterization, well-crafted style. This is as simple-minded as a traffic light switching from red to green.

SFR: I'd wondered about a connection between ambition and complexity

of GOD'S WORLD and what I'd heard about its taking a long time to sell in paperback?

WATSON: GW sold British paperback rights very quickly, for the highest advance to date, or since. (The recession started shortly afterwards.) It didn't sell at all in America. No doubt one of the reasons for that is that GW is a somewhat up-market book. But I was also messed around imcredibly for ages by a certain Big Name Editor over there, and if a novel hasn't sold after a while in America, there's a certain tendency to regard it as having gone stale or sour. Like yesterday's doughnut.

SFR: Is GW your favourite book? Have you a favourite book amongst your own? Also though here it may be Fifth Amendment time, I wonder whether you have a least favourite Watson book...?

WATSON: Which is my favourite finger? I would rather rephrase this: Which book am I most emotionally connected with, still? (Though even this is false, as it suggests that I have divorced myself from the others.) But ... well, MIRACLE VISITORS was the most dangerous book to write. Not merely because UFOs started manifesting themselves closer and closer to Oxford, as though they were homing in on me, but because of what I said earlier.

My least favourite book is a pre-tentious novel I wrote in Oxford as a student, called THE INFANT GLADIATOR. It strove mightily for effect, but I was merely writing. (Oscar Wilde, to his Aunt: "My dear, one doesn't write about things. One merely writes.")

SFR: Chris Priest and you have had rousing arguments on approaches to science fiction: To summarize with all my characteristic crudity, it seemed to be Watson the Didactic Vs. Priest the Aesthetic. "Neither precedes the other, but aesthetics, rendered sufficiently high, can trounce didacticism any time!" said Chris in FOUNDATION 10. Now, five years after that stage of the debate, how do the positions look to you?

WATSON: Well, we did start that off, as co-editors at the time, to get a rousing debate going. The Didact versus Aesthete business really conceals an underlying political bias, which really came to the fore when my dear, misguided mate Chris proclaimed at the Leeds convention, during the debate on whether science fiction should support causes, that Britain is an occupied country '(occupied by America) and that we could not, and should not, try to do any-

thing to change this, even if we all get blasted into radioactive dust as a result. This is the bankruptcy of the supposedly autonomous aesthetic stance. No wonder he likes the band Status Quo!

SFR: Ouch, I hope that's just a snide comment on poor old Chris rather than a suggestion that didactic writers such as the later Heinlein stand to the left of the mere aesthetes

WATSON: You've got me there, squire. Cunning devil, aren't you?

SFR: No comment. A word more on actual writing, now --- your settings, for example. Although you've got a nice line in Third World locales, I'm surprised we don't see more use of your experiences of science-fictional Tokyo?

WATSON: I have used Japan a fair bit, in THE JONAH KIT and then in UNDER HEAVEN'S BRIDGE with Mike Bishop. But I don't really write autobiography, you see. I'd just as soon steep myself in a country I've never been to, and then invent it. "Imagination is not memory", said William Blake; and if we can't invent unvisited countries on our own globe, say I, then how on Earth are we going to invent alien planets?

SFR: Let me have a tiny pinch of salt for my chip butty before I ask about Watson Characters ... The ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF SF, here a mere mouthpiece of Peter Nicholls, would have it that your characters are mostly afflicted with anomie to the point where they become indistinguishable. How do you plead?

WATSON: Actually, most people are indistinguishable from each other, most of the time. They are in a ground state, and tend to collapse back constantly into the ground state, from their brief moments of high existence. Constant high existence, and wildly differentiated individuality, is a consoling artistic fiction ... of novels, films, plays. A theme of my books is the self-programming of human consciousness, to escape from this ground state.

SFR: Speaking of differentiated individuality, I must say that literary collaboration has fascinated me ever since I first shared a bottle of plonk: How did the Bishop/Watson novel UNDER HEAVEN'S BRIDGE come about? The aliens in it are pure Bishop (from CATACOMB YEARS and A LITTLE KNOWLEDGE); their cybernetic God is pure Watson. I had visions of it starting with a phone call: "Hey, Ian, can you do me some metaphysics? or 'Hey, Mike, can I borrow some aliens until next Thursday?"



WATSON: I was fascinated by Mike's alien Cygnusians in CY and ALK and wrote -- we write to each other frequently -- asking if he was going to do a story set on their home world, since they certainly deserved it. He said he wasn't planning such, but why didn't I do it, or why didn't we both do it together? So I nipped out and did some research on 61 Cygni (separation of the binary stars, spectral classes, etc.) and discovered to my dismay that we couldn't use 61 Cygni after all. So I invented the Gemini system instead, and wrote sections of the tale (which was going to be a novella at this stage) and mailed them to Mike. Looking at the sections I wrote, in retrospect, it doesn't really seem to me as though I wrote them at all -- as I was doing my best to think in Bishope at the time. I'd say we can both do that for each other. Though we've never met, or even spoken on the phone, we can become a two-headed entity; so it isn't all that easy to dissect out who did what.

Anyway, Mike expanded what I'd written, altering and mutating it, and I added in extra chapters (such as the Prologue, or Chapter 20 for example, where the Kybers try to scale the platform to escape; Mike thought this had surfaced from my un-

conscious memory of news footage of the last US troops scrambling for the last helicopter out of Saigon, and I think he might have been right. I arrived at the 2nd French SF Congress in Angouleme, after two days out of touch, to find everyone in the hotel lounge staring at the TV screen, just as the last helicopter was lifting off.) We both polished the text, and it was all done, pretty speedily and without problems or disagreements. The book grew outwards organically from a centre, rather than being written chapter by chapter, turn by turn.

SFR: Onward to your newest book, DEATHHUNTER, which grew from your (damn good, I thought) short "A Cage for Death"

WATSON: The story in OMNI, yes. Actually, the novel has some of the same scenes, but otherwise, a different setting entirely, and characters are shifted around and renamed. DEATHHUNTER is an expansion of the idea, rather than of the text of the story. Chapter One of DEATHHUNTER is by no means "A Cage for Death", in the way that "Of Mist, and Grass, and Sand" is Chapter One of DREAM-SNAKE.

SFR: I suppose the novel and short story forms are so different that the odds are against such an approach working.

WATSON: Well, exactly. If a short story works successfully as a story, then simply making it into Chapter One of a novel verbatim by no means guarantees a successful novel. If anything, the opposite is likely!

SFR: Just been reading proofs of DEATHHUNTER (got my chip butty wrapped in them, actually): I liked the way an almost conventional and vaguely satirical narrative suddenly starts throwing up disorienting shocks, beginning with the onstage appearance of Death itself (from "Cage") and then topping even that several times. An accessible book, especially since the point of death, and after, must be where metaphysics becomes important to everyone. An "innocent", spontaneous book, or another which dragged you into its questions?

WATSON: Midway between the two, I'd say. DEATHHUNTER grew from a short story which ended with a massive question mark: What on Earth happens next? So initially, this was a narrative, story-telling challenge, rather than a metaphysical question mark. The novel really grew out of the image, of the death-creature caged -- rather than any pre-exist-

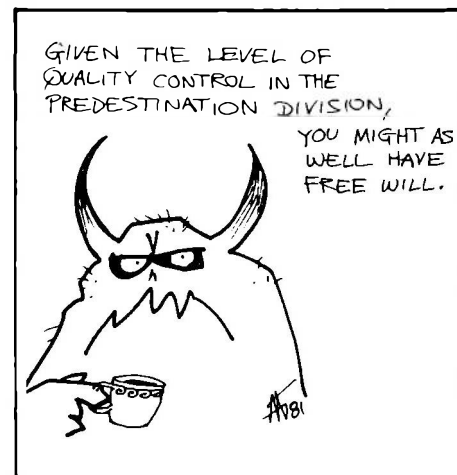
ing theory about death. But then the solving of the problem required relocating the action of the story, into a society much more occupied with their own theory of death. Out of which the narrative of the novel could then evolve. Then spontaneous narrative took over, since the ending of the book -- the last 2 chapters -- came as a complete double surprise to me.

SFR: Me too. Now, all I know of the novel after DEATHHUNTER is that you've mentioned a "comic" approach ... that right?

WATSON: Yes, that's the book we're talking about. It's a slapstick comedy, concerning the theme of the superhuman. Maybe there's too much slap and not enough stick? But it was the book that I felt like writing at the time. Now I'm in the preliminary stages of a wholly new science fiction novel, about which all I'm prepared to say is that it is set in 19th Century Russia. I'm back from off-world, with a vengeance.

SFR: But your next book is in fact your first attempt at editing an anthology, PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION. This, as I know too well, has one of the most warped approaches of any original anthology I've met. What sparked it off?

WATSON: This is to be published by Lionel Fanthorpe's Greystoke Mobray publishing venture. Until I met Lionel my kneejerk reaction was, "God, that foul hack!" Fifteen seconds after meeting him, I realized he's a wonderful human being. He was wanting to publish an original anthology ... We batted ideas around, and as I'd just written GARDENS, set in a Bosch painting, I thought of all the other paintings that it would be interesting to enter, hence the original idea. But they needed a framework, and this emerged from the fertile brain of Roger Campbell, a member of the Norwich Science Fiction



Group. And a very ingenious framework it is indeed. By a marvelous synergy, all the stories by different hands fit this framework, and dovetail into each other wonderfully, even though they're all quite independent of each other at the same time. Mike Bishop explores the ambiguous world of Magritte, Chris Morgan the heroic landscape of Frazer. And David Langford has done Durer, but as to the framework which Explains All, I'm not giving the game away!

SFR: What about the anthology CHANGES, with Michael Bishop?

WATSON: It's part original and part reprint, and should appear from Ace Books in the summer of 1982. It's about sudden metamorphosis. We've got original stories from Richard Cowper, Tom Disch and Ursula Le Guin already in; we have promises from George R.R. Martin and Chris Priest. Harlan Ellison read a story over the phone to my co-editor, but unfortunately, Mike doesn't have a speaker-writer attached to his phone, and we haven't been able to extract the words in written form from H.E.....

SFR: Um. Speaking of metamorphosis, haven't I heard that word or one very similar mentioned in connection with your "slapstick" book?

WATSON: Yes, METAMORPHOSIS (as in Ovid's) is the title of the slapstick book. Whose fate is unpredictable.

SFR: Does that (in conjunction with the fact that your anthologies are first appearing from other publishers) imply that not all your future novels may be issued, as traditional, by Gollancz?

WATSON: (Mouth crammed with chip butty, he failed to answer.)

SFR: We've heard from Watson the Novelist, the Didact and the Editor -- after standing as Helmdon's Labour candidate in the May council elections (and getting a respectable third of the vote, too), what does Watson the Politician have to say?

WATSON: I would like to see a socialist government in Britain. Michael Foot has proved to be a disappointment; he has waffled and betrayed the cause of unilateral nuclear disarmament to which he was committed. Conceivably Tony Benn may betray his principles too, once he is in a position of real power -- though I sincerely hope not. But if so, there will be others who will

put into practice what they have preached.

SFR: But what about your own campaign?

WATSON: Heroic stuff. Judy and I canvassed 29 villages, in blizzards and freezing rain and other manifestations of the British spring. Apart from help from some leafleteers, there were only us two. But instead of sitting back laughing, the Tories pulled out all the stops: Setting up committee rooms, laying on transport to take sick, mummified and senile voters to the booths. The turnout was very high, so I think we probably got the maximum possible Labour vote in this political Blue Hole, but the Tories likewise whipped up a huge turnout

SFR: Less earth-shaking but more science-fictional, you recently became UK rep of the SFWA. Do you think we mere "overseas members" can have a worthwhile influence on this often US-chauvinist organization?

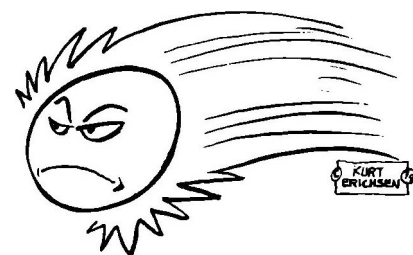
WATSON: SFWA is a slightly disorganized organization at times. I may be the British Rep, but I've been missed out of the Membership Directory, and my new computer mailing label altogether omits the name of the place where I live. Which makes it miraculous that the mail still arrives, penciled with queries and speculations by the post office. But SFWA is getting itself sorted out. And of course, overseas members can have an influence -- in proportion to the number who join. If everyone who is eligible in Britain, Europe, etc., joins ... then it'll become a different kind of organization, and all to the good.

SFR: What do you think of the science fiction market today?

WATSON: The British market is still on its knees because of that crippling element, Blue Thatcherite. The situation in America seems reasonably healthy. Some publishers are axeing, but others are expanding. Some magazines go under but others are emerging, or being reborn. GALAXY could well be refinanced again soon, for example. OMNI is spinning off a new science fiction magazine.

SFR: Meanwhile, do you ever find that shadow of market requirements falling between the idea and the reality -- the ideal and the finished novel? (Or between the novel and the large advance?)

WATSON: What large advance? On the whole, I write what I want to write.



I am **not** a number. I am a free electron.

Subsequent editorial suggestions are often quite helpful ones -- helpful to the work itself. To a reasonable extent, one can create one's audience, though admittedly there are a lot of adverse market pressures around. Well, there are also quite a lot of markets, too. For instance, right now the Germans are getting fed up to the teeth with horror and with dumb science fiction. As one zone sinks so another rises.

SFR: I hope that's true. As for being fed up to the teeth, what's your favourite way to make chip butties?

WATSON: I use oven-cook chips, myself. Incidentally, there's a good pub in Daventry (near Moreton Pinkney) that sells chip butties.

SFR: Last question. I'm afraid I'm going to say it. They all say it. There is no escape from it. OK, I'll say it now. Do you plan to carry on writing science fiction?

WATSON: Yes.

SFR: Thank you, Ian Watson.

FOOTNOTE FOR THE WATSON INTERVIEW:

The chip butty is supposed to be ever such a working-class delicacy, asymptotically approaching the ideal of a foodstuff made from pure starch. A butty is a sandwich; the chips within are the traditional British staple which Americans mysteriously call French fries. Only masters of our Chipshop Guild can achieve that special pale-green translucency which is the glory of the British chip. Disgustibus non disputandum. (DRL)

DEATHHUNTER
Gollancz, £6.95, 173 pp., 1981

REVIEWED BY DAVE LANGFORD

This one comes as a pleasing surprise to those afraid Watson was

getting ever more remote and erudite: While not as ambitious as (say) GOD'S WORLD, this metaphysical thriller is his most accessible book for a while. Perhaps this is because the aspect of metaphysics under scrutiny is the inevitably interesting one of Life After Death.

DEATHHUNTER opens with a rapidly, often wittily sketched "utopia" containing the expected whiff of something rotten. The Good Life arises from the philosophy of the Good Death: The creed is that, dying, you vanish like a turned-off TV picture and that the proper thing to do is accept this. "You should go gently into that good night". Psychiatrists are now "death guides" leading the aged and sick into this approved frame of mind, without fear, without hope, before voluntary euthanasia. With fear of death abolished, evils like war have somehow vanished too; but it's made plain that the creative arts have likewise bitten the dust. Even afterlife research is taboo, since its findings might shake the dogmas of the Houses of Death.

The eponymous (love that word) Jim Todhunter is a misfit death guide corrupted by "wrong thoughts". Perhaps the only good death is a violent one; perhaps something out there feeds on souls which fail to make a quick getaway? Onward to my favourite SF image of the year, seen separately in Watson's short "A Cage for Death" (OMNI). Lured by synthetic corpse-sweat and EEG recordings of the "thanatos rhythm", Death itself is caught fluttering like a great red moth in an infinite enclosure of mirrors ...

Dozens more cards await up the Watson sleeve. A cure for cancer, out-of-the-body journeyings, glimpses into C.S. Lewis-like hells of one's own desires, a whisky-swilling angel, cosmic revelations which flip the universe inside out and back again. Odd inconsistencies of logic and character are strewn with seeming carelessness: Clues to the unexpected "true" reality, the carpet from beneath which is pulled in the penultimate chapter. This provokes admiration as Watson cuts the ground from under critics of his characterization (you can almost hear him chuckle), and simultaneously gives the dreadful grey feel of that old cop-out which goes "Suddenly, he realized he had dreamt it all!" Ah, but then there comes another surprise in the final chapter.

Things and events can't be dismissed as unreal, Watson seems to say, merely because they lurk in "imagination space". You might have to create your own afterlife by an act of imagination when the

time comes; what happens to you could even be influenced by Watson's imaginings in DEATHHUNTER, in which case you'll find yourself afterliving in very interesting times.

This is the book to give people who think they don't like Ian Watson.



SCIENCE FICTION QUIZ COMPILED BY ROBERT SABELLA

Each of the following is the first line of a famous science fiction story. Your job is simply to identify the stories. The answers are on page 21.

1. His name was Gael Dornick and he was just a country boy who had never seen Trantor before.
2. There is a hollow, holey cylinder running from hilt to point in my machete.
3. It was the year of the fourth Nondepression.
4. I can't really say that I knew her, certainly not the way Seroff knew Isadora.
5. Supposedly his late wife Sybille was on her way to Zanzibar.
6. I am a very old man; how old I do not know.
7. "Tonight we're going to show you eight silent ways to kill a man."
8. Never buy anything at a second-hand organbank.
9. I'm a baitman.
10. Roum is a city built on seven hills.
11. Two glass panes with dirt between and little tunnels from cell to cell: When I was a kid I had an ant colony.
12. There are always those who ask, what is it all about?
13. It is three-thousand light-years to the Vatican.
14. Lije Bailey had just reached his desk when he became aware of R. Sammy watching him expectantly.
15. I was busy translating one of my MADIGRALS MACABRE into Martian on the morning I was found acceptable.

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THEORETICALLY
I UNDERSTAND
WOMEN, BUT IN
REAL TIME I
HAVE
TROUBLE.



ONCE OVER LIGHTLY

CITY
By Clifford D. Simak
Ace, Paperback, \$2.75

Closer to fable than to straight science fiction, this award-winning classic, now published with a new epilog, tells how humans desert Earth, leaving behind their robots and animals. Dogs with artificially boosted intelligence and the power of speech form their own peaceful, pastoral civilization with the help of the robots, who act as their hands. The eight stories and epilog that make up CITY cover many thousands of years and are connected by scholarly commentaries debating whether such odd beings as "humans" and such irrational constructs as "cities" could really ever have existed or are pure myth, invented by early Dog-gish storytellers. Despite some out-dated material on the technological reasons for the disappearance of human cities (most of the stories were written in the forties), CITY remains one of a handful of science fiction books that should be required reading for everyone, whether they normally read science fiction or not.

INHERIT THE EARTH
By Irma Walker
Atheneum, \$12.95.

Shea is, among other things, a telepath and a pyrokinetic. Because of her slow physical and mental maturation -- in her thirties at the end of the book, she appears to be still in her teens -- she was thought to be retarded so none of her family objected when a mysterious government agency took her off their hands, secreting her in a mountain hideaway where they can study her various talents and try to figure out ways of using them. When the hideaway is destroyed and her captors killed, Shea escapes and is raised by a backwoods family in the area. Unfortunately, she spends much of the rest of the book escaping from various factions wishing to make use of her abilities for less than desirable ends. INHERIT THE EARTH starts excellently, at times reminiscent of a cross between Stephen King and Elina Stone (VISIONS OF ESMAREE), but



it gradually verges toward melodrama and concludes with a series of unsurprising revelations right out of a 1950s EC Comic. Despite the disappointing ending, however, it is not the kind of book you can put down once you start it.

GUARDIAN
By Thomas F. Monteleone
Fawcett, Paperbk, \$2.25

OZYMANDIAS
By Thomas F. Monteleone
Doubleday, \$10.95

In GUARDIAN the supercomputer that controlled the defenses of the Citadel in the last days of the war that brought an end to the First Age is rediscovered by a small band of adventurers.

In OZYMANDIAS, it is, at its own request, "made human", its memories transferred to an artificially grown body with numerous latent psy powers. It names itself Ozymandias in honor of the poem by Shelley, a First Age poet, and sets out with a First Age cyborg to learn "what it is like to be human" and possibly to restore the science and civilization of the First Age. Despite an episodic story line and occasionally jarring anachronisms in the dialog, Monteleone's picture of this desolate far-future world -- the Slaglands, the Mantag Depression, the Ironfields, etc. -- are often impressive, and Ozymandias' adventures as he learns to make use of

his powers are gripping. And from the downbeat and inconclusive ending of OZYMANDIAS, it's a good bet that a third volume will be coming before long.

IN THE HANDS OF GLORY
By Phyllis Eisenstein
Pocket Books, Paperback, \$2.75.

When the Stellar Federation broke up, twenty ships of the now defunct Federation Patrol took over the human-colonized planet of Amphora ostensibly to provide protection from the "Outsiders". Now Dia Catlin, a gung-ho Patrol pilot captured and nursed back to health by Amphoran rebels, begins to doubt the purity of Patrol motives, past and present, and eventually turns her back on everyone in the Patrol, even her own parents.

In some ways, IN THE HANDS OF GLORY is a space opera not unlike something out of PLANET STORIES and a good one, at that. The only trouble is that the treatment reminds one a bit of a John Wayne movie turned upside down. That is, the "message" about fascist-like militarists (the Patrol) is overly obvious, and the heroine's "conversion" is far from believable. It seems apparent that, despite the Patrol propaganda she mouths enthusiastically at the start, she was never really "one of them" and was just waiting around to have her eyes opened to the truth.

Still, none of this really gets in the way of the story, and there is a bit of cynicism directed at the rebel motives, too, perhaps to make up for the stacked deck the Patrol was dealt.

AT THE EYE OF THE OCEAN

By Hilbert Schenck
Pocket Books, Paperback, \$2.50.

In 1840's Cape Cod, young Abel Roon learns that he is mystically linked to the seemingly living organism that makes up the world's oceans. Able to sense its motions and moods as well as those of the creatures that inhabit it, Roon becomes a godlike figure to those he works with while transporting shiploads of escaped slaves to freedom in Canada. Told in slow, almost archaic first person narratives by Roon and his bride, Hope Mayhew, and by her parents, the story nonetheless keeps you fascinated from first page to last with its larger-than-life characters and detailed picture of 19th Century life. And the final sections have the most powerful sustained emotional impact of anything I've encountered since the last time I saw Thornton Wilder's "Our Town".

THE DINOSAURS

Text by William Service
Art by William Stout
Edited by Byron Preiss
Bantam, \$12.95, paperback.

THE DINOSAURS consists primarily of a series of short "dramatic narratives" of the imagined everyday life of dozens of varieties of dinosaurs, profusely illustrated with Conan-style paintings and drawings. The narratives, says Dr. Peter Dodson in his introduction, have been created by "poetic license ... tempered by facts, reasonable inferences and restrained speculation". The result, while interesting, is more than somewhat frustrating, raising but not answering countless questions. What could make this book truly fascinating would be an additional hundred pages of footnotes explaining what the underlying facts are, where inference ends and speculation begins, and how much is pure poetic license. Still, if nothing else, the book may send a lot of people, as it did me, heading for the library to look up more detailed accounts of the latest paleontological theories and discoveries.

RESURRECTION DAYS

By Wilson Tucker
Pocket Books, \$2.75, paperback.

In some ways, RESURRECTION DAYS seems a cross between Ron Coulart's frothy comic novels and Eric Frank Russell's "bright-earthman-makes-

fools-of-bumbling-bureaucratic-alien" stories. But here the "bright earthman" is an Indiana carpenter killed by a train in 1943 and then, a few thousand years in the future, faultily resurrected to be a slave laborer. And the "aliens" are the regimented and brainwashed Amazonian women who resurrected him to work in a small, isolated and futuristically self-sufficient town in the middle of what used to be Indiana. The resurrectee, thinking and speaking, logically enough, in forties slang cliches, seems to maintain a bemused air throughout, and you get the feeling that, regardless of his perilous adventures in trying to escape from the bumbling Amazons, he's never really in serious danger. All in all, an enjoyable but rather strange little book in which it's often hard to tell just how far the author's tongue is poked into his cheek.



A GLOW OF CANDLES
By Charles L. Grant
Berkley, Paperback, \$2.25

A macabre twist on parental possessiveness and the old saw about turnabout being fair play; an unseen milkman who, in addition to leaving skim and homogenized each morning, grants wishes in a way that reminds one of THE MONKEY'S PAW, a desolate computerized future world in which, for one lone soul at least, dark powers still exist. These and nine other novelets and short stories make up this collection by a Nebula-winning writer whose shorter works, at their best, are reminiscent of the darker side of an early Ray Bradbury, both in mood and style.

Occasionally the author's self-proclaimed love for and involvement with Shakespeare are a bit much for a Shakespeare hater like myself, but those are minor problems that didn't for a minute keep me from enjoying immensely almost everything here, including the author's anecdotal commentaries on each story.

BEYOND THE IMPERIUM

By Keith Laumer
Pinnacle/Tor, \$2.75, Paperback.

An entire universe, past and present, is wiped out fairly early in this sequel to the 1962 WORLDS OF THE IMPERIUM, but that's okay. It's not our universe, and an infinity of other universes on other time lines still exist, at least for now. The narrator, a transplanted diplomat from our own time line, is the only survivor because he luckily and inadvertently slipped into Null Time just before the destruction. It's now up to him to race across countless time lines, escape from certain death a half dozen times, find out who destroyed the universe and somehow restore it, all in the first half of this two-novel volume. Laumer specializes in fast and furious action with new and mind-boggling (if gobbledeygookish) discoveries and concepts thrown in every few pages, and BEYOND THE IMPERIUM is no exception. It's great fun as long as you don't stop to think too long, but then, you probably won't have the time. And for those who want to know how it all started, Pinnacle/Tor will next year be publishing the less flamboyant but actually more enjoyable WORLDS OF THE IMPERIUM itself.

STATUS QUOTIENT: THE CARRIER

By Ralph A. Sperry
Avon, \$2.50, paperback.

After thousands of years on the planet Ath, all humans but one destroy themselves in an inexplicable orgy of killing. The one survivor is an immortal "regenerative", and, through his slowly evolving perceptions, there emerges a puzzling and often contradictory picture of Ath before and after the destruction. Did the humans destroy the "imitators", a possibly superior and certainly different race native to Ath, or do the aliens still exist? Could they even have played an unseen hand in the destruction of the humans? And what became of the Starship Project, so near completion when the destruction came? The answers are never spelled out unambiguously, and the carefully constructed, introspective first-person narrative is often slow going, but it grabs your interest on the first page and never once lets go. For fans of "last man" stories, STATUS QUOTIENT: THE CARRIER, is often reminiscent of George R. Stewart's classic EARTH ABIDES.

AND THEN I READ....



BY THE EDITOR

OATH OF FEALTY

By Larry Niven & Jerry Pournelle
Timescape/Pocket Books/Simon & Shuster, \$13.95

In the near future, in America, in Los Angeles, federal and local government is trapped in its high-tax, high-inflation, ever-more-welfare social and economic policies. The payoff is higher crime, more social breakdown, more social conflict.

In the burnt-out ruins of (I presume) southern Los Angeles, has been built with private money a giant 'arcology'---a two-mile-on-a-side, a fifth-of-a-mile-high structure called Todos Santos which houses and protects a quarter of a million citizens. And to a man they consider themselves citizens of Todos Santos. They have developed a separate, separatist, elitist loyalty...a fealty...to this giant structure, its way-of-life, its owners and its leaders...and themselves.

This loyalty and this social organization is medieval-like, and is an insult and a contrast, and a constant goad to the "lesser" citizens of surrounding Los Angeles who resent the wealth, safety and happiness of the residents of Todos Santos.

Ecology oriented terrorists/socialists have been attacking literally and figuratively the structure and the culture and the "concentrated waste of precious natural resources" inherent in Todos Santos.

As the novel begins a small band of idealistic, misguided college students, dressed as terrorists, carrying what appear to be dynamite and a bomb, using sophisticated electronic equipment to penetrate the advanced locks and telesurveillance monitors of Todos Santos, have passed through an outside door marked: IF YOU GO THROUGH THIS DOOR YOU WILL BE KILLED.

One of those killed is the son of a powerful Los Angeles Councilman.

The plot and cast of characters in OATH OF FEALTY explore the conse-

quences of a basic social/cultural clash, types of justice, varieties of loyalties, of technologies, of moralities, the value systems of individualists, competents, incompetents.

The sympathies of Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle are with the leaders and citizens of Todos Santos. They imply that a kind of New Medievalism is coming as a solution to the anarchy and New Barbarism of the present-day trends/reality. They are hinting strongly that most citizens will give up a degree of privacy to insure safety, will accept often ruthless security procedures to insure their safety and to gain the privilege of working in a hard-money, self-reliant meritocracy.

This is a novel to make you think. It challenges many precious givens and assumptions of present-day America. A few reviewers will call its authors names.

But OATH OF FEALTY is excellent science fiction--coherent, honest, challenging, plausible, well-written.

SLOW FALL TO DAWN

By Stephen Leigh
Bantam, \$2.25, 1981

An assassins guild on the planet Neweden fights for acceptance and integrity. Its leader, the thane, has a crisis of identity and motivation which creates climactic problems.

Good medieval society of guilds portrayal with the overlay of high technology and Alliance-of-planets diplomats in the mixture.

A small cast of characters, good characterization, good action.

A small scale, narrow focus science fiction novel that doesn't depend on the fate-of-mankind to hold attention.

THE SOUL EATER

By Mike Resnick
Signet, \$2.25, 1981

The MOBY DICK theme is melded to the FLYING DUTCHMAN legend in a gripping sf novel that follows hunter-killer Nicobar Lane as he provides exotic animals for museums on far planets. He hunts on the fringes of humankind's section of the galaxy, and is curiously a loner, a man somehow incomplete. He lives to kill...

Until he encounters a spacebeast which eats energy, a legendary creature called the Dreamwish Beast, or

Starduster...and with the help of the Ancient Mariner---an old space bum who had a sighting of the Beast many years before---searches and finds the creature in a vast dust-cloud.

Nicobar Lane and The Soul Eater share a telepathic emotional linkage that shakes him to his core. He becomes obsessed with the need to kill the Beast. He tracks it for decades, encounters it repeatedly...and is unable to compell himself to destroy it even though he has a weapon capable of doing it.

In the end... Well, THE SOUL EATER is an extraordinary love story.

PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION

Edited by Ian Watson
Graystoke Mobray Ltd. £1.75 [US\$3.]
129 City Road,
Roath, Cardiff CF2 3BP,
Wales, UNITED KINGDOM

An unusual anthology---eight stories [by Brian Stableford, Michael Bishop, David Langford, Chris Morgan, Roger Campbell, Richard Downes, Patricia and Lionel Fanthorpe, Ian Watson] with critical linking story material by Roger Campbell and Ian Watson.

The uniqueness of the idea is that each writer tells a story based on a famous painting. Of course it is obvious they all wrote with certain linkages in mind and with certain restrictions.

The result is uneven, often baffling fragments which, even when the vital background information is revealed in the final few "linkage" pages, do not seem to be anything more than irrelevant filler.

Granted, the stories, anecdotes, and vignettes here accumulated, written around famous paintings' content, are in themselves interesting and intriguing, they lack coherence.

The basic flaw in this anthology is its baffling, mysterious, opaque meaning from beginning to the very end. The adventures of Emm as he wears the "total sensory" helmet to experience lessons in humanity after he is taken from his home in a strange, alien-like spaceworld are bizarre and (to me) not obviously with clear point. I'm left with the feeling that Ian and the others are operating over my intellectual head, and I resent it.

I freely admit to being sometimes obtuse and thickheaded; yet I'm patently not stupid and probably in the top 10% of the sf readership...so I tend to think that if a story (or anthology linkage) escapes my understanding, it will probably baffle and anger at least 90% of the story's potential audience.

In this case I feel vaguely cheat-

ed; the idea that a parent freeworld (bionic, massmind) has recreated a pair of the original species of mankind for mating purposes, required for the "birth" of a new, young freeworld---and has used famous pre-spacelife paintings as a format with which to "humanize" its humans---seems more a gimmick contrived by Watson than a likely device by the incredibly far-future creature described in these pages.

I suppose my irritation with this anthology and its stories is with its purely intellectual approach and the structure which virtually prohibits reader identification and emotional involvement with Emm and with him in his "lessons". Emm has no real human future, doesn't know what's going on, is manipulated from beginning to end, and is sacrificed for the greater good of its massself--or something.

Could my Libertarianism and Individualism be recoiling from Ian-and-cohorts' socialism?

BRINKMAN

By Ron Goulart

Doubleday, \$9.95, 1981

The first two-thirds of this new Goulart serio-comedy sf novel is excellent---inventive, masterful dialogue, swift illuminations of character and motive---as a young future slum man, living by his wits, body and sonic-electronic tools, accidentally sees a years-dead former girlfriend fly by in a government aircar.

He meets an old conman friend and they seek to find the girl, for different reasons.

One incident, adventure, encounter leads to another, and the novel's formula grows clumsy and obvious and the reader is left with a faintly cheated taste in the mind.

Did Ron have to have his hero save the world from alien invasion again? We've been saved so many thousands of times I'm getting sick of it.

Goulart is marvelous in painting futures with satirical brush strokes; I would wish for less absurdity and far fewer cliched endings in future efforts.

WHO CENSORED ROGER RABBIT?

By Gary Wolf

St. Martin's, \$10.95, 1981

The pixie editors at St. Martin's have struck again! This delicious satire of tough private-eye novels elevated to high comedy with low tragedy is just about as good as it can be.

Eddie Valiant is the hard-boil-

ed P.I. with the usual soft spot in his heart. His client is Roger Rabbit, 'toon (cartoon) rabbit who is into an airtight contract with a comic strip syndicate owned by the DeGreasy brothers.

In this strange nowtime, 'toons are about half the population of the world, but second class citizens as humans regard and treat them with contempt.

'Toons talk with sound and often with word-filled balloons which come from their mouths or appear over their heads...and immediately disintegrate to dust.

'Toons also have the ability, if they concentrate real hard, to create doppelgangers of themselves---short-lived duplicates which live for only at most a few days before crumbling to dust.

Valiant's problems compound when one of the DeGreasy brothers is shot and his client, Roger Rabbit is also shot...and Roger's doppelganger shows up to help Valiant solve his murder!

Add suspects: Jessica Rabbit (Roger's former wife), Sid Sleaze (porno comic king), the other DeGreasy brother?

And why does everyone want Roger's old teakettle?

WHO CENSORED ROGER RABBIT? is a complicated, told-straight, believable murder mystery. As you read you come to accept the 'toon people as real. Wolf never tells how the 'toons came into being in the past [everybody knows that!] but there are small hints in passing.

I'd be very happy to read further Eddie Valiant capers in this 'toon-human nowtime. Wolf writes extremely well. His supply of metaphor and simile is copious and superior:

I pointed toward the door.
"Take a hop."

His puppy face grew up in a big hurry into a beaten cur. His word balloon came out so heavily weighted down with guilt, it dented the top of my desk.

...

Roger waffled so quickly I could almost taste butter and syrup.

...

Little Rock's Adam's apple gulped through a series of moves good enough for first place in a yo-yo tournament.

The ending of this murder mystery will surprise you. And you'll feel very sad for doppelganger Roger Rabbit.

THE SHADOW MAN

By John Lutz

Morrow, \$10.95, 1981

Martin Karpp, a deeply disturbed man with six separate personalities (one of whom assassinated a state governor) is in a federal maximum security prison for the criminally insane.

Yet a psychiatrist who has been interviewing Karpp and investigating the previous activities of the other personalities inhabiting Karpp's mind/body---is murdered.

U.S. Senator Jerry Andrews, friend of the psychiatrist, begins investigating the murder...and one-by-one close associates of Karpp's personnas begin to die.

What's going on? Is Karpp somehow able to leave the prison? Is there a supernatural explanation?

As danger---attempted murder---closes in on Andrews the tension increases.

This novel is well-crafted, well-told. It holds the reader in a very tight grip and compels reading on and on to the high-level conspiratorial conclusion.

The book isn't exceptional in plot, writing, characterization... but Lutz knows his business and uses his tools superbly: an intriguing puzzle, danger, suspense, violence, characters the reader doesn't want to die.

If only most science fiction writers had that much sense and skill.

IN THE SHADOW OF OMIZANTRIM

The War of Powers: Book Five

By Robert E. Vardeman and Victor Milan

Playboy 16999, \$2.50, 1981

The continuing story of Post Longstrider, somewhat reluctant hero, as he aids his lovely Princess Moriana in her quest to regain (yet again) the throne of the floating Sky City.



The Demon of the Dark Ones is released from the ancient magic spells which imprisoned it in the foundation rock of the Sky City. The reptilian humanoids, the Zr'gsz, emerge with hibernated hordes and retake the City from the eons-long human control.

A new War of Powers is unfolding.

Moriana, Fost, their two genie-in-jugs companions and as many humans as possible flee the City. Thousands fall or are thrown thousands of feet to their deaths...

Synalon Etuul, Moriana's evil twin sister, also a sorceress, also wanting power, survives along with her aide, Prince Rann.

This saga is adult fantasy, realistic in battle, human relationships, politics and culture. There is also humor and tragedy. Yet all the major characters survive the battles, the savage encounters (though often wounded, sickened, drained) to struggle another day.

Yet the stakes grow higher, and the fate of humankind on the planet (colonized thousands of years ago) hangs in the balance. The final, sixth book of this series is due out in March, I believe, and will be the climactic finish to the struggle between aliens and humans, between The Dark Ones and their Demon and the humans and the World Spirit. updated chronology of the history of the Sundered Realm---from 20,000 years before the first War of Powers, to the now of the series, 10,121 years after that pivotal struggle.

The books in this series are:
 Book One: THE SUNDERED REALM
 Book Two: THE CITY IN THE GLACIER
 Book Three: THE DESTINY STONE
 Book Four: THE FALLEN ONES
 Book Five: IN THE SHADOW OF OMIZAN-TRIM
 Book Six: DEMON OF THE DARK ONES

DEMON OF THE DARK ONES

The War of Powers: Book Six

By Robert E. Vardeman and Victor Milan

Playboy 21012, \$2.50

This final volume should be available in March. This series has been a very good seller for Playboy.

The climactic, terrible battle between the twin sister sorceresses, Moriana and Synalon, and the unleashed Demon who now possesses the Sky City is joined.

The planet is subjected to great, destructive upheavals, monster forces of destruction. The result will be either the total destruction of the Demon or the death of mankind on the world.

And the clash is majestic and terrifying. The magic unleashed is stupendous. The writing is excell-



ent; planned and executed marvelously.

This calculated mix of realistic action/violence, sex, magic, and lurking, other-dimensional forces/gods is very well sustained in each book, and I would expect either further adventures with the survivors on this world, or another series using a different set of characters and a different world/setting/theme. The partnership of Vardeman and Milan seems to have a great future.

NEPTUNE'S CAULDRON

By Michael G. Coney

Tower 51755, \$2.25, 1981

An intriguing man-on-the-run novel set on a water planet dominated by a gargantuan undersea continuously erupting volcano named Neptune's Cauldron.

The natives are the amphibian Tadda who are being exploited by King Kaiman, a ruthless Earthman operating a vast floating processing plant/city, The Providence.

The man-on-the-run is Tyg Brood, clone brother of Francis Brood who was convicted after death of having sabotaged The Providence and in the process killed several humans.

According to existing law, all clones are as guilty as the clone brother who committed the crime. Tyg must clear his dead clone of guilt or suffer execution. And on his trail is a never-fail alien detective...

The plot is routine. The alien Tadda are not; their undersea culture and especially their hollow-log submarines are fine, coherent, inventive science fiction.

And let me give the plot its due: it works well---is tightly written, gripping, the sets detailed and the people believable.

I do cavil at the use of first-person narrative since it telegraphs the hero's inevitable survival.

One other thing: I never expected Michael G. Coney to use that Grade D TV cliché: the villain cries to his henchman, "After him, you fool!"

MERLIN

By Robert Nye

Bantam 13550-3, \$2.95, 1981

Subtitled 'A Very Adult Fantasy' this bizarre, ribald, occasionally pornographic rendition of Merlin's life (as told by Merlin from before his conception in the womb of the virgin Vivien) is hilarious, startling, even disturbing in that it presents Satan and his demons Astarot and Beelzebub in cunning realism, in a curiously believable way in a totally incredible story about the legendary wizard and the legendary Arthur.

Merlin was conceived to be the Antichrist, but he decided otherwise and was eventually imprisoned in a crystal castle for his rebelliousness.

The plots of Lucifer and his evil cohorts are part CIA, part Laurel and Hardy, part medieval absolutist, part wild and erotic sorcery.

Nye is clearly having fun in this book, indulging in the obscure, the idiosyncratic style, the repeated phrase that tweaks curiosity and (possibly) outrage: '...grinned like a fox eating shit out of a wire brush.'

Then there's the matter of the Sleeve Job. Were Nye to write another novel and promise to detail in it the Sleeve Job, everyone who has read this book will be forced to buy the other.

MADWAND

By Roger Zelazny

Ace 51510-X, \$6.95, 1981

This is the second of the Changeling saga, and better, more varied, more intense, more vivid, tense, than CHANGELING.

We follow young Pol Detson, son of an infamous sorcerer who died in a titanic battle of magic years before attempting to open the Gate to still another magic-ruled world.

The magicians who defeated Pol's father, with Pol, face another terrible challenge as Lord Det's former allies seek to use Pol to help open the Gate yet again.

Among the players in this book are Pol's friend, Mouseglove (the professional thief), Moonbird, the dragon, Larick --- a young magician whose true identity is a surprise--- and above all Henry Spier, the master sorcerer who seems unbeatable in his plot to open the Gate. Yet Spier is from our Earth and the mystery of his past will be a factor in any subsequent volumes in this excellent saga.

This is Roger Zelazny in top

form. His phrasing is superb, his incredible pacing and riveting style continue to amaze and delight me. His imagination, his creations of other worlds in detail and coherence are wonders of discipline and technique.

Ahh, I must not forget the crucial demon involved in this story -- the very individual and terrible Curse of Rondoval ...

Nor the magic city of Belken where the world's sorcerers gather every two years ...

Nor the dangerous apprentice sorcerers' initiation in the bowels of Belken's mountain which Pol must survive ...

Zelazny's magic is concrete, his sorcery-ridden worlds deadly, and the plots and counterplots, layers of power and planes of existence, altogether convincing.



ANSWERS TO SCIENCE FICTION QUIZ COMPILED BY ROBERT SABELLA

(Quiz is found on page 15)

1. FOUNDATION by Isaac Asimov.
2. THE EINSTEIN INTERSECTION by Samuel R. Delany.
3. "The Persistence of Vision", by John Varley.
4. "Stardance" by Spider Robinson.
5. "Born With the Dead" by Robert Silverberg.
6. A PRINCESS OF MARS, by Edgar Rice Burroughs.
7. THE FOREVER WAR by Joe Haldeman.
8. "In the Bowl" by John Varley.
9. "The Doors of his Face, The Lamps of his Mouth", by Roger Zelazny.
10. "Nightwings" by Robert Silverberg.
11. "The Star-Pit" by Samuel R. Delany.
12. "'Repent, Harlequin!'" Said the Ticktockman" by Harlan Ellison.
13. "The Star" by Arthur C. Clarke.
14. THE CAVES OF STEEL by Isaac Asimov.
15. "A Rose for Ecclesiastes" by Roger Zelazny.

ALIEN THOUGHTS CONTINUED FROM P. 7

zine or his editing of the piece or the writing of an Intro for it in its un-altered form is waiting for free time which never arrives or is so far down on the priority list as to be invisible.

I will no longer promise it for an issue until lightning strikes and I have permissions and texts in my big clammy hands.

So it goes.

Editorial matters: The usual backcover ~~and~~ artwork had to be bumped this issue due to the extra-long length of the letter column. Too many good, provocative, must-print letters came in.

It was a good thing Elton's news column was short this issue, as that helped with the letters problem.

I wanted to start a new column (well, sort of new) this issue, "Report From Alternate Earth #666," which would be a current events commentary, but alas... Next issue, I hope. You haven't seen an ad for CONSPIRACY NEWSLETTER in this issue because I decided to suspend publication with issue #7. But so many recent events have proved me correct in my assessments of the forces at work in the world today, that I had the urge to continue my observations on a quarterly basis (diary format) in SFR.

Mayhap I'll be able to find three pages or so for it in SFR #43.

By the way, as of 1-8-82 there are three [3] copies of CANNED MEAT left.

CANNED MEAT

A SCIENCE FICTION NOVEL
BY RICHARD E. GEIS

Life in a computer-run domed city and the failing civilization of which it is a part.

Roi and Eelia, two young citizens of the dome, two children of Great Mother Computer, meet and experiment with forbidden sex.

Covers by Bruce Conklin

\$4.

Order from:
Science Fiction Review
POB 11408
Portland, OR 97211

Just received a too-late, no-room-left review by Darrell Schweitzer of RIGEL, a new small-press sf magazine. Darrell thinks it's remarkably good. Details next issue of SFR. RIGEL is \$1.75, from Aesir Press, POB 2523, Richmond, CA 94802.

That's it. No more room anywhere. I had hoped/planned on listing contributors' addresses beginning this issue. That will begin in #43.

Have a good three months.

TEN YEARS AGO IN SCIENCE FICTION

December '71 -- February '72

BY ROBERT SABELLA

Stanley Kubrick's "A Clockwork Orange" was released to generally favorable reviews although some people objected to the film's explicit violence. It was selected by the New York Film Critics as Best Film of 1971. It was nominated for an Oscar as Best Picture but the conservative members of the Motion Picture Academy would never award such a controversial picture their highest kudo ... Robert Silverberg moved from New York City to California, continuing the westward migration of science fiction talent. Terry Carr would be the next prominent figure to follow ... Outstanding stories published included "A Meeting with Medusa" by Arthur C. Clarke in PLAYBOY; "Goat Song" by Poul Anderson and "Painwise" by James Tiptree, Jr., both in February's FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION.

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ONE WRITER AND THE NEXT WAR

JOHN BRUNNER

My specialty has been science fiction since I first began to sell my work in my late teens. Thanks to the unusual nature of the SF field, and particularly to its national and international conventions, I've had the chance to meet and argue with a very wide range of my colleagues here, in the States and Canada, and on the continent.

One thing upon which an outsider might reasonably expect science fiction authors (concerned above all to project credible futures to their readers) to agree is that the threat of nuclear war is the most important obstacle to our achieving in reality those glamorous dreams -- about visiting other worlds, contacting alien races, even ultimately traveling through time -- which spun off from our forebears' yearnings. Given that, following such a war, the survivors would have painfully to reconstruct civilisation without many of the irreplaceable resources we have squandered, and indeed for a period of generations at least without the facilities like clean water and available food and adequate medicine which in the richer countries we have come to take for granted, so that fulfilment of more grandiose ambitions must be postponed for probably centuries, maybe millennia, one might assume that here at least was one group of people with a voice audible to the public who would be active in trying to prevent the catastrophe. Back in 1958, I assumed the same. But -- !

Oddly, and infuriatingly, some of the doyens of the SF field, particularly in America, have apparently set up mental house in the eighteenth century. For every story like the late Fredric Brown's "The Weapon", in which an anti-nuclear campaigner brought a present to the idiot son of a bomb-designer, in the shape of a loaded revolver for him to play with, one can find another in which the writer appeared to imagine that nuclear war was something to be shrugged off -- a phenomenon like the weather, which one might grouse about, but not avoid. In contrast to the fascination which most of them display *vis-à-vis* technology, their ignorance of history, sociology and plain ordinary human nature has often been appalling.

Luckily, however, the trend has altered. In the early seventies, for instance, a group of anti-war SF writers took a full-page adver-

tisement in GALAXY magazine condemning US involvement in Viet-Nam (open only to US citizens, or I'd have been a signatory). The counter-movement was unable to find as many actual authors to support the war, and had to bulk out the list with publishers and editors. Regrettably, though, the pro-war faction did include some of the best-known and highest-paid of my colleagues, and they are similarly pro-"deterrence".

Why exactly they should wish to risk sacrificing the system which has so generously rewarded them, at

the cost of finding themselves either messily dead; or at any rate reduced to instant poverty in a world where even survival manuals could not be published and marketed, is beyond me. I can only hazard a guess that despite their own proved ability to affect others through the written word they cannot believe that they too have been systematically manipulated and deluded, along with the general public throughout the rich world where we are bombarded with newspapers, TV, and the rest of the "information explosion". Having always had a taste for the footnotes of history, rather than the



LOVE AND HATE,
LIFE AND DEATH,
SURVIVAL AND
SELF-DISCOVERY

THE ONLY THINGS
WORTH WRITING
ABOUT

WRITING FOR -
NOW THAT'S
DIFFERENT

official versions of the past which I was offered at school, I've been fortunate in wanting to look not only at the information I was being given, but also at the motives of the giver.

And looking at those motives has often saved me from believing what organisations like the CIA are said to refer to as "disinformation" -- pounced on by your subsidised media-editors because it would please the prejudices of those they had already partway entrapped into a state approaching conditioned reflex than rational judgment.

I do not, for example, believe that the Russians plan to invade Western Europe, let alone Britain, because (a) if there is a country on this planet which really appreciates the disaster of modern war it must be the USSR, and (b) they have never managed to digest even their portion of the spoils of WWII -- as witness contemporary Poland -- and (c) in any case, while the so-called "free" world is busy betraying its commitment to "democracy" and "liberty" by propping up corrupt regimes and manufacturing weapons of mass destruction, they can walk in at leisure and mop up support among those conscious of such betrayal. If there is a threat of conquest, it's at least a threat within the compass of an individual to oppose; witness Russia's inability, after so long, to eliminate dissidence. Even an invader meets you face to face. But you can't argue with an H-bomb launched from beyond the horizon by an efficiently dehumanised automaton of the kind one sees in TV documentaries, seated underground in missile silos.

It is a measure of the distortion imposed on rational thinking by the mere existence of nuclear weapons that again and again one must argue in favour of the Soviet Union (a country I personally would loathe to live in) purely because the threat against which we in the West are ranging our armaments is the wrong threat -- because, in sum, the generals and politicians are planning to fight the wrong war, at a time when they are already being defeated, so that they wind up as deranged as Hitler in the bunker, determined that if he goes under so must the rest of the world in a shoddy imitation of the Götterdämmerung.

Equally, our distraction from rational thought is exemplified by the reluctance of so many SF writers to admit that what they base their stance on is the result of being fed cleverly-organised information designed not as news but as propaganda -- that, in sum, they are being told what they have been taught to want to hear.

You may imagine my delight,

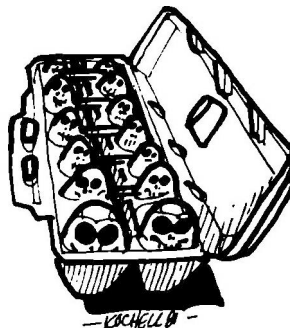


therefore, when in THE GUARDIAN in mid-August I read that an appeal denouncing the idea of limited nuclear war with neutron bombs, cruise missiles and the like, as "a criminal notion", and calling for an end to the arms race, had been launched by



writers' unions in both East and West Germany, in France, in Italy, and at several European centres of PEN.

While we were in France and Italy during the next two weeks we inquired about the chance of support from some



of our SF friends. We got positive reactions. Accordingly I wrote an open letter to my SF colleagues, inviting them to become associated with the many distinguished signatories already involved, such as Heinrich Böll and Stefar Heym, Hans Magnus Enzensberger and Günter Grass. Not only are the replies coming in almost daily; I've been asked to draft a similar appeal for SF fans, and Marjorie has persuaded the Society of Authors to publicise the original appeal in the next issue of THE AUTHOR. At the time of writing I'm scheduled to attend an SF convention in Birmingham next weekend, where I'm on a panel to discuss "The Future of the Real World" with some rather distinguished company. This is a marked improvement over what happened at another SF convention not too long ago, where a small group of bigoted reactionaries threatened to issue a writ of mandamus against the organisers for permitting author Ian Watson to poll the attendance on the question of nuclear disarmament. Mark you, some of them may be there again, I suppose ...

In which case, I shall cheerfully rub their noses in the fact that at the same convention they raised no objection when the committee devoted some of the proceeds to sending duplicators to Poland for Solidarity, a cause to which I donated some first editions for auction.

Ah, I'm drifting away from the question of writers per se. It's not unforgivable in the SF field, where writers and readers come into such intimate and frequent contact.

But in conclusion I would observe that, while it saddened me when it turned out that authors from other branches of fiction which have no pretensions to scrying the future care more about our real and present danger than people in SF, at least it seems something is being done to put that right.

PS: While as I said above I disbelieve the idea that Russia plans to invade Britain, in common with most informed circles in Europe I do believe President Reagan, who has said the USA plans to fight a nuclear war on European territory without if possible involving an attack on America itself. Bully for you over there -- but how the hell do you think we feel about being fried to a crisp without a chance to say no? You broke off from British domination on the slogan "No taxation without representation!" We're raising the cry "No incineration without representation!" When you elect European representatives to Congress, then and only then you may have the right to gamble with our lives. But not before.



LETTERS

LETTER FROM ORSON SCOTT CARD
November 14, 1981

'Between being a full-time writer and a full-time student I don't have much time for science fiction-related reading anymore -- SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW remains the one SF magazine I read, despite my best intentions, from cover to cover the day it arrives. The only other magazine I do that with is TV GUIDE. One must keep one's priorities straight.

'Your juxtaposition of letters from Polyphemus and George Warren made both letters better than either would have been alone. Both letters struck home. Within the Mormon community I have felt the scathing claw of the rabid feminist reviewer who, incapable of seeing anything except in terms of the woman's movement, utterly misread several of my works. In the same community I have also seen the masculine mindset that

aroused that feminist rage in the first place. Contrary to what many feminists seem -- understandably -- to think, most of the perpetrators of injustices to women don't hate women. They just don't think of them as real people. This excuses nothing, but does explain the look of hurt surprise they get on their faces when accused. And we who consider ourselves sexually egalitarian look even more hurt and surprised when that feminist sword falls. It bites deep. I have had a novel outline rejected because it included a woman who, in an America ruled by Russians, decides that the only route to personal freedom is the bed of powerful men. I thought I was satirizing a society even more sexist than our own. But even depicting an evil, apparently, is frowned upon -- it does not matter, apparently, that she discovers the limits of her choice and performs revolutionary acts after all; it is enough to make the book unacceptable that a woman is shown making a mistake. How in the world satire can ever work without depicting ugly social systems and the strategies people are forced into to survive within them is beyond me.

'However, I cannot share Mr. Warren's alarm. Oh, I was annoyed at the unspeakable stupidity of this editor's gross misreading of my work, but I am not afraid of the "censorship" perpetrated by timid or ideologically hidebound publishers and editors. That sort of censorship has always been with us, and, frankly, I'm glad of it. Let the cowards be cowards; let fools be fools; let the ideologues tie themselves in knots. The only censorship I fear is censorship by the government and by the mob. I fear that sort of censorship enough to spend some of my time making probably-futile speeches and writing splenetic articles to help keep the Moral Majority in its various incarnations from winning control of either the government or the fearful, mindless mob. But publishers are free to reject my work for any reason they please. The fools are eventually weeded out, if the public is intelligent; if not, the public gets the pap that it deserves.

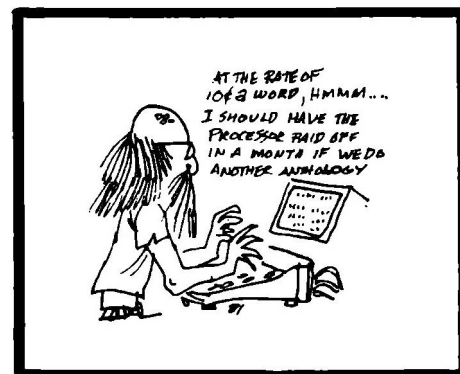
'It is Polyphemus whose letter, despite its overuse of the shift key, alarms me. My agent and the editors I work with at the moment are all women, and anyone who supposes they are doing harm to science fiction (or to anything) is simply wrong. The percentage of women in the Book Biz shouldn't alarm anyone -- it should delight us all. Since I'm saying nice things, why not name names? Victoria Schochet and I do not have identical tastes, but when she reads a novel and responds to it,

I know that she has read it, and read it intelligently, and read it as I meant it to be received. No editor can possibly do more. Susan Allison knows good writing and good science fiction, and actually notices where they overlap. Ellen Datlow and Terri Windling are also fine editors. I'm not saying they're better than men because they're women; I'm saying that these are editors who will actually make the world a little better for those of us who write and read for our lives. The notion that anyone could think their inevitably strong presence dangerous is a bit frightening. Frightening, but not surprising -- because people with ability are dangerous, and their enemies are right to fear them.

'I wonder, however, if Polyphemus hasn't done more harm than good with his letter. If there really is such a conspiracy against women in publishing as he implies, then of course he is right to say so. But if what he has detected is merely cocktail conversation and old-guard griping, then Polyphemus has merely given weight and credibility to minor-league idiocy.

'It is interesting to find, through David Gerrold's report on "Chuck's latest bucket", that I am still linked with such disgustingly commercial and, God help us, popular writers as Longyear, Niven and their ilk. I could understand the alarm felt by some when, back in 1977, I seemed to appear suddenly in the little world of science fiction, copying the Campbell Award and getting my teeny fragment of a \$50,000 paperback advance from Dell; I could understand the criticism when my first novel came out more than a year late, so that instead of debuting decently and modestly in its proper place in my career, months before the Campbell Award, it came as my first post-Campbell entry; naturally my flaws were excoriated, my failings as a human being verified -- one expects that sort of thing. But by now, years later, it surely should be clear that I am not a reliable story factory, and that I do not write for the masses. Or if I do, the masses do not notice. I have no more Hugos or Nebulas than, say, Charles Platt; I attend about one convention a year and the fans at the other conventions do not tear down the halls looking for me; I wrote more scholarly articles last year than short stories; I haven't written a speck of science fiction in two years -- surely the virginity of our little world is no longer threatened by Orson Scott Card.

'Apparently, however, once you are perceived as a menace by some people, you continue to be seen that way until you die. What saddens me, though, is that John Shirley (and Thomas Disch, and anyone else who names me with the other corrupters of the public taste) run the risk of ruining their credibility by so naming me. People who actually read my work will say, "Card's stuff isn't anywhere near as exciting as Niven's and Longyear's and Pournelle's. And if he's like them, where are all his Hugos? Why is he not surrounded by adoring fans? Why are his autographing lines so short at conventions?" If I am to be a credible enemy, I need to be built up and buttressed in my position. John Shirley owes it to his own reputation now to secretly lobby for votes for my work -- we can't have another year like this one, where I didn't even make the ballots, or Shirley will start to look as though he doesn't know what he's talking about! The way I figure it, if Shirley and all the other right-thinking guardians of correct writing get together and vote for me, I can win at least one award. Then I will be certifiably popular and crass and their reputations as perceptive thinkers will be safe forever.



'I don't share David Gerrold's annoyance at pseudonymous writing, however, perhaps because of my love of 17th-and-18th-Century invective and satire, most of which appeared under false names. Of course, in those days you could lose your freedom or your life for writing frankly and now all you can lose is the respect of respectable readers -- but I think pseudonymous writing is at least as defensible as convention costume parades. By raging at pandering storytellers under false but meaningful names, they can pretend that they are Dryden and Pope, the undisputed geniuses of their times. It is certainly as therapeutic for them as pretending to be Darth Vader is to a pimply teenager, and it seems cruel of Gerrold to criticize them for it.

'When will critics realize that

they are incompetent to judge any work that they did not approach with respect and hope? No book, however good, can survive a hostile reading, and once a critic has committed himself to despising a certain author or a certain genre, he can no longer make any intelligent comment on that author or that genre, because he is no longer a fit audience for it. I submit that anyone who finds Larry Niven's work worthless because of his "shallow characterization" or "wooden prose" or any other of the literary set's current epithets, has probably forgotten how to read. Really read. They are detached now, admiring works, not for the stories they tell, but for the manner of telling them, like gourmets who enjoy anything if the table setting is elegant enough. They use the dicta of Modernism as cudgels against those who write within a completely different tradition. To criticize Niven for not being, say, Bishop or Priest is like criticizing Boccaccio for not being Joyce or Woolf. It has been done, but it adds little to the collective wisdom of the world.

'The world of writers has always been plagued with squabbles and condemnations. It's a sign that, even though the squabblers rarely know what is important in storytelling, they at least know that something is important in it. And those of us who love good stories told well can always turn in relief to Gene Wolfe and his too few kin, who quietly bring out excellent work, always experimenting, always growing, without seeming to think that hate is an essential part of the creative life.'

((It isn't that male chauvinists hate women, or think them not human (though there is a small segment, no doubt, who consciously or unconsciously believe/feel thus), but I think they don't feel women are quite competent to edit male-oriented or basically action-oriented fiction magazines and anthologies because women aren't instinctually or glandularly attuned to that kind of fiction.))

((SF has been considered basically a male-oriented fiction genre... adolescent male, specifically...with its emphasis on exploring, conquering, fighting, experiment, etc., and on a deeper symbolic level---that phallic spaceship.))

((It would be instructive to see how many male fiction editors there are in the romance, young love, confessions genres. Assuming women predominate heavily in those areas, would that betray sexism and female chauvinism? Could a heterosexual male editor be as attuned to the readership as a female? Would he make the right ms. choices, or would a

tinge of masculinity creep into the line he edited?

((Or is it all really a matter of publishers hiring women to edit whatever because women command smaller salaries? And if men could be hired at even lesser salaries men would displace women?)).

LETTER FROM JOHN SHIRLEY

1123 Avenue K, #E6
Brooklyn, New York, 11230
November 29, 1981

'About my article in Platt's THE PATCHIN REVIEW... I think it may be true that Charles indulges in shit-flinging rather much, and he's learned (from Geis?) that an editor can generate controversies and by so doing generate sales ... But I think my article seems to Gerrold of a piece with the sludge being lobbed, only because it appeared in Charles' magazine. I think if he'd read it elsewhere he might have paused and considered my remarks more carefully and viewed me more charitably.

'Because as it stands, he's full of shit. The very stuff he accuses me of flinging.

'Now, see here, Gerrold, you write: "Shirley states his position in his very first line: 'The science fiction field is in dire need of higher, tougher standards.' Shirley does not say who should set or enforce those standards; it is obvious who he believes is best qualified. He begins by sitting in judgment on Barry Longyear (etc) ... At the end of the journey, he states the standards he wishes to see in the field. They're straight out of the old first-year writing texts. It's old news. Most writers already know them. We just choose to apply them in our own ways." Apply them in our own ways!'



'You contradict yourself. First, David, you allege that I don't

say who should set the higher standards, and then you say "most writers already know them". If we already know them, then that tells you, obviously, who must set (or re-set) the standards. Those who already know them -- but ignore them. We're ignoring standards that are set -- yes! as you say! -- in "first-year writing texts". Why? They're not really so restricting we can't abide by them and still write imaginatively.

'Only 8% of America's population regularly reads books! This is a nation of illiterates! And if we write badly, and abuse the language, and write without thought-out themes and good characterization, we're contributing to that illiteracy. I've been guilty of it too: Witness my first novel, TRANSMANICON; inventive it was -- but for the most part, pure trash. A patchwork of imagery and incredibly sloppy writing. *Mea Culpa!* I still need improvement. I do NOT say that science fiction has to be High Literature. All I ask for is a basic level of competence so we can communicate ideas to our readers with the utmost clarity, efficiency and sincerity. You ought to re-read Orwell's excellent essays on lucidity in literature.

'One side effect of the canonization of sloppy writers is the overshadowing of those who deserve recognition. Someone tell me why Disch's brilliant and epochal science fiction novel 334 was not reviewed in a single science fiction publication? Maybe it was overlooked because we've inadvertently trained most science fiction readers to respond to simplistic thinking and hackneyed characters and television voice-over prose. Hence, editors assumed readers wouldn't be interested in 334.

'Claiming the standards I asked for are irrelevant because they're "old news" doesn't make it. Einstein's theory of Relativity is an old one now -- been around for three-fourths of a century, or thereabouts. It's Old News. So is it without application? How about Blish's critical writings? How long has it been since they were first published? Decades? Is Blish now irrelevant? He was asking (by implication) for much the same thing I'm asking for.

'I am saying this: We're screwing our readers and we've got to stop.'

((If it were only that easy to get rich by dealing in controversy! It tried deliberately to generate a controversy in SFR about...eight years ago...by commissioning an article designed to raise hackles

and infuriate all and sundry. Result? Zilch. It flopped.

((No, I discovered it's simpler to be myself, provide a forum, and let nature take its course.

((Long-time fans in England know that Charles Platt was a very opinionated, controversial fan editor and fan writer long before he came to the U.S. and before he was (if he was) infected with the Geis Disease.

((I don't agree Tom Disch's novel, 334, was brilliant; I read it, liked it, and perhaps reviewed it in SFR. I do know the novel was reviewed in SFR a long time ago. But you were referring to its non-review in the prozines, I presume. As I recall several fanzines reviewed the book.

((Yes, the latest stats do show that only 8% of those Americans who can read, read books fairly regularly. That percentage is going to wither away in the decades ahead. The question becomes: do we fight like mad dogs over the shrinking reading dollar, or do we try to reach out to the rarely-read-a-book people, to the turned-off-readers-of-books, and those who don't-read-books-but-might?

((It's a challenge which an adventurous (and greedy) publisher might consider....especially one who isn't already up to his eyeballs in debt and/or owned by a conglomerate which is trying to unload him.))

LETTER FROM CHARLES PLATT
9 Patchin Place
New York, NY 10011
November 2, 1981

'I suppose I have to take David Gerrold's critique of THE PATCHIN REVIEW seriously. He seems to have three main points: that my little magazine's use of pseudonyms is cowardly; that I am engaged in mud-slinging, and that my approach is elitist.

'Re the pseudonyms: Gerrold conveniently ignores my editorial explanation for this. Briefly: the science-fiction field is very incestuous and friendly. We are therefore reluctant to offend each other with frank criticism, we speak polite platitudes instead, and we thus encourage one another to produce lazy, mediocre work. Frank criticism is needed as an antidote; I personally prefer signed articles, but if the preservation of friendships necessitates anonymity, well, unsigned frank criticism is better than none. In the face of proliferating pompos-

ity, irreverence is also useful -- which is why I run a self-satirical gossip column. When authors lose sense of proportion and sense of humor, it's time to poke fun.

'Re the slinging of mud (or, as he prefers it, buckets of shit): Gerrold himself is no amateur where this is concerned. His piece gratuitously mentions bad books I once wrote, uses the term "fanzine" as a pejorative three times, and quotes an (anonymous!) limerick, all to discredit me. This is good fun (at least, I always find it entertaining to be attacked personally in print), but it makes me wonder about his motives. To undercut my little magazine? Hardly; his article functions as a free advertisement. Rather, I think he is working out an old personal grudge (for details of which, see below). Too bad; an attack impelled by sincerely held beliefs, rather than petty malice, would have carried more weight.

'Which brings me to elitism. As a writer of daytime TV, Gerrold seems to have reached that stage where he resents other writers who still hold onto their critical values. He feels perhaps that no one has the right to sit in judgment -- that writing is just a craft, and it's meaningless to say that such-and-such is "better" than so-and-so.



'But within certain limits it is possible to distinguish absolutely between good and bad writing. Bad prose is derived second-hand from other authors; deals in cliches; shows little first-hand observation of the world; is clumsy; may be ungrammatical; is repetitive; misuses words; and shows signs of lazy or hasty habits. I can define precisely these various traits, just as C.S. Lewis did when he wrote on the criticism of literature decades ago. This is purely an assessment of function, and elitism has nothing to do with it.

'Let me rephrase this on a more down-to-earth level. I get tired of reading science fiction which is unimaginative, which insults average intelligence, and which lacks any kind of relevance to real life. I get angry when this work receives shallow praise and even Hugo awards.

I am not alone in my dissatisfactions: I sell a lot of subscriptions and I get a lot of favorable mail (in fact, thus far, not a single complaining letter). I also get a surprising number of contributions by professional authors. Thus my outlook is shared by a surprisingly large "elite". Also, I print opposing views, such as Brian Aldiss' article in the second issue, savagely attacking my own magazine as suffering from the very vices it criticizes in others. I would certainly have published Gerrold's far less eloquent attack, and would have paid him, had he sent it to me. This reflects not elitism but the idealism which Gerrold thinks is bogus. I value freely-expressed criticism and personal comment (I have never understood the need for libel laws). The ultimate expression of such ideals is to pay someone to apply them to me, then spend my time typing the article into the computer, pasting it up, and doing headings and art for it.

'The trouble with Gerrold is that he is a mediocre talent who backed away from his earlier ambitions, turned to opportunism, but isn't even very good at that. In condemning those who haven't won any awards and resent writers who have, Gerrold omits to mention his own name. He remembers, perhaps, that it was I who asked officials to withdraw his book THE MAN WHO FOLDED HIMSELF from the Hugo ballot because I counted the words and discovered it should only be eligible as a novella. Perhaps he also remembers being described by me in a Los Angeles newspaper nine years ago as "the nouveau riche pimp of science fiction". At the time, Gerrold's revenge was to try to get me fired by Avon Books, my employers; even now, he probably nurses a grudge.

'Maybe he even remembers my rejecting his story "In the Deadlands" when I worked on New Worlds in the late sixties. That story, incidentally, showed rather self-conscious literary ambition; the person who wrote it still believed in those "elitist" critical standards, which, like idealism, were more fashionable then. How far Gerrold has retreated over the ensuing decade, to the point where he now slings his mud at those who are so tactless as to be critical -- and who thus threaten his own comfortable marriage with mediocrity.'

((I'll object to your implied smear of daytime TV writing. Every type of fiction writing, for any media, has its must-do's and must-not-do's. And every genre can be written well or badly within professional

techniques as required by the form. It is obviously possible to write superbly crafted and effective fiction for daytime TV, to the point of winning awards and critical acclaim among those who can judge the skill and effectiveness of such scripting. It is entirely possible that forty years from now certain authors' scripts for certain shows will be collectors' items, and a great critical literature will be written about those scripts and authors. After all, who at the time would have thought that hack Elizabethan playwright, Shakespeare, would turn out to be an immortal of literature?

((Your "analysis" of 'The trouble with Gerrold' is pure smear and damages you more than he.

((Aside to David: Let's let this personal attack business stop here.

((Finally: I've followed David Gerrold's sf career through the years---as I have a hundred or so others---and have concluded that he writes well, writes often daring, speculative sf novels, and have noted that he has had innovative, interesting saga novels cut off because of poor sales and editorial-publisher lack of interest---hardly the mark of a mediocre hack. I suspect David writes daytime TV scripts in order to live; I suspect he'd far rather devote full time to his sf novels if he could sell them. So would a lot of us.))

LETTER FROM HANK STINE
THE DONNING COMPANY/PUBLISHERS
5659 Virginia Beach Boulevard
Norfolk, VA 23502
October, 1981

'As is inevitable when anyone is taking notes during a long-distance telephone call, one or two errors crept into Elton's account of our 1982 line-up which I would like to set straight for the record.

'The controversy over Ray Faraday Nelson's novelette, "Turn off the Sky!" was not that it failed to be nominated, but that it was nominated and announced, and then in a rather peculiar move, a new ruling was suddenly made by the Con Committee, in which a novelette written forty years before by Edgar Rice Burroughs (but only recently published) was deemed eligible, a new tally taken, and Nelson's story, was, inevitably, beat out by the Burroughs piece on the nostalgia vote (he hadn't had anything new in print in three decades). (There is a great deal more to all this, of course, but to avoid fresh injury to some very de-

cent people on both sides, we will let it rest.)

Second, INTERSTELLAR CONMAN by Randall Garrett and Vicki Heydrøn will complete the "Leland Hale" stories begun by Garrett for ANALOG some years ago; three new stories will be written to complete the book. It is the first volume of a proposed series.

As to the "feminist Mafia" in fandom, yes, Richard, it really exists. Now, instead of paternalistic males telling women what lifestyle and mode of thought is best for them, we have a group of maternalistic females (all of them extremely atypical of the male population at large) telling other women exactly what lifestyle and thought patterns they think are best for them. And woe betide the woman who's sex-drive, fantasies or ambitions are significantly different from their own -- she will be subjected to as much abuse, attack and social ostracism as any rebellious woman in a paternalistic society.



'Here is a question to chew on. If men getting turned on by the sight of a woman's body represents sexual exploitation, then does that mean that the leaders of the feminist Mafia don't want their males turned on by them when they make love? If not, where do they expect sexual desire to come from? Perhaps as the natural result of a long courtship and a ripening acquaintance (sounds like the Victorianism of the 1950s doesn't it)? For that matter, has no woman in the movement ever been betrayed into a bad relationship by the simple arousal of overwhelming physical lust? And if they have, why is it wrong for men to become similarly enflamed?

'Re your comment on the remake of THE POSTMAN RINGS TWICE: Yes, there are a fair number of men (and women) who have sex drives exactly that powerful, and who would be, and often are, in bed three, four and six times a day; and an equal number with no, or practically no, sex drive at all (the bell curve seems to be more of a universal constant than most people want to realize).

The thing is, there seems to be as much legitimate variety in sex drives as in height, weight and intelligence or perceptivity. (Again, there are a frightening number of the ignorant and ego-centric who believe that any sex drive higher, or lower, than their own is neurotic or worse.) "I'm okay, Mac", (in spite of the fact that my life is utterly fucked up). "You however, are not doing things the way I do them, and are utterly unredeemable".

((I suspect there is a great deal of fear behind urges to control and downplay sex: women don't want to have to compete with or be compared to the beautiful women "used" in and by the media, and men want young women (mostly) to be inexperienced and non-judgemental in lovemaking when first met or married.))

LETTER FROM DARRELL SCHWEITZER
113 Deepdale Rd
Strafford, PA 19087
November 17, 1981

'Your view of Attanasio's RADIX is remarkable. You've favorably reviewed a book which was panned by Theodore Sturgeon. I trust you realise how unusual an event this is. Surely a sign or a portent of some sort, presaging some great miracle. Then more remarkable things have happened. PATCHIN REVIEW #2 contains a favorable review of a book which was not published, namely the Ace edition of Ellison's BLOOD'S A ROVER. Perhaps this indicates a reviewer with prophetic powers. But since the future is not predetermined, he is only able to foresee possibilities, and in this case he was looking up an alternate timeline in which the book duly appeared.

'One amusing detail Wayne Keyser doesn't mention about the Jesus freak types at last year's Disclave was that after they had made a nuisance of themselves for a while, a chorus of fans gathered in front of their table to serenade them with a rousing rendition of "We are sinking deep in sin/won't you come and push us in?" (Melody: "Rock of Ages") A friend of mine who had a table right next to these people reported that they were very tiring to listen to after a while, and also bad for business, as they tended to scare customers away from that end of the room.

'My feeling is that it might have been better to have brought together a large number of fans in strange costumes to zap them with the most

elaborate and thundrous Satanic/Yog-Sothothian curse imaginable. It would either have scared them off or at least made the spectacle a bit more amusing.

'But seriously, I understand that some D&D events have been cancelled in some places because of Moron Minority pressure. Yes, on the grounds that such games encourage devil worship. One concludes that we are dealing with frightened zealots who are too insecure in their beliefs to actually understand what they are condemning. Actually they do have good reason to fear fantasy role-playing games. If you can have Jesus Christ or Satan appear in your dungeon as easily as you can Sauron or Darth Vader, that tends to reduce religious figures to the same level. It does not encourage the worship of anything. Instead it trivializes all objects of worship. But no self-proclaimed Christian is likely to be smart enough to figure that out.

'By the way, have you noticed that the idiot-level ones are always those who call themselves Christians, rather than Catholics or Presbyterians or Baptists or whatever? The reason is that the established churches are too sophisticated for all this sort of nonsense. I can tell you from my own experience that they teach evolution at Catholic highschools and universities and they encourage scientific/literary/textual studies of the Bible. Also the last couple of popes have been big supporters of the space program. But then in the eyes of the fundamentalists, these people aren't "Christian".

'Actually, one might point out that the fundamentalist who proclaims himself "saved" (at 19% interest one hopes) is not only guilty of arrogant pride (one of the seven deadly sins, no less), but blasphemy (or maybe heresy) because no one can be sure they are in a state of grace.

'I have an idea. I don't play D&D myself, but I wonder if the people who do have thought to introduce Jerry Falwell as an imaginary monster-type figure, right there along with the balrogs, dragons or whatever. Perhaps if a character is unlucky enough to encounter a Falwell in his stretch of the dungeon, everyone and everything in that re-

gion is wiped out and the player is declared "saved". He then loses several turns and a lot of points (his magic and intelligence ratings at least temporarily drop to zero) unless by some lucky throw of the dice he manages to backslide.

'I wonder if it wouldn't be possible to produce and market a game along these lines.'

((We make a serious mistake if we think the Born-Again, Moral Majority types are of low intelligence. They have chosen that set of beliefs and priorities for emotional reasons! In my view they are weak-ego, insecure, dependent types who need Answers and Certainties and Inferiors and Masters and Enemies. Rational arguments, facts, proofs that they are wrong only infuriate them and they must reject such out of hand.

((Their often considerable intelligence is bent to the task of defeating opponents/enemies/devils and giving a rational, plausible veneer to their emotionally imperative belief needs.

((Such character/personality types can choose other belief systems, of course: Liberalism (the State is Master), Communism (the State is Master), Socialism (the State is Master), or other religions.))

LETTER FROM DARRELL SCHWEITZER
113 Deepdale Road
Strafford, PA 19087
November 22, 1981

'Further comments on SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #41:

'Mark McGarry has completely misunderstood the nature of the censorship problem in today's field. Of course he was able to sell a story with a sympathetically portrayed homosexual character to the most conservative magazine in the field. Similarly, when ISAAC ASIMOV'S SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE published "Full Fathom Five My Father Lies" by Rand B. Lee, a downbeat story set in a society in which father-son incest is the norm (the tragedy came when the son fell in love with another boy), there was no outrage from the readers. On the contrary, the story was extremely well received. There was a lot of mail on it, and the closest thing to an unfavorable one was from someone who said, well, he didn't approve of homosexuals, but it was a good story anyway. If the story had been conspicuously bad, maybe there would have been a few charges of sensationalism, but I



rather doubt it. (As it was, the story was perhaps the most promising author debut I have ever seen. Alas, the author has not followed it up.)

'Jerry Falwell and his ilk make a convenient bogey, but I don't think they seriously menace science fiction yet. If they ever do, they will have to be combatted, but we are talking about the contemporary situation.

'I don't think there's an editor in the field who is censoring from the Rightist/Fundamentalist viewpoint. This is not to say these people are any more tolerant than Leftist/Secular Liberal/Feminists, but that none of them are in power just now.

'So neither McGarry nor Lee ran into any trouble, because homosexuals are on the official Protected Minority list, along with blacks, Amerinds, Hispanics, Jews, women and several others. (The one religious group which doesn't seem to be there is Muslims. I wonder that there are not more Arab villains in science fiction, along with that old standby, Fundamentalist white, Southern rural reactionary bigots.) I think the sort of people who read science fiction have at least grudgingly settled into an acceptance of gays as people who happen to coexist with everybody else. How many anti-gay science fiction stories can you think of? Perhaps you may have heard some of the amazing rumors (including a very good Harlan Ellison story) which got started when a conservative editor tried to commission one.

'As a result, the remaining censorship is in the name of Liberalism. Robert Silverberg has expressed it all very well in a recent editorial in AMAZING. He pointed out that before long the only allowable villains will be WASP males. (Until they start protesting.) His conclusion is that it isn't the artist's job to be nice to people. (He was being taken to task for an unsympathetic gay in THE BOOK OF SKULLS.)

'But, to be honest, we must admit that what the censors are out to eliminate really exists. Vigilantes usually have a legitimate complaint, before they become as serious a prob-



lem as the one they set out to combat. Extremists tend to become exactly like their enemies. How different is a Communist slave state from a Fascist one? How different is a Feminist/Liberal censor from a Conservative/Moral Majority one? But I digress. The Feminists are right when they say that a lot of blatantly sexist science fiction does exist, and that this sexism passed unnoticed for decades. (Actually, the earliest story I can find which questions these attitudes is "Delilah and the Space-Rigger" by -- you guessed it! -- everybody's favorite Right Wing Sexist, Robert A. Heinlein.) Sexist science fiction is still being published, though not as much as many would have us believe. Biggest change I see in this regard is that an increasing amount of it is written by women and that women are able to get away with far more blatant bigotry than men are. Consider reversing the gender roles in say, "The Female Man" or "Houston? Houston? Do You Read?" Would these stories still be publishable? I doubt it.

'Of course there are the Gor books. But their appeal is, I think, extra-literary. They are simply pornography, not read for story or idea value, but for glandular interest, and perhaps for reassurance by men who are afraid of women. (What disturbs me the most about them is the large number of women who read them.) They would probably be publishable as hardcore porn, save that it's more profitable to do them mass-market. This way lots of readers can buy them and booksellers can sell them and delude themselves into thinking they aren't dealing in pornography. In this sense their appeal is similar to DHALGREN, save that they appeal to a different set of sexual fantasies.

((The GOR books are not pornography! They deal in male power/sex fantasy---the totally self-assured male, the submissive beautiful women, the power to command or force instant sex, the wish to have worshipful, adoring sex slaves.... (And, let's note the occasional sequence in which the woman lords it over the male---later to be punished for her usurpation of the male role and brought to a full realization of woman's place in the right scheme of things.) That relatively large numbers of women read and enjoy the GOR novels suggests they share that belief system; they are of that character type (as are the other weak-ego, master-needing, dependent types) which finds such fantasies attractive.

((Pornography is (in most written and film examples today) also a male power/sex fantasy media, more blatant,



far, far more graphic and detailed in re the sex acts which are the whole of the book or movie. There is, in the printed porno novels, a more intense humiliation of the woman/girl, and they are required to worship not just the male's power and lordship, but imperitively his huge, ever-potent penis. Too, in printed porno (of which I can speak with some authority), the woman/girl is helpless in her lusts for sex and orgasms; a slave to her sex needs. And she is not an exceptional nymphomaniac; she's everyone's wife, daughter, sister, aunt, widow, secretary, nurse....

((Call the GOR books porno in theme if you like; but they're not porno in execution or in current legal definition.))

'The Gor books also make a convenient bogey. A Feminist censor can justify anything by saying, "But the Gor books are being published!" Irrelevant. The appeal is on another level. Last time I looked at a dirty book rack (admittedly this was years ago and the trends may have changed) the big areas seemed to be spanking parties and women having sex with dogs, collies preferred for some reason.

'The stories at issue are the more subtle ones, which are designed to do something other than stimulate glands. The pro or anti-feminist elements are in there as assumptions in the way the characters behave or perceive the world. This is where the censorship occurs.

'But, as I said, there's no discernable Right Wing/Anti-Feminist/Fundamentalist censorship going on. Can anybody verify a case of a story being rejected because the heroine was

successful or intelligent? (Do not cite PLAYBOY or lesser mags of that ilk. Again irrelevant. We are talking about the core of science fiction publishing.) Can anybody cite a recent example of a story being turned down because the protagonist is a sympathetically-portrayed black, gay, Hispanic, Indian, Jew, etc.? Again, I can cite examples of stories with strong women characters being published in the allegedly most conservative markets imaginable. (Example: "The Barbie Murders" by Varley in ISAAC ASIMOV'S SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE. The story was fairly well received. Some people complained about one-dimensional characterization, a common fault with Varley. One person insisted that because of the strong sexual element in the story we were dancing on John W. Campbell's grave. To which Isaac replied, "This just isn't 1938 anymore.")

'I suspect most of the perceived anti-women censorship is really a matter of editors refusing to publish stories in which the propaganda gets in the way of the story. You don't, you'll notice, see Gorean type stories in the magazines, or in, say, the Timescape Books line. This is not a matter of ideology. The anti-women, rape-is-what-they-want obsession of the author dominates the books, to the exclusion of the story. The reader who is not into that particular fantasy, who is trying to read them for story (or literary) value, will O.D. in about five pages. Similarly, the reader looking for story value will find little of interest in a Feminist tract. This is a bedrock commercial matter. I am not saying that Feminist tracts or anti-Feminist tracts or save-the-whales, anti-pollution, anti-(or pro) Communist tracts should not be published, but when editors refuse to market them as fiction, this is censorship.

'Correspondent Polyphemus will indeed probably be out of a job soon if he practises what he preaches. He does not understand that when readers want positive, upbeat stories in which science/reason/and mankind conquer the universe, they are not insisting that women be relegated to the kitchens (or the ovens). No, they are insisting that there be upbeat stories with science/reason etc. conquering the universe. Gender is not the issue. It is true that most such stories in the past have featured male protagonists. Does it follow that these stories found favor because the protagonists were male, or for other reasons? Does it follow that readers would not favor an upbeat, positive story in which the scientific, reasonable, universe-conquering type is a woman? I think they would. The story would have the same appeal. Polyphemus sounds to me like the sort who will put him-

self out of business by publishing tracts and Social Rightness rather than the stories the public wants to read.

'A couple parting thoughts: Would it be possible for a woman to produce a counterpart of *Gor*, in which men are shown as better off when enslaved and humiliated by women? I think such a thing would be published if the right author found the right cynical and irresponsible publisher. Whether or not it would sell would be a sociological and psychological problem rather than a literary one.

'The shortage of publishable material in the magazine/short fiction market is getting pretty severe. Even with the highest budgets, the editor must struggle to find short fiction which isn't too bad, which is minimally readable and written on something vaguely like a professional level of competence. He must fill his pages mostly with the work of beginners, because the more established writers are all off writing novels, and realises that he will lose most of his regular contributors after a couple years when they, too, go off and write novels.

'If John W. Campbell, with all the crotchets and dogmas of his later years, were to start up today, I do not think he would be able to survive as an editor. I don't think a Raving Feminist or Fundamentalist or Black Radical or Neo Nazi would be able to survive in today's magazine field. They would be turning down perfectly good stories for ideological reasons and there aren't enough good stories to go around. In his last years Campbell was conspicuously lowering the quality of *ANALOG* in order to get stories which were ideologically right, but in today's market, I doubt he would be able to maintain the barest minimum standards of readability. The day of the dogmatic editor dictating the content of the stories may be over.'



((But if the current recession ripens into a full-fledged depression, and if there is a further, cataclysmic, shake-out among the publishers of sf and fantasy, then the remaining publishers of books and magazines will find themselves able to pick and choose from among many fine stories turned out by many, many fully professional writers---experts at the craft---who will be rather desperate for sales.

((I suspect there will be a strong buyer's market very soon, even for short stories.))

LETTER FROM JOE R. LANSDALE
608 Christian
Nacogdoches, TX 75961
November 8, 1981

'Pardon my coffee-stained stationery. It was handy.

'Polyphemus's letter is well intentioned, but misses the point. Your reply stated this, but one thing: I'm not advocating that we go back to fiction the way it was, that women be given back to the cookstove and the bedroom. Only saying that sometimes a knee-jerk reaction keeps an editor from seeing good fiction. Often, as in the case of my novel, mentioned last time, remarks are made out of hand, and stupidly. Like the editor calling me a racist just because a character that was killed in the book was black. Does he want only white victims? Is this better? Might not it have been better for him to at least read enough of the book to find out that the main character of the novel is black? (Honkeys die in this one, too.)

'No, he didn't have time for that. He reads a sentence where a Black is killed, and since my novel is from the South, why I'm obviously sitting here at the typewriter in a white hood and sheet with a cross burning in my front yard.

'If you think the book sucks, okay, but Christ, give a writer a chance. At least try to see what he or she is trying to do.

'You have my permission to put this on a toilet roller and install it in your bathroom. That's probably the best place for it. Arguments like this don't do a fucking thing, other than cause enemies. It's sort of like all of us who squawk about publishers, late payments (do the janitor and secretary and editor wait for their checks as long as we do?) and such. We're not going to do a fucking thing. The

whole business is falling down around our ears and we're all walking around with a smile on our face and a corncob up our ass.

'Don't make waves, they may not buy anything else. They may hold your check.

'What the hell does it matter if you're not getting paid anyway, huh?

'Right now there is considerable talk about a Writer's Union.

'I hate Unions. They become governments within themselves, tell us what we will and will not do.

'But ... I'm wavering. It's starting to sound like a good idea to me. My ass is raw from the fucking I'm getting and it doesn't look to be near healing. In fact, I see a big spiked dildo coming now.'

((A writers union sounds great ---except there are too many potential scabs. Now, all you have to do is change that dead black in your novel to a dead white commie Muslim who used to live in Libya.))

LETTER FROM RONALD R. LAMBERT
2350 Virginia, Troy, MI 48084
November 16, 1981

'For some time now you have been relating the horrendous facts of life in the writing/publishing business. What I wonder is, what has allowed such a state of affairs to develop? You can say human nature -- but in our society we have established systems of checks and balances that on the whole make it possible for many lines of business to be pursued in more or less equitable fashions. What has gone wrong in the writing/publishing business?

'Do you think we need new laws or new activism? For example, would it help if enough people pressed Congress to enact legislation prohibiting large corporate conglomerates from owning controlling interest in any publishing company? This would tend to leave publishing in the hands of the people who understand and (hopefully) care about publishing, and would help facilitate freedom of the press.

'Writing, especially fiction writing, is the last widespread cottage industry left to civilized Man. I would hate to see it closed down. What might replace it is something like no-name brand supermarket novels cranked out by salaried hacks. In order to write to sell, you would have to be in a publishing company's "stable", writing according to speci-

fications set by market analysts. You would labor under a "bonded servitude" contract that required you to turn out a novel a week, which you offer on speculation to your exclusive employer. How is that for a nightmare? If it ever comes to that, we might as well not bother teaching school children to read any more.

'I have always suspected that thoughtful, artful writing of any sort is by nature an underground activity (thinking is an underground activity these days). Only a fluke has ever brought it into the open marketplace. How many people read books? A few million at most in this country -- which is a very small percentage of the total population. In one sense literature seems like a mass market business, but in another sense it is very small scale. It is not and never has been anything more than an intellectual indulgence of a very small minority. Perhaps we are approaching a day when all publication of thoughtful, artful writing will be an underground activity.

'Still, I prefer to believe the Renaissance continues. We will weather the present economic downturn. Mankind will yet ascend to the stars in body and in soul. Even should a new Dark Age descend, there will also come a new Renaissance.'

((The writing/publishing business has always been this way, witness the problems of Balzac, Hugo, Dumas, etc. in the 1800's. In fact, it was probably worse in the last century. The great wealth provided by the exploitation of the natural resources of the planet by way of the industrial revolution has allowed a generalized prosperity for about 400 years so far that has gradually increased till now we live like kings in terms of comfort and services and entertainment and food.

((We are currently in the grip of a monstrous worldwide debt structure which has become too big to handle. It is in the process of crashing and it takes time and involves a great deal of pain---usually to the wrong people. As usual, ignorance isn't bliss---the ignorant get screwed in a debt collapse. 99.99% of the people are ignorant or misinformed about what causes what in economics. The dynamics of debt/credit bubbles are fascinating ---but I must not let myself get carried away here. The problems of publishers compound in a debt crunch, and the writer is the one least able to force payments due, by the very nature of the writer-publisher relationship.

((The only way to give writers leverage and power is to forbid any but a few card-carrying Writer Unionists to write and sell. This requires government interven-

tion to enforce the exclusivity of union writers and their lock on all publishers' needs. In that case sooner or later the government will dictate content...as in the U.S.S.R. today.

((The next boom/debt cycle will spread the Electronic Age to undreamed of heights and extensions. It'll be marvelous. The danger is in an unwillingness to let the current debt structure complete its deflation; we could choose government intervention to the point of stagnation and dictatorship.

((That course would delay the Renaissance for perhaps generations.))



LETTER FROM ROBERT A.W. LOWNDES
717 Willow Avenue
Hoboken, NJ 07030
November 7, 1981

'Jim Blish is supposed to have noted somewhere that we really don't know much about the future, but at least we can keep the past straight. I hope that is a slight misquote, because such optimism wasn't really characteristic of Jim -- I hope that he put the word "try" in. Because "try" is all we can do. Not only are memories highly infallible, but people are often deceived in what they honestly believe they saw, heard, or read, etc. Even if everyone were 100% honest, we'd still have trouble trying to keep the past straight.

'What brought forth that bit of philosophy was a line in "The Human Hotline", #41. Actually, it's a parenthesis in the paragraphs about

AMAZING STORIES "(first issue in April, 1926)". No, no, no! The first issue of AMAZING STORIES did NOT appear in April 1926; it appeared in March, 1926, and was dated April.

'I won't cry shame upon Mr. Eliott because he is most likely a victim of widespread and longstanding misinformation perpetrated by oldtimers writing on the science fiction magazines. The shame is on them -- Lester del Rey, Mike Ashley, Dave Kyle and many, many others (perhaps even I myself sinned once or twice in that regard) -- because they should have known better. It gets most insidious when you see that type of error perpetuated in encyclopedias of science fiction.

'Let's try to get the past straight.

'I'm hardly in the same league as Sam Moskowitz when it comes to being an expert on science fiction and the old magazines, but I can claim a fair amount of expertise about the science fiction magazines issued in the USA between March 1926 and December 1937 -- the period that Del Rey rightly calls the "Age of Wonder". I must pass on MIRACLE SCIENCE AND FANTASY STORIES; not only do I not own copies, though I have seen them, but even if I had them there is no sure indication as to whether the April-May 1931 issue went on sale in February or March 1931, and the June-July 1931 issue appeared in April or May 1931. I'm missing the first two issues of ASTOUNDING STORIES OF SUPER SCIENCE, but I've studied them both in the past; and I let my first four issues of STRANGE TALES go, since I reprinted all the stories in those issues in my own magazines during the '60s and early '70s. (I'm also lacking the December 1935 AMAZING STORIES, and I didn't bother to keep the last two issues of the Teck AMAZING STORIES QUARTERLY, since they were all-reprint issues.) Otherwise, I don't have to rely upon memory; I have the copies here at hand.

'It gets very confusing when you want to say in what year a certain story appeared, or a certain author made his or her debut, if the issue of the magazine in question was dated January (or, on some occasions, February). In what year did John W. Campbell's first story appear? Not 1930 as I (and perhaps you) have read too many times. It was 1929; in the January 1930 issue of AMAZING STORIES, which went on sale in December 1929.

'Likewise, the first issue of ASTOUNDING STORIES OF SUPER-SCIENCE, dated January 1930, appeared on the first Thursday of December 1929.

'A brief rundown: AMAZING STORIES appeared one month earlier than

the cover date from March 1926 to July 1933. One issue had a double date: In July 1933, we saw the August-September issue, which was the last one in the original large size. Then in August 1935, we saw the October, rather than the September issue; AMAZING STORIES had become a bi-monthly, and every issue in the Teck series thereafter was dated two months ahead.

'SCIENCE WONDER STORIES, AIR WONDER STORIES and WONDER STORIES were all dated one month ahead. The first two combined in May 1930 and the June 1930 issue was Volume two, number 1. It remained that way, although during 1933 there were two combined issues: July-August and September-October; each appeared a month before the earlier of the two dates on the cover. In October 1935, we saw the December, rather than the November issue, and the magazine became bi-monthly, appearing two months before the cover date for the final three Gernsback issues. The last one, dated April 1936, went on sale in February. THRILLING WONDER STORIES started in June 1936, dated August, and maintained regular bi-monthly appearance through the rest of the period.

'ASTOUNDING STORIES was stable, appearing on the first Thursday of every month preceding the cover date, from December 1929 to May 1932. Then things became hectic. No issue appeared in June 1932, but in July 1932 we saw a September issue. From that point until the end, it was regular, bi-monthly, with the final, March 1933 issue appearing in January. September 1933 saw the title's revival, dated October 1933, and the magazine became the most regular of all, never missing a month (although to Isaac Asimov's and my own temporary horror, the release day was shifted -- but, I believe that was later than the end of 1937 -- whoops! there I go, relying on memory, when I have the relevant issue at hand. Shame on me! Well, I just checked and find that this time my memory was OK).



'STRANGE TALES was erratic, after the first four issues, but I do believe that the final, January 1933, issue appeared in October 1932.

'WEIRD TALES played a fascinating, if dirty, trick on us in 1933. The April 1933 issue, containing the first installment of Jack Williamson's "Golden Blood", appeared as it should in March. The release date was always, officially, the first of the month. But come the first of April, there was no May issue of WEIRD TALES. It finally showed up around the 15th, without any explanation of the delay, and we were assured the June issue would be on sale May first. But it wasn't. It appeared on June first, and now it was explained that they'd decided to change the release, so that the magazine actually appeared in the month shown by the cover date. That lasted until August 1936; the new issue had a combined date, August-September; but the magazine had not gone bi-monthly (as it actually had done during 1931). They had decided to return to one-month-ahead cover dating, and on September first, 1936, there was the October issue. That system remained stable so long as WEIRD TALES remained a monthly publication.

'The errors about what month magazines appeared "in" after 1937, when the boom started, are too numerous to mention. As a result, the confusion as to just when a new science fiction (or weird or fantasy) title really appeared is tremendous.

'My copies of various books on science fiction magazines are littered with marginal corrections on dates alone.

'How important is it? That's relative, of course, when you consider the price of potatoes and other things we need in order to have the leisure, strength, etc. to read science fiction. I'm a history nut, real history as well as science-fiction-magazine history, and I do get annoyed by those errors when they're committed by people who should know better. (Particularly ex-magazine editors, who should remember that their own issues did not appear in the month shown on the covers.)

'I implore you, good sir: If ever again, you have something to run in SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW wherein the writer avers that the first issue of AMAZING STORIES appeared in April, 1926, will you please change that to "in March 1926, dated April?"

((I'll try to remember. Thanks, Bob, for the detailed history lesson. I suspect this letter (and this is-

sue of SFR) will be Required Reference Reading for future sf encyclopediasts.

((By the way---SFR is habitually mailed on or about the 26th of January, April, July, and October... give or take a Saturday and Sunday when the P.O. is closed, and lacking an exceptional occurrence like an ice storm, fire, flood, earthquake, extreme illness.... This note for the official record.))

LETTER FROM DOUG FRATZ
EDITOR, THRUST PUBLICATIONS
8217 Langport Terrace
Gaithersburg, MD 20877
November 27, 1981

'I continue to enjoy SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW, but the only thing you seem to have to say about THRUST lately (as well as other semi-pro efforts) is that they cost too much for so few pages! Such critical acumen! (Bring back Alter!)

'My main objection is, naturally, your inclusion of THRUST in this "over-priced" category. THRUST has had a cover price of \$1.95 since Winter 1980 (up from \$1.50) and my four issues since then have contained 52, 56, 44 and 40 pages. Only the latter issue was typeset -- but being typeset enabled more text per readable page. I'd be willing to bet that no other semi-pro publication during that same period, with the exception of SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW, presented more material for less money. But also note that THRUST is almost all "paid" material, with only a couple of pages of letters, which makes my costs higher, when compared to SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW. I also spend more on graphics (including typesetting) and printing (Washington D.C. probably has the nation's highest printing costs, due to federal government money).

'And let's look at that \$1.95 THRUST cover price for 40 pages, versus SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW's \$2.00 cover price for 68 pages. That cover price is paid only by bookstore buyers. For subscribers, THRUST costs \$1.50 and SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW \$1.75. That closes the gap a bit. And the fact is that 75% of THRUST sales are still wholesale to bookstores and not subscribers. I get, on the average, about \$1.00 for those.

'I suppose that what raised my ire here is that I have always fully realized that a too high price for THRUST would decrease income, and have continued throughout THRUST's existence to keep the price artificially low. The final proof of this

lies in the fact that I have maintained my losses (not profits) on THRUST at a constant \$500-\$1000 per issue for years. I cannot go higher in my losses, but I refused and continue to refuse to try to cut my losses and thereby kill the magazine as so many others have done.

'THRUST is just a goddamned hobby, but an expensive one.'

((I had no idea THRUST was a money-losing operation. Especially that much! I have to admire a man who puts his money where his mouth is. I hope your enjoyment and pleasure in publishing continues to compensate you for many years.))

LETTER FROM ARNIE FENNER
8435 Carter
Overland Park, KS 66212
December, 1981

'SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #41 was another enjoyable issue. Very nice erotic cover by Fabian, phallic broomstick and all. I guess I should make some sort of comment on your editorial dealing with the small press publishers and the prices of their respective magazines. But there's no need to put on your slicker because I'm not going to start flinging shit. Not me.

'Because you're right. Pretty much, anyway. \$3.00, \$3.50, \$4.00 is too much to pay for some of the fan/semi-pro zines being sold today. Not that those prices are necessarily out of line with the present rate of inflation -- production costs and low circulation, as you pointed out, drive prices through the ceiling. But I think that the cover price of an amateur magazine (or any other project) can be justified by the amount of entertainment that a reader can derive from said publication. Most fans know deep down that no one gets rich off fanzine publishing (for that you have to go over to the comics field) and judge a magazine on its own merits.

'If they get \$4.50's worth of reading out of WEIRDBOOK then they'll probably feel their money's well spent; if they yawn through TRUMPET or SHAYOL they'll probably find something else to spend their dollars on. Intrinsic value justifies the price tag.

'Which, of course, means that you could get away with charging more for SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW and get nary a grumble from my corner.

'So there.

'Take care. And remember what

Robert Blake said: "When times get tough, you gotta grab yer stick and keep strokin'!!!"

((Another aspect of small-press publishing is the problem of finding those people who will feel your publishing effort worth the money you have to charge.

((I'm convinced there are perhaps 10,000 people, worldwide, who would be willing, even eager, to subscribe to SFR; it's a question of letting them know SFR exists and what it offers. Short of a hundred thousand dollar investment in advertising, the only other way is the el cheapo classified ad in the prozines and word-of-mouth.

((Come to think---I'm also fairly sure I don't want 10,000 subscribers. Too much bookkeeping and order-filling would be involved at that level of mail processing. And the job of enveloping and addressing...!!!

((I'll be happy to keep the circulation-by-mail between 1500 and 2000.

((And my response to Robert Blake is: I'm strokin' as fast as I can!))

LETTER FROM W. PAUL GANLEY
Box 35, Amherst Br.
Buffalo, NY 14226
9 November 1981

'I was very disappointed at your remarks juxtaposing WEIRDBOOK 15 with Greed on page 7 of your excellent 41st issue.

'When I was attending the World Fantasy Convention last weekend, someone asked me if I made a living from WEIRDBOOK PRESS. I laughed.

'Since 1977 I have lost approximately \$10,000 on this publication effort. I am hoping for a really good year in 1981 -- under \$500 lost.

'Of course, I have lots of back issues in the basement. And I DO sell some as time goes on. Issue 8 went out of print recently.

'Anyway, let's look at some elementary facts. WEIRDBOOK 15 cost me about \$1600 to print 1500 copies. About 400 sent to wholesalers garnered \$600, and about 200 sent to dealers on my "special standing order list" brought around \$400 more after postage. Subscription copies? Around 250 at most, and count them at \$2.50 per copy since most of the subs date back to the 4/\$10 price. That's about \$600 after bulk rate mailing costs. Add them up -- \$1600, right? Enough to pay for the printing bill.

'That doesn't count the \$675 paid to contributors, or the lesser expenses -- like \$50 pro-rated for the cost of this IBM Selectric, minor advertising, general overhead costs (the bulk rate mailing permit, the box number, etc.).

'I haven't kept count of the single copies sold since then, but I would estimate perhaps another hundred at an average return after postage of somewhere around \$300.

'That still puts me \$375 in the hole on that issue, minimum. Sure, there are around 500 copies in the basement. Sure, some day I'll get my investment back, in inflated dollars.

'Too bad I don't have 1800 subscribers (but then neither does AMAZING STORIES).

'Don't tell me to advertise because ads don't bring in enough money to pay for their cost. A favorable mention in SF REVIEW does more for me than two ads. (And most of your reviews have been favorable.) Of course I do advertise anyway...'

((I see now that 95% of the fan publishers who turn out a quality product are not in it for the money. It's a hobby, idealism, madness.))

LETTER FROM MICHAEL WARD
MEGATHERIUM PRESS
P.O. Box 1496
Cupertino, CA 95014
4 November 1981

'You are right about the small press publications pricing themselves out of the market, and you are right about the reason: insufficient market for the kinds of material, kinds of publications. You could have mentioned P*S*F*Q: print run of 1000, price \$2.50 for 36 or 40 pages at the newsstand. Of course, few (relatively) copies are bought for full cover price; subscribing is cheaper to the reader and nets more money to the publisher as well. Once again, it is cheaper to subscribe. And the publisher is happier.

'Distributors, such as carried FANTASY NEWSLETTER, pay on the order of 40% of cover price for their copies -- which they have to do, to stay in business. That doesn't leave much for the per-copy cost of the magazine. You, and Charlie Brown, and perhaps Andy Porter, live (more or less) off your small-press magazines. The rest of us hope to break even. (Please correct me if I am wrong. Mr. Fratz? Mr. Fenner? Mr. Keller?)

'Given the above situation,

what's a boy to do? Don't ask me; I have decided that I must be doing it for Art. If Art is triumphant, we can look for more semi-prozines coming from an association of some form with a local college or university (non-profit mailing rates, free typesetting and production labor and printing under university auspices, even course credit in journalism school...) As for P*S*F*Q, I am in the position of doing job typesetting to pay for the Compugraphic ACM9000 which I bought to be able to do my magazine in a presentably attractive fashion.

'One more publishers' puzzle: Is the new FANTASY NEWSLETTER still eligible for the Fanzine Hugo? People keep having fits when you and Charlie win the award (I've even got an article on this very subject coming up soon in P*S*F*Q); can a university-sponsored journal conceivably be considered a "fanzine"? Anyway, keep them banners flying, Mr. Geis!

((Who is and who is not eligible for the fanzine Hugo is a matter for the voters and the Convention Committee to decide.

((LOCUS has won the award two times in a row now, and no fanzine ever has won the Best Fanzine Hugo three times in a row. We'll see if tradition prevails or if LOCUS can win it again.))



LETTER FROM NEAL WILGUS
Box 25771
Albuquerque, NM 87125
December 1, 1981

'SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW has pretty good coverage of the various awards (Hugos & co.), but somehow the Rhysling Awards (given by the Science Fiction Poetry Association each year) seem to be overlooked. The 1981 Rhyslins went to "Meeting Place" by Ken Duffin (from ISAAC ASIMOV'S SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE) for short poem and "On Science Fiction" by Tom Disch (from TRIQUARTERLY) for long poem. The Disch poem also won a Clark Ashton Smith Poetry Award, by the way.

'Now, I have a lot of respect for the Science Fiction Poetry Association, for its newsletter STAR LINE and for its 150-plus multitalented members. But, it seems to me a shame that Disch's insulting and lackluster verse has been selected as the "best" long poem when there were

many others more deserving of the award.

'I don't know how the CAS Award was determined, but in the Rhysling competition eight others were nominated in the long poem category (over 40 lines), including a fine narrative poem by Chad Walsh (which I nominated and which took second place), a first-rate mythical piece by Paul Edwin Zimmer, an unintelligible mammoth by Gene Van Troyer, a light satire by Suzette Haden Elgin, my own inscrutable "Balloon to the Center of the Earth" and several others. Since only about half of the SFPA members voted and the first, second and third place poems together took 60% of the votes cast, Disch's win was hardly a landslide.

'Specifically, Disch's message is that Science Fiction people are all cripples. "First admit that/" Disch sings, "And it follows we incur no uncommon shame/By lying in our beds telling such tales..." And so on for 61 additional lines, fleshing out an idea that, if not crippled, is at least hobbled by its own self-loathing.

'Giving the Disch his due, "On Science Fiction" does carry out the poet's obligation to play with a concept/image until at least some of its ramifications shine through. Alas, Disch's poem does not strike me as particularly clever or insightful nor does his use of language stir me to great admiration. Adequate is the best description.

'But the main point is that Disch is wrong. We are not cripples, lying abed and escaping into fantasies and we should not "admit that" as Disch exhorts us to do. Disch and his admirers may be cripples if they wish, but include me out. Science fiction is a dynamic, creative and important use of the human brain and deserves our support and respect, whatever its shortcomings. Science fiction poetry in particular seems to me to be the cream's cream and I don't find amusing Disch's attempt to poison it with malice aforethought ...

'One of the poems nominated for the short poem Rhysling this year, by the way, was Roger Zelazny's "I Used to Think in Lines that were Irregular to the Right" (from WHEN PUSYCATS LAST IN THE CATYARD BLOOMED), which is not science fiction to my mind but is a good piece in its own right. Readers of SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW may recall my letter in #39 last year in which I noted that Zelazny and I had independently invented the technique of aligning a poem to the right margin rather than the left. Since then I've discovered that L. Ensley Hutton, a poet of

whom I know nothing, invented it earlier (refer to: Verso-rhyme, page 197) in PATHWAYS FOR THE POET by Viola Jacobson Berg, 5 Roosevelt Avenue, Malverne, New York, 11565; hardcover, 1977, 235 pages, \$9.00; highly recommended).

'Finally, let me complete an update on that SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #39 letter by noting that my appeal for Science Fiction Leftys to come forward and be counted resulted in only one letter from a lefthanded fan (Roger Waddington, North Yorkshire, England). Thus Juanita Coulson and Gene Wolfe are the only pro science fiction writers to proclaim leftishness -- Wolfe noting in his letter in SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #40 that he had already mentioned his lefthandedness in the interview in SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #39. Wolfe, by the way, was the winner of the first Rhysling long poem award (1978) and has since become President of the Science Fiction Poetry Association.'

((For what it's worth, I'm left-handed, too.

((The argument that sf readers and fans are emotional cripples who need the "crutch" of fantasy and are avoiding reality is elitist crap which springs from the elitist's need to be superior. Sf fans and readers have been a good target for that put-down.

((If that argument is valid, then all readers of fiction, all viewers of films, all watchers of TV, all spectators at sports, opera, ballet, concerts...all readers of poetry...all those who go to plays...everyone who is entertained, diverted, amused, affected emotionally by any activity which is non-fact, non-work, non-immediately devoted to sober consideration of grim, deadly, serious, no-win reality---all those (all of humanity!) are also emotional cripples who are guilty of the sin of avoiding Reality. Has Disch ever played a game of chess? GUILTY! Take him away.))



LETTER FROM GENE WOLFE
POB #69
Barrington, IL 60010
Nov. 10, 1981

'Piers Anthony Jacob flays me with some justice. I did not intend

to say that there was no such thing as learning disability; but it appears that I implied it, or something very like it. What I meant to say was that lazy and stupid kids are now called learning disabled by the teaching profession. I still believe that this is so, and indeed that a majority of the children who are now classified as having learning disabilities by the public schools have none. I apologize to the genuinely disabled and their parents and I extend my sympathy to the parents whose children are denied education and discipline because it is so much easier for the school to stick them in an LD class.

'As I said in the interview, I always try to write well, but I sometimes fail.

'PS: Mr. Jacob subtly flatters me by intimating that he had to read THE SHADOW OF THE TORTURER to page 173 in order to find something to complain about. I can find something in every chapter, and in fact on almost every page.'

CARD FROM ROBERT BLOCH
2111 Sunset Crest Drive
Los Angeles, CA 90046
November 5, 1981

'About why people write ... your conclusion is "Deep character drives and talent explain those who do become selling authors. Illusion and delusion probably explain the other 98%."

'I think that's a bit simplistic and would tend to place my bet on misanthropy to win, place or show. Perhaps there are more people than one thinks who are seeking an escape from a nine-to-five daily grind that begins and ends in bumper-to-bumper traffic and has as its centerpiece the insistent -- and frequently idiotic -- demands of an alleged "superior" or the constant clamoring of "customers". Perhaps there are many who dread the assembly-line but are equally unhappy with the either-or dictum which offers them an alternative existence as a dropout.

'A writer who can operate at better than a mere subsistence level has beaten the system, at least in part, and expanded his or her freedom of choice. And he suffers less fools gladly -- as your letters and articles eloquently attest. In short, I think many turn to writing as an escape from being dumped on. Hoping you are the same.

'PS. Stunning Fabian cover art! (#41) And a stunning issue!'

((Well, now that you mention it ---my dissatisfaction with my series of menial jobs in my twenties (and other, physical-emotional factors) probably explain why I---after one abortive, too-soon attempt---turned to writing. But why was I able to sell my first story? And after my 95th sold story, why did my first novel sell? A certain talent and a certain drive and self-discipline is how I explain it. I succeeded. But I know there are millions of others who didn't succeed who were just as pissed at boring, grinding 8 to 5 jobs as I.))



GEIS NOTE: The following two letters complete the background, foreground, sideground, underground and overground of the IguanaCon Anecdote. This is a tempest in a teapot, but sometimes such storms must be allowed to blow themselves out.

LETTER FROM BILL PATTERSON
November 13, 1981

'I happened to see Bruce Arthurs' loc in your recent SFR and thought I would write to "amplify and correct" the IguanaCon Anecdote he cites, which did, indeed, happen, but not quite as he remembered it.

'When the concomm met with Harlan at WesterCon in 1978, he volunteered presumably in an excess of good spirits or what passes, in him, for bonhomie, to do a story for the program book. "Sure", I said. Me look a gift horse in the mouth? Nah. Never happen. "Okay, I'll do it. You want a pink-and-white-bunny-rabbit story, right?" Visions of future Hugo ballots crediting a World-Con program book that had been forming in my head crashed instantly and died in flames. "Huh? Well, it'll be a change of pace," I said. But it was too late: The conversation had already passed to other matters.

'The story goes on from there, though. I didn't really expect a pink-and-white-bunny-rabbit story from Harlan -- but "The Executioner of the Malformed Children" I didn't expect, either.

'Well, I didn't get a lot of things I did expect.

'Came time to put together the program book and Harlan's story was nowhere to be seen. So I set aside six pages and tagged them for the program. I supposed that he had simply forgotten about it, and that was okay. I wouldn't ask a professional writer to do a story gratis under any circumstances -- and Harlan was donating a bunch of other goodies to the con anyway. So when next I talked with him (about every other day at that point), I mentioned that we had laid out the program book without his story.

'"Wait a second," he said. "You can't do that. I've got the goddamned story waiting for you". Okay. So I shrugged and bumped the program to the pocket program (which is why it got printed so tiny, by-the-by). And proceeded with the pasteup.

'And it didn't arrive, and it didn't arrive. Came nail-chewing time. We were on deadline, and we had these six, blank pages

'To make a long (very long) (Harlan can think up the most inventive excuses...) story short, we finally had to send Phil Paine and Anna Vargo in Pat Mueller's car to go to Sherman Oaks and kidnap the manuscript. Harlan was revising it (for the fifth time) as they arrived. We had already sent the rest of the program book to press -- and in fact, all the other sections had already been printed -- so I typeset the thing myself, and we got it in literally just under the wire.

'Another exciting chapter from the Secret Protocols of the Elders of the Iguana.

'PS. Incidentally, I'm writing up a history of Phoenix fandom that will contain, among many other things, an intimate history of IguanaCon -- presumably for publication by next year's WesterCon. It'll probably run to 50,000 words, of which 30,000 are finished as of this moment.'

LETTER FROM HARLAN ELLISON
3484 Coy Drive
Sherman Oaks, CA 91403
November 21, 1981

'I am in receipt of the various Xerox copies of letters/postcards from Bruce Arthurs, Bill Patterson and myself in re: "The Executioner of the Malformed Children" and how

it came to be written for the IguanaCon program booklet.

'Bill's letter is 100% accurate. When I wrote Bruce, my memories of the circumstances were so hazy it would ennoble them to call them imprecise. The way Bill Patterson relates the story is absolutely correct. Reading Bill's recollection of the casual offhand flip way in which I'd said "soft pink-and-white bunny rabbit story" at the 1978 West-erCon, I realized I'd said just that; and he should not be considered either in error or as one who rewrites history. Quite the opposite. His memory is bloody faultless. I'd even forgotten that Phil Paine and Anna Vargo had driven all the way from Phoenix to Sherman Oaks and back, without sleep, just to pick up the revised manuscript.

'Which is something so damned fannishly heroic, I would be a swine to misremember it. Which I did, I suppose, out of subconscious chagrin at how long I kept them waiting for the story.

'The one part that is not exactly as Bill reports it (sorry, Bruce), is that the first version of the completed story did get sent off to be mailed by Linda Steele's assistant, whose name was Maggie Impens (married name, Pierce), who did toss it into the back seat of her car, go eymoon and never even returned the manuscript long after the IguanaCon.

'I'm sorry that my failing memory -- premature senility is what we call in the crazy person biz a real bitch -- has cast even the faintest shadow on Bill Patterson's historical recollections or Bruce Arthur's reportage of same. They are both right, I am wrong, go ahead drive in the fucking spikes, I'll just cross my legs.'

LETTER FROM VINCENT PERKINS
POB #234, Saint John,
New Brunswick, Canada
December, 1981

'Piers Anthony's letter in SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #41 (and subsequently your reply: "...Have you written any readable novels yet?") has sparked some thoughts on art. If you were to ask me if it's enough for the artist (or writer, or sculptress...) to be competent in his or her medium, I would have to say no. Personally, I don't think competence (and by that I mean technical accomplishment in a particular art form) is enough. For instance, when I look at a painting, I may agree that the artist is a good draftsman

or a splendid colorist, or that he shows a terrific sense of design or construction. I could say, "Yes, that's a beautiful tree, it's a perfect sycamore, I saw one just like it in the park, this man can certainly paint good trees". Instead I look forward to the artist showing me some of his personal IMAGINATION. I want him to astound me, to entice me, to conduct me (the viewer, the reader ...) to places I might never have imagined without his help. The crudity of one's expression is neither something to be frowned upon nor spoken of with distaste.

'Two painters (with quite dissimilar styles) here in Saint John are Don and Dave. Don is a commercial graphic artist who paints landscapes in his spare time. He is fast, deft and meticulous. Dave, on the other hand, doesn't use brushes anymore; his implements are trowels, rags, split wood, chisels, anything which can spread paint on a canvas. His paintings drip, they're splotchy, they're haphazardly executed. And yet -- their vitality excites me. I admire Don's work too; but it doesn't touch my nerves in the same way. Don's paintings are infinitely more salable than Dave's (at least here in Saint John where it hurts me to admit, abstract expression is more often ridiculed than seriously discussed or purchased. This kind of attitude irritates me.)

'Much the same is true of writing. I think. Piers Anthony, for example, possesses one of the most unrestricted and riotous imaginations in science fiction. The fact that his mode of expressing such imagination often-times seems crude is due, I think, in part to the vast amount of material he produces. This, I'm sure, is his own choice. At least he shows us things we've never even considered before -- and he does it consistently. His novels are readable, Dick.

'But on the other hand, so are Gene Wolfe's, whose writing in one sentence in one book Piers finds grammatically offensive.

'History shows that art is many things. Fauvism and impressionism were only two of many styles which were crude. By my God, weren't they exciting! How different from, for example, magic realism, whose paintings invoke even more detail than photography. A worthwhile art form and exciting, too.

'Rudy Rucker's novels are another case in point. The first two -- SPACETIME DONUTS and WHITE LIGHT are I believe, undeniably crudely written (though WHITE LIGHT is a great improvement over his first. This man is going places!), but because his imagination is so strong, and

his vision so all-encompassing, the books are saved and saved wonderfully.

'So what if someone's (yours, mine, his, hers ...) expression is not efficient in some places, or some areas? Look to the strength of IMAGINATION!'

((Yes, yes, Piers Anthony's science-fantasy novels are readable, obviously, else hundreds of thousands of copies of his books would not be bought; I was just zinging him back for zinging me in re Alter-Ego.

((Curious how, in your mind, at least, crudity and undisciplined style and technique equals vitality and excitement in art and in fiction. I suppose this linkage exists in many minds. I think it's a false assumption springing from an impression of "primitive power" and "spontaneous emotion bursting forth..." "untrammelled imagination..." Unmitigated bullshit, I think.

((I'll admire and respect the mastery of words and their usages, the mastery of drawing and its techniques before the "primitive" stylists of any medium of expression. The artist who has full command of his tools and techniques and who uses them to do precisely what he wants---to evoke emotions all all kinds in the viewer and reader---that man or woman will win my praise and admiration. The artist or writer who lacks discipline or control or knowledge and produces "impressionistic" daubs or flawed stories wins some applause from those conned by a special effect or trick or theme, but I always wonder what a skilled artist or writer would have done with the same idea or material. Alas, in our imperfect world the combination of mastery of technique and great imagination and emotional power is rare.))

LETTER FROM STUART DAVID SCHIFF
WHISPERS/WHISPERS PRESS
70 Highland Avenue
Binghamton, NY 13905
December 23, 1981

'I mentioned that I wanted to respond to your statements in #41. I apologize beforehand for the possible lack of coherence of this letter but it is late and this is coming off the top of my head. The remarks to answer were in regard to your mention of increased prices for semi-prozines. This note may contain "anticipatory" statements in "answer" to what you

will be saying when you receive the next WHISPERS. Yes, Richard, there is a WHISPERS (sorry, Virginia).

'With the Ramsey Campbell double-issue of WHISPERS (March, 1982), the magazine's price will increase to \$5.00. Needless to say, I was loath to do this. I do not want to commit the suicide you talked about, but sometimes a price increase IS necessary. I would like to consider it an "adjustment" rather than an increase since I am also increasing the size of the magazine from 132 pages to at least 176 pages. As an aside, I'm still almost \$1000 in the red on the Leiber issue so you can see that I am not banking "it" away on WHISPERS.

'Why do some fanzines ask different prices for "similar" products. The answer is very simple, one cannot compare apples and pears. Everybody has a different "fruit". Firstly, the more copies you can sell, the cheaper your price can be. That is simple economics. Also the more money one takes in, the better price one can give. You, for example, say your product goes about 3/4s to subscribers and only 1/4 through dealers. This gives you more money per copy than someone such as me whose sales are 2/3s to dealers and 1/3 to subscribers. Simply speaking, if my figures were reversed, I would have almost \$1000 more income without selling one more copy of the magazine. \$1000 is a major change in income for a magazine such as mine. My object, therefore, should be to aim to reverse those figures. Maybe more ads (but they cost money which is not here to use)? More discounts on subscriptions (but this could result in LESS income if no sizeable increase in subs)? For WHISPERS I also plan to get back to a regular schedule which is sort of an "ad", I suppose. Any ideas?



'How else can we compare semi-prozines? Let us look at author and artist payments. Firstly, many zines do not pay any money, period! I started WHISPERS out paying authors a maximum of 1¢ per word. These rates are now from 1-3-5¢ per word. My B&W covers cost me \$35.00, but my color covers now cost me anywhere from \$200-\$500-\$1000 depending on the artist. To reduce costs, do you lower the quality you took so long to build (and maybe lose readers)? Do you beg your friends to lower their prices for you (and as a result, get what you pay for)? Any ideas?

'How about the look of a magazine, the way it stands out on a mag-

azine rack and looks to perusal? B&W covers do not usually catch the eye as well as color. SFR's colored paper and black ink is an excellent way out, but this publisher feels that full color is best. Do I have to switch? What about typesetting? I started out perfect-tieping (well, almost perfect) and unjustified right-hand margins. Now, I have gone to typesetting (and an additional cost of between \$1200-1500 per double-issue). Should I go back to typing to save money? Will I lose people with the old look that I attracted with the new one?

'What else can a magazine do to keep their costs (and, subsequently, the price) in line? I am trying several methods. My first thought, of course, is to sell more magazines. The new look was one way, improved quality another, and new markets (like libraries) a third. Certainly I am always trying to get lower material costs without sacrificing quality. I have now decided to take ads inside of the magazine to help increase revenues. I have also created another product, our signed hardcover editions of 250-350 copies, to fill the coffers. I am doing the best I can in the face of all the problems.

'In summary, I have tried to give you a look at the problems I believe I am facing and some solutions I am taking. Indeed, my price increase may turn out to be the suicide you spoke of. Look what happened to Paul Allen. He committed Hari-kari when FANTASY NEWSLETTER proved of limited profit potential. I certainly do not want to do that, but I cannot afford to support the magazine out of pocket either. In the final analysis, as always, the public will make the decisions. I hope, as do all magazine editors, that the hands will be thumbs up.

'To get on, the current news for WHISPERS not only includes its rebirth in March, but a second double-issue in July. That will be our Stephen King double-issue. August will see us publish the hardcover edition of Robert Bloch's PSYCHO II in both a trade and signed-slipcased version. I have several more projects in the fire, but rather than jinx them, I will keep mum for now.'

((We each have our own style of publishing; I would consider the cost of typesetting exorbitant, and full-color covers far, far too costly, because I don't believe the buyer cares that much. I don't believe anyone buys a small press publication because it has a four-color cover (all other things being equal), nor

*refuses to buy because the col-
ums aren't justified.*

((Were I you I would go to saddle-stitch binding, a brilliant white heavy cover stock, a fine, vivid, eye-catching cover art, get an electronic typewriter which can use the Qume printwheels and use the Bookface Academic wheel...in place of the cost of typesetting.

((Ads are almost always a waste of money. Bookstore display, word of mouth, and reviews are the best promotion methods. Accepting ads is okay if you can get enough to make a difference, and if you have the guts to charge enough for the space.

((There, I've saved you a couple thousand dollars! Now, go and do as you will anyway. Nobody takes my good advice....))

LETTER FROM MARK BERRY
POB #16, Taylor, MI 48180
December 12, 1981

'In the last issue of SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW, it was noted that Asimov's book, LIGHTNING ROD was due out in the fall. I recently interviewed Isaac for a newsletter I publish on space colonization and exploration and I asked him about the book. He said, "The book is due when I finish it. The earliest it will be out is Spring 1983." He is presently at "just" the 70,000-word mark. I also found out his current book count is 244. When I interviewed him the count was 242. Two weeks later, it had increased by two. Whew! He must burn out several typewriters a year!'

LETTER FROM WILSON BOB TUCKER
34 Greenbriar Drive
Jacksonville, IL 62650
December 11, 1981

'You should be advised that the world is coming to an end. I know this because I have been given eleven wondrous signs in the space of a single year. Eleven ghosts of fandom past (Fandom Past) have made their presences known to me at unexpected times in divers places, and one need not be a divine oracle to realize those ghosts are harbingers of doom. Don't pay your debts too quickly -- you may save money.

'The first ghost appeared at a bookstore autographing session in Ann Arbor, Michigan last January.

He was Joel Nydahl and he appeared in the chair beside me and asked wistfully if I remembered him. I did. About 1953-55 he was a fourteen-year-old whiz-kid fan-editor who produced many multi-colored fanzines of high literary quality (Literary Quality) and then burned himself out by exhaustion. He left behind him a condition now called "Nydahl's Disease". Nydahl is now teaching in Ann Arbor but doesn't care a moldy fig for fandom, although he seemed pleased that I remembered him.

'The second ghost appeared just a month later at a convention in South Bend, Indiana, and at first I thought it a quaint coincidence. Niel DeJack, who used to roam the Chicago and northern Indiana fan scene in the early 1940s popped into the convention hotel to wonder wistfully (again) if I remembered him. I did. He was one of the fans who taught me not to play poker with fans. He had been gone from fandom for perhaps thirty years and now had no desire to return.

'The third ghost was a shocker, the most amazing of the lot. The third ghost was Claude Degler (himself!) who came to the convention hotel in Indianapolis last Fourth of July weekend to learn if anybody remembered him. We recognized each other at once in the lobby. With the brilliant hindsight I now have, I realize that I should have seized him by the lapels and dragged him up to the microphone to address the assembled multitude there -- he could have spoken on The Cosmic Circle or his memorable dig down to hell. But, alas, he disappeared shortly never to be seen again.

'By now I was aware that the signs were not coincidences but were omens of vast import. I awaited the next and the next, knowing them to be signs of doom.

'The signs and the ghosts came in great, glorious clumps at the Denver Worldcon this past Labor Day weekend. They were Clifton Amsbury and Aubrey MacDermott who edited and published fanzines as early as 1932; Olan Wiggins who was doing the same in 1936 and went on to sponsor the first Denvention in 1941; Chuck Hansen and Roy Hunt who became fans about 1939 and helped with that first Denvention; Ted Dikty, who published as early as 1938 and was a sparkplug of Indiana fandom; and Judy May Dikty who discovered fandom about 1949 and liked it well enough to co-chair the 1952 Chicago Worldcon. (She also liked Ted Dikty well enough to marry him.) All these ghosts of Fandom Past turned up at Denver and found me, or I found them, and together we examined the convention around us to marvel at what we had wrought by our inaction. We could have throttled

fandom in its cradle a quarter-century or a half-century ago.

'The eleventh and final ghost was Dan McPhail, an Oklahoma fan who began publishing fan newspapers in 1931 and who still publishes a quarterly fanzine today. He awarded me a freebie position on his mailing list.

'All this has to mean something (Mean Something) for it is beyond the bounds of mere coincidence that I would discover eleven ghosts in one year, eleven signs in less than a twelve-month. Nydahl didn't seek me out just because he saw my name on a bookstore poster, Degler didn't find me just because he saw my face on a TV interview, Amsbury and MacDermott didn't attend the Denvention because it happened to be there. These were signs. I suspect the world is coming to an end and the signs were sent to me, to reveal to the world. I may even be a latter-day degler.

'Repent, Richard.'

((Pent...pent...pent...pent...I'm repenting as fast as I can, Bob.))

LETTER FROM BUZZ DIXON
8961 Yolanda Avenue
Northridge, CA 91324
December 18, 1981

'I have (truly-uly, as my daughter would say) been meaning to write and compliment you on the truly outstanding job you're doing with SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW (particularly the Malzberg offerings -- for the first time in my experience I found myself reading Malzberg's writings and agreeing with his point of view and understanding his perspective, so much so that I was nodding my head and saying, "Yes, yes," to myself, "Go get 'em, Barry!" And if you know my reluctance to even read anything by Malzberg you'll appreciate my enthusiasm. Barry is a far better critic than fiction writer).

'I've also been slaving away at the Ruby-Spears salt mines, cranking out scripts for THUNDARR THE BARBARIAN and GOLDIE GOLD. We've also been doing development work on a variety of series for next year, including two shows developed by yours truly which received the back-handed compliment of "these are too good for Saturday morning so we're not buying them." (!?!?)

'So I haven't been indolent, Dick, waiting for the next SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW to roll in so I can ignore it. I read SCIENCE FICTION



REVIEW thoroughly (especially book reviews -- to see what I want to buy -- and your capsule film comments). By the time you've seen a movie and written about it in SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW, it's usually on the cable channels, so your reviews often are timely.

'On to commenting on SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #41:

'In regards to your comments re writers' boards, writers' incomes, etc. I'm a member (finally!) of The Writers' Guild of America, which handles union writing in Hollywood (as opposed to scab writing or non-guild signatory writing). There are about 6,000 members in the guild, of whom maybe 3,400 are current members (i.e., have enough credits points; one-shot writers are associate members until they get enough points). Less than 10% of the writers in Tinseltown make more than \$10,000 a year. In fact, something like 300 writers write over 50% of all the TV scripts in this town (which means they're averaging five scripts per person, giving them mini-mum incomes of \$60,000 to \$120,000 a year!).

'The vast membership of the guild, however, has gone a long time between meals. We're not talking about neophytes here, but people like George Clayton Johnson and D.C. Fontana, talented writers who've contributed quality scripts in the past.

'Why -- with such a huge number of scripts available each year (we are talking in the 3,000 range -- and this is just for TV alone, not counting radio and films) -- aren't more writers selling shows?

'Apparently a lock-out has des-

cended on this town. Producers are hiring staff writers but dubbing them "story editors" and "associate producers". Now, the guild doesn't frown on hiring staff writers, nor does it frown on writers who work as story editors or as producers.

'What's been happening is that these bogus story editors (who are in theory charged with the task of locating writers, obtaining scripts from them, then polishing those scripts into the type of episode used by a particular show) are in direct competition with the people pitching stories.

'Case in point: I pitched six story ideas to a now defunct TV series that was so loathsome I'm not even going to mention it by name. The story editor -- who was writing scripts on his own at a furious clip -- rejected five of my stories but did take a fancy to one (needless to say, the sleeziest, most cliché-ridden of a thoroughly bad lot).

'However, if the story editor bought the story from me, it would mean he'd lose two scripts he could write himself; the script I'd sell and the script he could have written in the time it would take him to edit and polish my script. So he strung me along, kept me dangling with promises of "I'll take it to the producer in a week or so when he's less busy."

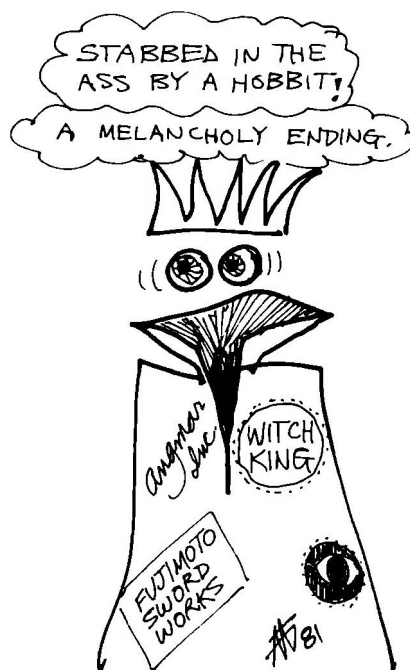
'The series got shitcanned long before the producer ever saw my story idea. Needless to say, three more scripts by the story editor were written and filmed during that period, plus a script written by a person to whom it was politically advantageous for the story editor to buy a story from (you lick my anus, I'll lick yours).

'My story is not the most terrible of this sort; it's actually rather mild. Other people have pitched ideas only to be told "we're doing something like that already" then once the writer was out of earshot the story editor hot-footed it over to the producer with "his" new idea.

'Back in the Bronze Age of television (contrary to starry-eyed romantics, it never had a Golden Age), story editors only edited stories, just as producers only produced. Indeed, the worst episodes of a series were usually the three-week wonders that a story editor wrote in utter desperation when his regular writers failed to come through. In the Bronze Age of TV (1950-65) freelance writers were catered to and enticed; producers seemed to be of the opinion that the more input they had to a series, the better the series would be.

'Now, with people demanding guarantees before they sign on as editors and producers, guarantees of a minimum number of scripts, freelancers are in effect frozen out of the market.

'I am lucky; my income is above \$10,000 a year. However, last year I wrote eight animation scripts, which gives me an income of about \$25,000. I get no residuals, no royalties, no share of the profits (indeed, the animation union specifically prohibits me receiving such benefits). If I create a show for a company, I never see a penny of its rentals, residuals or merchandizing. Had I written eight live-action hour-long scripts this year, I would have made a minimum of \$160,000.



'There's a lot of money to be made writing, but more and more cliques are taking over the publishing and dramatic markets. These are not conscious, evil conspiracies, but simple groupings of people who have worked together before. The problem is, by their very nature, they tend to exclude outsiders.

'And when you think about it, aren't most good writers outsiders at heart?

'Cliff McMurray's shuttle report was fascinating; you have a particularly good batch of non-fiction reporting recently. I do wish you and he would stop criticizing Governor Moonbeam -- he's the most entertaining comedy-soap-opera running today. Grant's "Wow!" cartoon fitted the tone of the article perfectly.

'If David Gerrold maintains man-

agers are never to blame for the failure of talent (particularly top-line talent) I suggest he look at the season record for the ex-L.A. Lambs ... er ... Rams.

'Glad you disliked BLOW OUT: Another horror story regarding screenwriting is that I was one of three people (at least!) who wrote full-length screenplays for that film. Two of us weren't paid, none of us got any credit. Some of our material did end up in Mr. DePalma's (hoo-ha!) screenplay. I'm glad the movie laid a turd for two reasons: DePalma's less-than-ethical behavior and the fact that Filmways -- in a lunatic budget cut to keep from spending money on a company they planned to sell -- kept me unemployed for the bulk of 1980.

'DRAGONSLAYER, by the way, is not a Disney film. It was partially financed by Disney (in return for overseas rights), and some of the full-scale effects were done by the Disney effects crew, but the film was a Paramount venture. It got buried in the summer sludge rush this year; too bad, I hope Paramount re-releases it at a more opportune time (say after the CONAN movie).

'So Robert Sabella and Barry Malzberg are kicking around the age-old question: If tin whistles are made of tin, what are foghorns made of? What is science fiction? (You decide if it's science fiction, speculative fiction, sci fi or what). Allow my two cents worth to be deposited:

"Science fiction is what a writer writes about when he thinks about what the world could be.

"Fantasy is what a writer writes about when he wishes what the world would be.

"Horror is what a writer writes about when he thinks about what he fears the world is."

'By the way, I liked your two nice ZAPS to Christopher Priest and Piers Anthony Jacob -- it's so nice to see you haven't lost your malevolent old form ... or wit.'

((I think that as the economy continues to slide, the contraction in publishing will result in more and more "staff" writers---proven writers who are part of an unofficial clique who supply 95% or so of the fiction needs of publishers. As you say, the newcomers and the outsiders will have an increasingly tough time breaking in.

((I'll dispute you: sometimes the "insider" is also a good writ-

THE VIVISECTOR

BY DARRELL SCHWEITZER

ELFLAND, THIS EXIT; RIGHT LANE ONLY

We might as well admit it: Fantasy has become a genre for the first time. Fantasy is the oldest form of "literary" writing. Some Chinese oracle bones are older but the earliest piece of written storytelling is probably THE EPIC OF GILGAMESH, and it is ... you guessed it. Realistic literature does have ancient antecedents, but nothing that ancient. Fantasy remained the dominant form of fiction in our culture until about 1600, when it retreated a little, but by the end of the 18th Century it was back. The mainstream novel, by which I mean the novel which is realistic in both treatment and subject matter, is a recent innovation. Its strongest period of dominance was probably about 1880-1960. It seems to be declining now. You might say fiction is reverting to normal.

But, for all fantasy has existed for thousands of years, it has only become a genre in the last ten. There is an obvious reason for this. As Norman Spinrad points out, everything is genre these days. There aren't any "general" fiction books anymore. The other reason is less obvious. Fantasy reached its many-centuried low point in the 1950s when virtually no books of the type were published, and the very concept was virtually unknown to the reading public, not to mention the publishers. (The sort of people who read and publish "Novels" with a capital "N". The implication of the use of the word to mean realistic literary fiction is that the beholder is unaware of any other kind of novel.) Then Fantasy was rediscovered, first through Tolkein, then T.H. White, then Burroughs, then Howard. Each time a publishing explosion occurred, but in each case (with the possible exception of White) it centered around the author himself and closely identifiable imitators. The phenomena had not broadened into a field.

Lin Carter changed all that with the Ballantine Adult Fantasy Series. Not only did he reintroduce William Morris, Dunsany, Cabell and many others, but he showed clearly that Fantasy books sell. Not Tolkein books or T.H. White books or Robert E. Howard books, but Fantasy books.

When the type of book is more important than the name of the person who wrote it, you've got a genre. For the first time, in the past ten years or so, publishers started clearly-labeled Fantasy lines, just like their mystery lines, their mainstream lines, their gothics, westerns or whatever.

This is a mixed blessing. A genre offers protection. A genre book will sell a predictable amount of copies, merely because it is in that genre. Therefore if it is budgeted properly, it will not lose money, no matter what is between the covers. It is less of a risk for the publisher to undertake. The advantage of this is that it becomes far easier for new writers to break in. The major disadvantage is that there is a general lowering of average quality. Back in the old days, before Fantasy was a genre, when a Fantasy novel was likely to meet with prejudice and outright incomprehension, the few that got published tended to be brilliant: The GORMENGHAST books, THE LORD OF THE RINGS, ONCE AND FUTURE KING, JURGEN, THE BROKEN SWORD, THE WORM OUBOROS, THE CROCK OF GOLD, Lord Dunsany's early story collections. They were usually published as rather odd entries in the Literary category. Certainly there are Fantasy books contemporary with the above which have been forgotten, but damn few compared to the number of dustbin mainstream novels there are for every FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS or THE GREAT GATSBY.

Genrefication makes room for mediocrity. But it also allows new writers to start at a beginner's level and work up to greatness. Before, Fantasy writers usually had to spend their apprenticeships writing something else. (Who reads Cabell's THE EAGLE'S SHADOW these days or White's early books?) I wonder how many never got started at all because there was no genre to protect them.

When a field becomes a genre, you have to lower your expectations for any randomly-chosen book. So it is in Fantasy today. There used to be just a few great books. Now there are just a few great books, and a lot of not-so-great ones. On one



end, there's formula sword-and-sorcery. On the other, there's a kind of fantasy romance, usually written by women and read by women, which threatens to become as totemized as the gothic or the Regency Romance. (Or maybe the Bodice-Ripper. Has anybody written a Fantasy Bodice-Ripper yet? If not, steal my idea. See if I care.) Somewhere in the middle there's a kind of fake, lifeless medievalism which ignores all the characteristics which give real medieval literature (or even real after-the-fact medievalism, like White's) its interest. If you ignore both the spirituality and the earthiness; if you don't use the peculiar worldview -- well, all you've got left is a lot of people in armor and/or drooping robes calling one another "My Lord" and "My Lady" (or maybe "Sirrah", which is Elizabethan, please note) and living in papier mache' castles. As Avram Davidson pointed out recently, in any real castle there are hundreds of absolutely essential people who are neither My Lord or My Lady; there are latrines over the moat; those old and doddering wizards were once young and not so doddering, etc. In other words, life was not a Society For Creative Anachronism event. Nor was it a Dungeons and Dragons game, even in Romance. (I am not saying one has to be realistic. The romanticizing of the Middle Ages began in the Middle Ages. But one has to be something.)

What I mean to say, before running on longer, is that each genre has its own particular straightjackets, its pitfalls, its fossilizations, and now that Fantasy is a genre, there is a lot of bad fantasy,

and this bad fantasy tends to run in channels. When you open a Fantasy book, you can no longer expect it to be something special. It can be anything.

The only encouraging note is that there is no evidence that genrefication decreases the number of great works written. It just hides them. It may even increase the number slightly, by making less commercial books (which would never make the Best Seller List) safer to publish.

To consider some recent Fantasy:

THE WAR HOUND AND THE WORLD'S PAIN
By Michael Moorcock
Timescape Books, 1981, 240 pp., \$12.95

By genre standards this is quite good. It is above average for Fantasy books published in 1981. It is original in conception, quite inventive and well written in spots.

Curiously, serious treatments of the Christian Mythos are rare in Fantasy. There is the humorous variety a'la JURGEN, "The Devil and Daniel Webster", or those endless slushpile stories about the formalities of the hereafter, but Christian elements in a serious work are almost taboo. Editors clam up. They are hyper-defensive, expecting a preachment. In the pulp era, one just didn't do that sort of thing. Sword and Sorcery fiction, which is pulp-derived, almost never uses Christian elements. Even C.L. Moore's Jirel of Joiry series, one of the very few to use the historical past rather than Never-Never Land as a setting, carefully avoided Christianity. (And probably lost most of its potential that way. If your story is based on something which is one of the most fundamental elements of our culture's way of thinking, it will resonate nicely in the reader's subconscious. It isn't a matter of being a Believer.) What Moorcock has done is not only use the Christian Mythos but make it stand on its head, jump through hoops, etc.

WAR HOUND sounds like great stuff from the generally accurate flyer and jacket copy: Ulrich von Bek, mercenary captain and professional survivor during the Thirty Years War, one of the most brutal and dismal periods in European history, meets the Devil in a strange castle. It seems that Satan wants to be reconciled with God, but is unable to communicate with him. Therefore he sends von Bek on a quest for the Cure For the World's Pain, the Holy Grail, offering him redemption as a reward. The quest leads through strange lands, through the intersecting Multiverse familiar to long-time Moorcock readers. There are striking inventions, vivid images, unusual sit-

uations, but ... but ...

... but the book is rather disappointing, because it isn't nearly as good as it should be. Maybe I came to it expecting it to be non-genre, automatically far above average. It is one thing to carefully explain how Fantasy is genre fiction. It is quite another to get used to the idea. (The irony of it all is that Carter created the genre using non-genre books, most of them far superior to what is published as Fantasy today.) THE WAR HOUND AND THE WORLD'S PAIN has all the material for a great book (and I mean a really Great one, like TITUS GROAN or ONCE AND FUTURE KING), but there are passages in it which read like any Moorcock sword-and-sorcery novel, including the ones he used to dash off in a few days.

There is a curious lack of passion or intensity, which robs the story of its enormous potential. This is supposed to be the most apocalyptic era in the history of Europe, you see. The tale opens:

"It was in that year when the fashion in cruelty demanded not only the crucifixion of peasant children, but a similar fate for their pets"....(p. 11)

But there follows a rather bland synopsis of the hero's early life and his military experience. Nothing real on a gut level. No pain, no horror, no convincing remorse for his evil deeds. No emotion at all. There are no scenes of cruelty, violence, terror. We have to take someone else's word for it that things are as bad as they are. The reader never gets a chance to see for himself and to react. The first person narration may be at fault. Like many first person narrators, von Bek talks too much, merely describing his emotions. He is perhaps too self-conscious, unable to submerge himself in the action.

On the plus side, the novel is fast-paced, smoothly written, and it is enlivened by flashes of irony. It is at its best in the real of abstract moral and philosophical ideas, either standing conventional notions on end or elaborating a new and unusual theology which doubtless would have gotten Moorcock burned at the stake in the period he's writing about. What I like about this novel is that, not only is it inventive, but it is definitely about something. It does more than just go through genre motions. What I don't like about it is that it lacks the depth and intensity it would have had to get published, say, twenty years ago, back when there was no

Fantasy genre. It is worth reading. It will probably be popular. It may even win awards. But I don't think it'll be a classic. We have to get used to the idea that every Fantasy book isn't a classic anymore.

THE CHANGING LAND
By Roger Zelazny
Del Rey Books, 1981, Paperback
245 pages, \$2.50.

Genre or no genre, I have my limits Here's a real disappointment. Zelazny used to be one of my favorite writers. He is still a writer I think has done excellent work, even if most of it was a while ago. This is not just a case of adolescent infatuation either. I grew up on Zelazny, yes, but this past year I was hired to write annotations for a bibliography of his work, and I went back and read a great deal of it. And I read a lot of his early stuff I'd never gotten to before. It held up.

I've long since ceased to regard every Zelazny book as an Event, but I never expected to be bored by one. It came as a shock. CREATURES OF LIGHT AND DARKNESS might have been inferior. DOORWAYS IN THE SAND might have had a slapdash ending. BRIDGE OF ASHES might have been a framed fragment rather than a whole novel. But those books held interest. They had considerable virtues. THE CHANGING LAND is simply tedious.

Some review -- it might have been Algis Budrys -- commented in a review of TO DIE IN ITALBAR that Zelazny has been, over the years, putting all his magic tricks into the hat. There goes the poetry. There goes the characterization. There goes the sheer personality of his narration which sometimes took the place of characterization (and you didn't care) ... There goes the wit ... The hat is nearly full, folks. Virtually all the elements which made his early work so distinctive are lacking in THE CHANGING LAND.

It's the first Dilvish novel. Dilvish, you'll recall is the hero who was sent to Hell for 200 years while his body was turned into a statue. He returned at last, a legendary figure, to save his country. He rides a black metal horse which is sentient and occasionally given to wisecracking. Zelazny's prose had a lot more zing in those days.

About all that remains is the invention. The characters spend most of their time trying to cross the Land of the title, which constantly undergoes deadly transformations (one is reminded of the shifting temporal fronts in Dickson's TIME-

STORM) because a mad/senile god-like being dwelling in a castle in the center is dreaming these things. The wizard Jelerak (who sent Dilvish to Hell originally) is master of the place, but he's missing and every amateur wizard in the universe, not to mention Jelerak's servants and the like, has a scheme for seizing control of the god's powers. Plots and counterplots multiply. There are a lot of odd details. Slaves have to shovel shit (literally) into the tentacled god's pit constantly. No one (not even the author) ever makes anything of this. There is an ingenious description of a whirlpool of land, what it would be like to be on one, and how you escape.

The novel is full of good bits, and that's all. The story itself is dull because the characters aren't even made of well-cut cardboard. Only one flickers to life briefly and that's when remembering her past. Like the Moorcock book, this one too is dispassionate very much to a fault, only this one isn't about anything, and therefore does not hold interest. In a total absence of emotionally-involving characterization there can be no suspense. Motivations don't make sense. Conflicts bring a sigh of "so what?" One is reminded of Mark Twain's dictum that the reader should learn to love the good people and hate the bad ones, not wish they'd all go drown in a lake together.

Worse, I couldn't care if they drown in a lake together. The book is a lifeless shell in the shape of a novel. It is a finger exercise. Zelazny still possesses his remarkable talents. I only wish he would take the time to feel his way through a book.

Ah, well, it'll probably make a good board game.

MERLIN

By Robert Nye

Bantam, 1981, paper, 238 pp., \$2.95

This one won't even make a good board game. King Arthur always sells. This isn't just a commercial thing. The Arthurian story has amazing vitality. It still moves us. It inspires great works in every age. Its facets have been examined again and again, and upon examination there always turn out to be a few more facets than anybody imagined.

There are also a few smudges. MERLIN begins well enough. In an oddball, almost stream-of-consciousness manner (with a lot of arty five sentence chapters), the famed wizard begins to recall the experiences of his life. He also recalls quite a

few before his life, before his conception even. How is this? What else can you do cooped up in a crystal cave?

The cause of the book's undoing is mentioned on the cover. "A VERY Adult Fantasy", it's blurred. Well, no it isn't. It's a very adolescent one. It would be just great smuggled into the Tenth Grade at an all-boys prep school. This is the Sexy Version, you see, and every situation is exploited for its obvious possibilities. There is even a long sequence in which an abbess teaches Vivien (Merlin's mother) how to masturbate properly. This after she's gone to confession with a priest who must know (for Theology's sake presumably) whether or not the Devil has hairy balls. It isn't just because of the abbess that this reminded me of a porno book I read part of once, called NUNS IN CHAINS. All the characters have such one-track minds. The humor wears thin quickly. Yawn.

Merlin contains one good dirty joke. I'm going to tell it to you right now, so you can save three bucks: A certain merchant and his daughter were set upon by robbers, who took all they had, except for some jewels which the girl concealed in her privates. Later, she returned the jewels to her father to cheer him up. "If only your mother had come along", he sighed. "Then we could have saved the horse and wagon!"

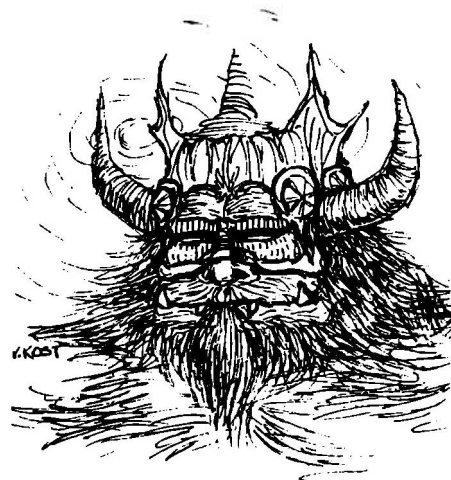
Darrell Schweitzer in his column, THE VIVISECTOR, relates a "good, dirty joke" which he read in the Fantasy book, MERLIN. The joke may be "good" and it may be "dirty" but now it is not. I was properly astounded, as I have heard that one ever since my childhood and it was old already then, serving as a part of our "Behind-the-Barn" sex education, the only kind available.

-- Paulette

a classic. He continued to write the stuff out of love, even when it could only be sold to marginal markets. He can hardly be accused of jumping on the bandwagon now that there's gold in them thar elves ...

FANTASY contains a sampling of stories published between 1951 and 1979. There are also a couple of essays, one of which, "Of Thud and Blunder" ought to be, like Le Guin's "From Elfland to Poughkeepsie", required reading for would-be scribes in the field. It will teach them to avoid most of the standard stupidities, including fifty-pound swords, bareass barbarians riding horses as if they were motorcycles, etc. etc. Embarrassingly, one of these stupidities (heads lopped off by one blow with a sword) turns up in one of the stories in this book, but nobody is perfect. It is a witty, intelligent discussion, rich in suggestions for making such fiction better.

As for the stories themselves, my favorite is "The Tale of Hawk", which is a Norse tale in the manner of Norse tales, both humane and grim at the same time. I don't read Old Norse, I confess, or even Icelandic. What I mean is that it reads like an excellent translation of an old story. It captures the special flavor of the Northern Thing.



FANTASY

By Poul Anderson

Tor Books, 1981, paper, 334 pp., \$2.50

This is more like it. Poul Anderson has written a small amount of Fantasy over the years. He continued to do so even during the years in which such fiction was hardly a commercial proposition at all. He wrote THE BROKEN SWORD, one of the best Norse fantasies ever, which had a tiny edition in 1954, was met with little understanding or appreciation at the time and endured to become

The other stories demonstrate an admirable variety. One of the problems Fantasy now has as a genre is that some people (editors and readers) think that if the story hasn't got wizards, dragons, castles and people in droopy costumes calling each other "My Lord" and "My Lady", well, it just isn't fantasy. The field is a lot richer than that. It wouldn't have survived this long if it wasn't. Anderson does a good job of demonstrating this. He does Viking stories. He does rationalist fantasy, in which some fantastic premise is treated with rigorous logic, as if it were science. Stories

like "Superstition" (arguably science fiction: A post-Blast society which has space travel, but believes in charms, portents, astrology, rain dances, etc. and regards materialistic science as superstition) and "Pact" (the ultimate deal-with-a-human story: A Devil discovers the lost reverse-Faustus technique, conjures up a human, and things don't work out the way he wants them to) would have fit into UNKNOWN splendidly.

"The Visitor" is, in Anderson's words, the saddest of all his works. It's about a little girl living in a fantasy world -- only she isn't little. She's been in a coma for years, and it's a timeless prison inside her mind. The story is very moving.

One of the most encouraging things about such a broad selection of Anderson's work is that there is no diminishing of quality over the years. When you think about it, you realise that most of the great talents in Science Fiction/Fantasy did their important work in a short space. Heinlein had about fifteen good years. Bradbury had perhaps ten. Silverberg perhaps eight or nine. Van Vogt very clearly had eleven, 1939-50. But after more than thirty years, Anderson is still going strong. A slow improvement is visible. The early stories are good but tend to include stereotyped characters. The later ones show more sensitivity.

Also a must: "The Barbarian", possibly the first (1956) and still the best Conan parody. It actually has a point. The Barbarian comes to grief because he cannot comprehend civilized war: After all that slaughter and pillage the Empire is mad at him, because there's no one left to pay taxes. The reason this parody works is that it undermines the typical sword-and-sorcery epic with logic rather than simple exaggeration and slapstick.

Long-time Anderson fans will also like "House Rule", a tale of the Old Phoenix, the tavern outside of time and space, where famous people from all eras (and also from fiction and legend) gather. The place has turned up in other works, most notably A MIDSUMMER TEMPEST.

I found I already had most of the stories, but few fans (much less general readers) read magazines these days, so probably most or all will be unfamiliar to you. Recommended. A strong possibility for a Best Collection Award, either World Fantasy or Balrog.

I should also like to commend the (uncredited) artist for producing a painting and the art director for buying a painting, which doesn't

look like every other Fantasy book cover on the market. The semi-abstract, rather fuzzy style reminds me vaguely of Goya's painting of Chronos devouring his children. The subject matter isn't similar, but the technique is a little like that. I am getting tired of Disneyland Realism, photographic covers (usually by Rowena Morrill) filled with chesty males and busty females, skimpy costumes and heroic poses, completely lacking any wrinkle, smudge, texture or movement which would convince the viewer that everyone and everything depicted isn't molded out of plastic and put on display in Fantasyland.

Noted:

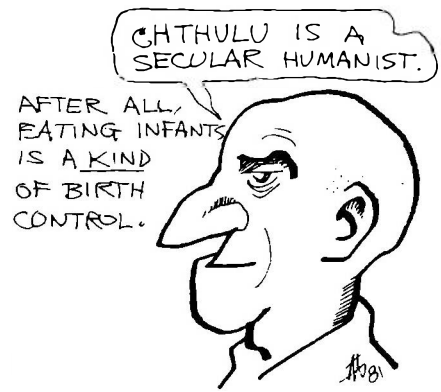
THE TOMB AND OTHER TALES

By H.P. Lovecraft
Ballantine, 1981, 190 pp, \$2.25

AT THE MOUNTAINS OF MADNESS

By H.P. Lovecraft
Ballantine, 1981, 184 pp, \$2.25

Ballantine is beginning to re-issue the old Beagle Books Lovecraft titles with new covers by Michael Whelan, which are far superior to the old ones, but just as non-illustrative. The problem with this series is that Ballantine/Beagle does not own the rights to much of the best material. The basic Lovecraft, for any serious reader, consists of the three continuously in print Arkham House volumes, THE DUNWICH HORROR, AT THE MOUNTAINS OF MADNESS, and DAGON. The first contains most of the best short and middle-length fiction, including the classic title story, "The Colour Out of Space", "The Call of Cthulhu", etc. The second contains three short novels, and other (mostly important) material. The third, DAGON, consists of everything else, including the dregs. THE DUNWICH HORROR was the first to be sold to the paperbacks and was split into two volumes (THE DUNWICH HORROR and THE COLOUR OUT OF SPACE) which have wended their way through a tangle of Lancer, Zebra, Jove etc. editions, none of which, alas, have been nearly as well distributed as the Ballantine/Beagle series, which is derived from the last two Arkham volumes and contains much inferior material. As a result, THE TOMB AND OTHER TALES is a pretty bad book, and not a suitable introduction to the author. Only three of the stories are of interest to non-specialists: "The Festival", "The Strange High House in the Mist" and "In the Walls of Byrrh". The title story is enough to scare away any sophisticated reader. (It does contain a wonderful drinking song, though.)



So, for the uninitiated, AT THE MOUNTAINS OF MADNESS is certainly the better buy. The title novella is severely flawed, but it is a major work and there are readers who claim it as their favorite. "Dreams in the Witch House" is superb and shows H.P. Lovecraft at the height of his powers. "The Shunned House" and "The Statement of Randolph Carter" are rather minor.

I'd dearly love to see Ballantine package all of Lovecraft this well.

THE LETTERS OF J.R.R. TOLKIEN

Edited by Humphrey Carpenter
Houghton-Mifflin, 1981
463 pp., \$16.95

Like most volumes of literary letters, this one is for specialists. Only rarely does anything turn up as good as, say, Lovecraft's letters, which are a wonderful reading experience for their own sake. (Better than the stories, some people insist.) Perhaps it is because Tolkien led a fuller life, richer in direct personal contact rather than correspondence that he didn't put as much of himself into his letters. Then again, the sort of letters presented here, business correspondence with his publishers, answers to fans, etc. aren't the sort in which the personality of the average writer really shows through. But his letters to his sons are rather dry too.

If you've studied Tolkien rather than merely read him, this volume will no doubt be a revelation. There is a lot of literary data. Several times he explains religious ideas in great detail. One of the things that surprised me was that Tolkien apparently didn't think of THE LORD OF THE RINGS as a massive work originally. There are a few letters from the late 30s asking his publisher if they think they can get it out by the next Christmas season if he hurries up and finishes it.

Of obvious interest to Tolkien students, but this isn't the sort of book that's going to become popular.

I hope Houghton Mifflin didn't print as many copies of this as they did of THE SIMARILLION.

CONTEMPORARY LITERARY CRITICISM
Edited by Sharon R. Gunton
Volume 19, Gale Research, 1981
500 pp. plus indexes, \$68.00

As long as they keep sending me these things I'll keep reviewing them. I don't imagine any individuals will buy CONTEMPORARY LITERARY CRITICISM, but every library should and anyone who does literary research of any sort should be familiar with the series. It consists of excerpts from reviews and articles about various authors. The idea is to give an overview of critical opinion on each. A weakness is that sometimes the concentration is on recent work rather than the most important work. The Isaac Asimov entry spends too much space on his autobiography, not enough on his fiction. Science Fiction/Fantasy authors covered this time include Asimov, Jorge Luis Borges, Philip Jose' Farmer, Brian Moore, Sylvia Townsend Warner and John Wyndham.

SMALL PRESS MAGAZINES

Reviewed By
Darrell Schweitzer

There is a new WEIRDBOOK out. I have been looking forward to each issue of WEIRDBOOK for well over ten years now. I'll admit to a sentimental attachment: The magazine has not only been one of my best markets over the years; it was my first market. Before that, Editor Ganley wrote me some long and patient letters explaining why the stories I wrote in my middle teens were so rotten. But besides that, WEIRDBOOK is one of the oldest small press magazines, founded in 1968. It has been roughly annual since then and fairly reliable in quality. There is always a spread of stories, ranging from fairly weak but still readable to superior. Usually one story per issue really stands out. I can think of some professional operations over the years which haven't been nearly as dependable.

Sure enough, the stand-out in WEIRDBOOK 15 is by one of the least-known people in the issue, Thomas G.

Lyman, and is a novelet called "The Prayer Machine". In some ways it's quite standard, a tale of eldritch revenge in a Nepalese monastery, but the prose is vivid and powerful and the characters are alive. Too many stories of this type feature cardboard cutouts which exist solely to be eaten by Things. (Which I suppose tells us something about the nutritional requirement of Things.) In this case there is real interaction and a conflict the reader cares about. Also the remote Himalayan setting comes across very well. I was completely caught up in the story as I read it. Who is Lyman? If he sticks around, I predict he will go far.

Brian Lumley's "Recognition" tells us more about the nutritional requirements of Things. Actually, I don't want to sound too harsh. Lumley writes well. His ability to keep me reading one of his tales of the Derlethian Cthulhu Mythos despite everything is a sign of that. All I can really say is that for those of you who like this sort of thing, this is the sort of thing you are bound to like. Standard elements fall into place like tumblers in a well-oiled lock. There are few surprises. The Eater this time is a kind of spider god, possibly new to the Mythos. I'm not sure. I have not consulted the program lately.

Another story in the issue that I like is Jerry Page's fable, "Two Princes of Saturn". There is an attempt at something similar by Jessica Salmonson, which is far less successful.

One of the more interesting things about WEIRDBOOK is that it sometimes publishes what can only be called experimental fiction like that in NEW WORLDS only with content. There's one by Eddy C. Bertin this issue, which almost comes off. There is also a William Scott Home piece, "Prisoner of the Omega" which I was not able to read. Home produced one brilliant tale, "The Fruits of Yebo's Sins", in WEIRDBOOK #4, years ago, but since then he has produced some of the most intensely opaque prose imaginable. I understand he is influenced by M.P. Shiel. That could explain a lot of it.

I have two stories in this issue, "The Other Murder of Etelven Thios" and "The Final? Murder? of Etelven Thios?" which, together with the one I had in issue #14 (I will let you guess the title -- Etelven Thios is a wizard who is hard to dispose of) form a trilogy. There is one remarkable typo in the text. On page 19, the last paragraph of the last story, someone makes his "penultimate mistake". Unlikely. Please change it to "ultimate" before you read the



THAT MUST BE
MY REJECTION
SLIP...



story. Also, in the last paragraph of page 15, one sentence makes more sense if you change "not found" to "not found".

The one big disappointment this issue is "Wanderers of the Waters" by the late H. Warner Munn, who has been a regular in this magazine since the beginning. This story, too, completes a trilogy (the others are in issues 12 and 13), or more precisely, it rehashes the previous stories then slaps an ending on. Humanity is having it out with the Deep Ones, and other undersea critters, you see. Alas, that the virtually indistinguishable characters spend virtually the entire piece retelling what has happened, filling one another in on the world situation (which should already be known to them), or otherwise lecturing in the finest RALPH 124C41+ style. This is a novelet-length story in which nothing happens. With a bit of handwaving, a solution is arrived at offstage, but there is no dramatic tension at all. The other two stories are worth reading, by the way.

Also featured are stories by Michael Avallone, Dennis Etchison and a few others plus a poem by Robert E. Howard. This is an average issue of WEIRDBOOK. I can't judge my own work, of course, but for me it's the Lyman story which makes the issue worthwhile.

There was a fairly good story by Charles L. Grant in the June FANTASY NEWSLETTER. FANTASY NEWSLETTER is probably known to most of you for its reportage, very strong columns by people like Fritz Leiber and Karl Edward Wagner and its author interviews. It also publishes fiction on occasion. The 37th issue presented

"The Residents", which is about strange doings in a homey urban neighborhood and an old man who feeds children he doesn't like to his haunted car. The writing is polished; the setting comes off as very real, and there is even a plausible motivation for what happens (too often lacking in this sort of story), but I wonder: The car is usually seen as an immobile wreck at the curbside. The old man offers the boy a ride and, quick as you can say Twilight Zone, the car is shiny and new. The kid is reluctant to get in because his mommy told him not to get into cars with people, but he doesn't even seem to notice the amazing transformation the old heap has suddenly undergone. My disbelief never quite recovered from that. The idea that the old man can actually go places in some mysterious way in this memory-and-ghost-filled wreck is very good, but Grant has not quite shored it up with convincing detail.

Now, turning from the old standbys to new publications, let us consider FANTASY BOOK. This is an extremely interesting entry, a more than yearly (announced as bi-monthly) fantasy magazine with eighty 8 1/2 X 11" pages per issue. That's about 70-80,000 words of fiction per issue. Therefore, the most exciting thing about FANTASY BOOK from the writer's point of view is the prospect of a regular market which can publish a lot.

But sure enough, within a month or so the magazine had become overstocked, as new small press fantasy magazines usually do. But as a reader I can't help but wonder if the problem might not be that the editor grabbed everything in sight with just a little less discrimination than might be desired. The first issue is not very good. The second promises to be better (it includes a story by Dennis Etchison), but the first does tell us something about what this magazine will be like.

There are a couple of quite weak pieces of science fiction, including an overly cute and unfunny cover story by Sherwood Springer. There is a great tendency toward Folksiness, which is to say the characters are just plain country (or small town) folks such as writers who live in the city are likely to imagine. No less than four stories fall into this category. By contrast, the one reprint in the issue, a hitherto un-reprinted H.L. Gold story from UNKNOWN, is about an urban laundryman and it rings true. There are also two stories (by Kris Neville and Walter Beckers) which are completely incoherent. Actually the Neville, presumably an old manuscript, is sufficiently formless and opaque that I'm surprised he couldn't sell it during the New Wave era.

Jonathon L. Breen parodies the Gray Mouser series. This is the sort of thing which would probably put the audience in stitches if read aloud at a convention under the right circumstances, but it seems to go on too long in print.

There's also a hitherto unpublished story by L. Ron Hubbard called "The Were-Human", also presumably an old manuscript. It is not his best by any means. The illiteracy of the title should tell you something. Since "were" is an Old English word for "man" a "were-human" would presumably be someone who stays the same under the influence of the full moon. (That other old standby, the "were-woman" would be a kind of Swedish convertible, I guess.) Ah, but no, this is about a wolf who is stuck in human form. The idea is merely presented. The "human" does a sufficiently brutal deed, turns back into a wolf, and romps off. Not much of a story really. But here is a classically bad piece of writing:

"... he found a blind man playing a guitar and tapping with a cane as he moved along ... With socketless eyes, twisted from left to right in an effort to gain sympathy ..." (P. 44)

All explanations to the contrary, I refuse to believe that this fellow doesn't have at least three arms and eyeballs completely outside of his head, dangling like grapes.

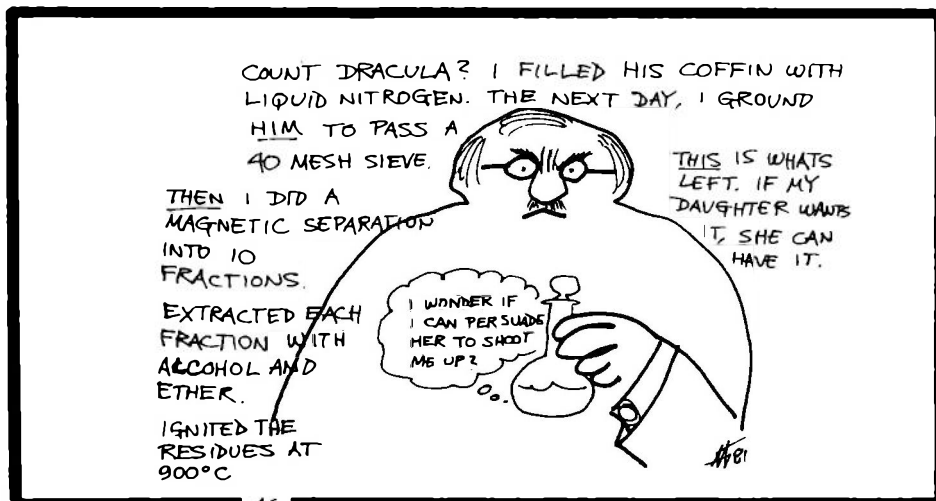
But to be a bit more positive, except for the two incoherent stories already noted, everything in the issue is very readable. "A Symphony for Sarah Ann" by Sheila Finch-Rayner, about a musician's love for a mermaid, has real emotional power. But nothing stands out as excellent. There is only one story I strongly object to, and that is "We Take Care of Our Own" by Terri Pinckard, in which the jes' plain country folks cook up a scheme to murder all the

welfare cheats and degenerate hippies they can lure to their town. The crisis of the story occurs when bodies pile up faster than the undertaker can get rid of them in double-decker coffins. But all ends happily when a bunch of cows die and there's a lime-pit handy ... This sort of sprightly humor (?) strikes me as coming about four decades too late. It would have been just right for the "Time Out" section of the Auschwitz camp newspaper.

Other authors in the first issue include Kathleen Sky and Stephen Goldin, Walt Leibscher and J. Neil Schulman. The magazine promises more than it delivers at this point, but considering that it is on a larger scale than anything except TWILIGHT ZONE, one can hope the future will be better.

Its most glaring need right now is a new title logo. The present one is in such a thin script that it can only be read up close. Bad news for bookstore display.

SORCERER'S APPRENTICE is a fantasy gaming magazine, rather like THE DRAGON. Most of the contents deal directly with gaming, but there are always a few more general articles and a story or two. The story in the eleventh issue (Summer 1981 -- the most recent issue I've seen) is "Can These Bones Live?" by Manly Wade Wellman, in which John the Bal-ladeer encounters yet another spectral thingie in the Appalachian Mountains which seem to be nearly as haunted as the part of New Jersey Jules de Grandin used to live in. The story is about average for the series. The writing is good, incorporating dialect deftly and the background is convincing. The supernatural theme is drawn from an old song ("Dry Bones" this time) and after a brief encounter the menace is laid to rest. John has gotten a lot of practice laying menaces to rest, but his fans always want more.



FANTASY TALES #8 is for people who wish they still wrote 'em like they used to. Take heart: They still do. The magazine is handsomely produced and looks like an under-sized issue of the digest-styled *WEIRD TALES*. The fiction is about as good as that found in the late *WEIRD TALES*: No classics, but ranging from fair to pretty good. "A Place of No Return" by Hugh B. Cave reads like pure, vintage pulp fiction. An American professor, who is also a bit of an arrogant ass, wants to know if there really are zombies in Haiti. I need not tell you the rest. The setting is well realized. The story could easily have been published in *WEIRD TALES*, *STRANGE TALES* or any of the other pulps Cave used to write for.

"The Dark Country" by Dennis Etchison reminds me of Bradbury's "Next in Line" and the trouble is that last time I read "Next in Line" (which I confess was years ago) I didn't like it much. It's a tale of brooding and vaguely-defined doom in Mexico. When it gets specific, it's merely sordid. Some of you may see more in it than I do. You may also see something in Michael D. Toman's "Weirwood" which didn't make a lick of sense to me. All I saw was some intensely florid prose. Toman should work on reducing his adjective-to-noun ratio.

There are some stories this issue I liked more. I smiled when I read "The Elevation of Theosophus Goatgrime" by Brian Mooney, not just because it's witty but because I'm editing an anthology of stories from magazines like *FANTASY TALES* and I thought I had something here. Not quite. The writing is good, the style spritely as the inept hero (who has been an apprentice sorcerer for over 100 years, never getting good enough to graduate) tries to improve his lot, but the ending turns on the usual vaguely worded Three Wishes by which he comes to a bad end. Good, but not quite. Mooney is definitely a writer to watch, though.

"Shadows From the Past" by Mary Clarke incorporates an outrageous image and is horrific in what it suggests, but that's all. The author doesn't seem to see the possibilities. The writing is quite Victorian (as are Clarke's ideas about hypnotism), which gives the present-day action an odd texture, but certainly this is one of the strongest pieces of sheer grue to come along in a good while.

"The Legacy" by James Glenn is well, okay. It's another one of those stories about Biblical and/or Legendary matters being worked out in the present day. It's an venerable genre, and sometimes begets thousand-

page novels like *THE WANDERING JEW*, so I wonder why so many modern writers just present their ideas and stop which is all Glenn does.

"Sic Transit" by Mike Chinn is a little less than okay. It's another one of those comical God-and-Devil stories. An angel gives the hero extreme longevity, you see, because Heaven is getting crowded. Chinn writes well enough. Perhaps some day he'll get beyond superficial cleverness.

A fairly good issue of one of the fantasy field's standbys.

WEIRDBOOK

W. Paul Ganley, Box 35, Amherst Branch, Buffalo, NY 14226
\$4.50 per copy, 3/\$10.00

FANTASY NEWSLETTER

Paul Allen, POB 170A, Rochester, NY 14601.
\$1.95 or \$15.00 per year (monthly)

Note: FANTASY NEWSLETTER is now published by Robert A. Collins, College of Humanities, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL 33431. Allen still has back issues.

FANTASY BOOK

Fantasy Book Enterprises
POB 4193, Pasadena, CA 91106
\$3.00/\$18.00 for six issues
Bimonthly

SORCERER'S APPRENTICE

Flying Buffalo Inc., POB 1467, Scottsdale, AZ 85252.
\$2.25/\$10.00 for six issues

FANTASY TALES

Stephen Jones, 73 Danes Ct., North End Road, Wembley, Middlesex, HA9 0AE England
75 p plus 18 p postage.
U.S. price: \$2.50 + \$1.00 postage.

Note: You can save on postage by buying it at a convention or getting it from a dealer as part of a large order.



LETTERS CONTINUED FROM P. 40

er. Some insiders are former outsiders who decided to conform---in middle-age, perhaps---having learned that the "glamorous" image of the Individualist, Outsider, Rebel is self-defeating, counterproductive, and dumb. But the factors involved in that change of attitude are usually not conscious.))

LETTER FROM ELAYNE WECHSLER
418 East Third Avenue
Roselle, NJ 07203
December 15, 1981

'First, to explain my initial reaction to a quickie scan of *SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW* (in a previous postcard mailed to you) -- I agree that the abundance of female nudes vs. an almost total absence of male nudes in science fiction illustration is due in large part to cultural conditioning. In fact, the whole debate of a supposed feminist conspiracy (damn, why don't they ever let me in on it? I love spy stuff) in Polyphemus' letter and your reply belies conditioning and conscious counter-conditioning. Polyphemus spouts the usual feminist dogma -- my mouth dropped open in total shock when I read, for the second time this month (hm, is there some conspiracy?), the line "Have you ever been raped?" I've never been raped and no, I wouldn't like such senseless violence either, but this lurching into horrific reality to make a point about science fiction's sociological implications is a bit too much of a jump, even if there is an indirect connection. Stick closer to the theme ... I agree with you, REG, in part. Censorship of ideas should not be imposed. Publish all. But, to me, the word "idea" implies newness.

'What is new, or for that matter even creative or imaginative, about male dominance, pornography, violence, all the traps into which many authors of "shoot-outs in space" perpetually fall (even willingly dive)? Science fiction attracted me, a female, as a teenager (even though my first exposure was to early Heinlein *BOYS LIFE* schlock), because the notion of newness and originality appealed to me. Here was a literary form which supposedly did not content itself with wallowing in familiar territory. The whole concept of science fiction to me is one of choice. That is also the particular aspect of feminism to which I ascribe. Alternate cultures and universes. Beings not necessarily male

SMALL PRESS NOTES

BY THE EDITOR

COLLECTED POEMS

By Richard L. Tierney
Arkham House, \$6.95
Sauk City, WI 53583

This handsome small book, bound in a black leatherlike cover with Tierney's signature in gold, subtitled Nightmares and Visions, with occasional fine drawings by Jason Van Hollander, contains 82 poems, all but a few short, all but a few enclosing dire warnings of mankind's fate, detailing the horror of Things in the night, in the earth, in the night sky... Horrors slaving for souls and power...

Tierney has a dim view of our future, as his final poem, "To the Hydrogen Bomb" attests.

But for quality and a view of stark inner feelings---"A Man In the Crowd", the first poem in the book---is the finest verse in the collection.

All of Tierney's poems rhyme; this produces a kind of gratitude in me, and, as they are read, a kind of mental/physical sensation of pleasure for the precise meter and repetitive sounds. These poems are fine for reading aloud.

THE RAJAH'S SAPHIRE

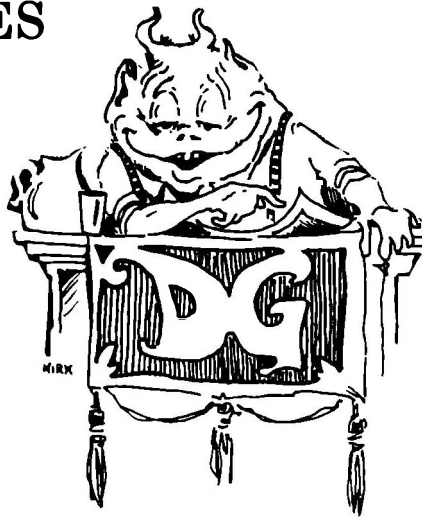
By M.P. Shiel
Highflyer Press \$6.00
Order from: J.D.S. Books,
P.O. Box 67 MCS,
Dayton, OH 45402

This small 125 page book is a facsimile reproduction of Shiel's first novel, including the original illustrations. There is an Afterword, "The Curious Tale of Shiel, Stead and The Sapphire" by John D. Squires, which examines the origins of THE RAJAH'S SAPHIRE and traces Shiel's writing career.

The story isn't of novel length, and it is told in a kind of light-hearted graceful style that invites the reader to not-quite-believe.

The story is about old-fashioned (1890s) romance and superstition as the ancient deadly curse of doom-to-the-owner follows the sapphire from a lovesick young diplomat-aristocrat from Germany to his vain, thoughtless love in England, to the rakehell, amoral villain who manages to marry her.

The action is occasionally superb--as when the oceanliner sinks after having been rammed in a storm---but mostly silly and melodramatic as in the final confrontation scene



and suicide by the villain.

Hi-ho. It's fun to read, as much for the customs of the late 19th century as for the skill of writing Shiel obviously possessed.

THE CONSPIRACY PEDDLERS

By Robert Eringer
Loompanics Unlimited \$3.95 plus
POB 264 \$2. mailing
Mason, MI 48854

Subtitled 'A Review of the Conspiracy Media in the United States' this booklet (44 pages) provides around two dozen listings of books, magazines, cassette releases, newsletters, tabloids....

The book is valuable for that reason only.

Robert Eringer's attitude in his reviews/descriptions of the conspiracy media is that all the conspiracies are fantasy or malevolently based in racism, intolerance, hate. The title of the book signals his belief: "Peddlers" is a putdown word. So is his use of "preach" in his distorted introduction.

Nowhere is there a hint that there may be an element of truth in any of the conspiracy material extant.

"Conspiracy" is a loaded word to begin with, of course. It's a great label to tack onto a person, a publication...a body of knowledge.

But just as the local city council can rig things to benefit itself and its friends [as has happened since time immemorial, following the paths of human nature], so too can and do more higher and more powerful elites in human affairs---even including giant international conglomerates, holding companies, banks, oil corporations.... If the temptations to conspire for personal and/or business advantage is yielded to in small towns, why is not that tempta-

tion yielded to at the highest levels of power and influence?

Of course conspiracy exists at all levels. Robert Eringer's unwillingness to make distinctions between fantasy and legitimate conspiracy commentary is sad. It simply shows he is a tool of the Denebians who are plotting the takeover of Earth on July 19th, 1997.

HOW TO MAKE YOUR FRIENDS AND MURDER YOUR ENEMIES

By Jack Woodford \$14.95
Woodford Memorial Editions, Inc.
POB 55085
Seattle, WA 98155

That's an incredibly commercial title, isn't it? Especially when the subtitle is: Telesthesia, the Ancient Art of Thought Control.

This is the last book Jack wrote. He was ill, living in a mental institution, destitute.

Yet--- In these 238 pages is the wonderful, calculated, impulsive, off-the-cuff, above all casual and conversational style that holds the reader with anecdote, facts, fable, lies, exaggerations, opinions, biography, autobiography...

Here is the Woodford Mix, used well to serve a possibly paranoid mind, promoting the belief that telepathic hypnosis is not only possible, but has been used through the ages by great men (to become great and stay on top as long as possible), by Eastern Mystics, and by everyday folks.

Jack here gives specific, detailed instructions in the use of telepathic thought control. The chants, the images, the content.

He repeats everything often, half by design, and partly because he wasn't keeping track. But he keeps drilling his message into your mind, makes it seem so rational, logical, easy....

As you read you'll find yourself trying out the chants, the "orders" on those whom you'd like to control ---or kill!

Only---you'll be struck by the old "If you're so smart, how come you're not rich?" argument. Caged in an institution he hated, bedeviled by a woman who was tormenting him, in despair at the treatment and condition of his daughter in another wing of the institution...why couldn't he use his mastery of Telesthesia to cure his daughter, get himself and her out of that terrible place?

He apparently couldn't, and God knows he had motive and will enough to make the technique work---if it works at all, ever.

So... you are left with a fascinating piece of delusional writing, so coherent and believable that you will...come on, admit it...try the chants...just in case....

WARHOON 29

Edited and published by Richard Bergeron,
P.O. Box 5989,
Old San Juan, Puerto Rico 00905

Richard Bergeron is an old fan, and not yet tired. WARHOON, for the newcomers to sf fandom, is long-lived. Almost as old as I, I suspect. Rich recently published the monumental, impossible, reverential WARHOON 28 which was/is a fucking BOOK, the biggest fanzine known to man [of a fannish nature], about Walt Willis.

WARHOON and Bergeron are about the celebration of fans, by fans. And this is called a faanish fanzine, as opposed to SFR which is, in the fannish language of yor, a Serious Constructive fanzine. Thus are the fans divided---those whose primary interest is sf, and those whose main interest is other fans.

Ah, the legendary BNFs*, the Tuckers, the Ellisons, the Silverbergs, the Calkins, the Benfords, the Hoffwoman, the Vick, Keasler, McCain... And a dozen others I can't pull from my memory. Towering over them all--Walt Willis.

Anyway, this issue of Wrhn is a time binder, and revels in nostalgia, with Bergeron, Bangsund, Harry Warner, Tom Perry, Willis, Ted White, and letters....

For those who don't get WARHOON, you can trade your fanzine for it, or as a newcomer's entry fee--pay \$2.00 for a copy.

The WARHOON 28 book costs \$25.

* Big Name Fans

EERIE COUNTRY #5 \$2.00
Edited and published by W. Paul Ganley, POB 35, Amherst Branch, Buffalo, NY 14226.

A well mimeographed fictionzine of 32 pages with offset covers and interior full-page art.

The supernatural fiction is exceptionally good, of professional quality. True, "Land of the Wolf" by John Wysocki is predictable, but this werewolf story has fine pace and a kind of authenticity; certainly the vicious winters of Russia are a great 18th Century background, and Wysocki makes you feel the cold and the horrible death, the fear and hate.

"Moanworm" by Walton Simons is an after-death vampire story with a twist--the point-of-view of a special kind of worm which feeds on the recently buried. Well done. It should be considered for new horror anthologies.

"Arthur" is utterly predictable, as a fat, unpopular boy discovers a way to walk through walls and inevitably... By John Taylor.

The best story in this issue is "The House of Bones" by Brian Crist.

A professional thief is sent into a vast building in the vast city of Rheem to find the sister of a rich man. She was dumped into one of the huge death chambers in error by city crews who thought her dead. Private burial in the ground is unheard of.

In the bowels of this huge receptacle for the dead the thief discovers the sister---and discovers lies, double-cross, attempted murder... An exciting, fascinating, inventive story. Worthy of some BEST FANTASY OF THE YEAR anthologies.

"The Fate That Money Can Buy" is rather trite, but sensuous and realistic. By William Tredinnick, Jr.

As Ganley notes in his editorial, postage costs for small press items are simply horrendous and now represent 50% of the subscription price. There seems no end to the post office's lust for money, to the point of pricing 2nd, 3rd and 4th class rates close to first class rates!

One of these days some fan publisher will discover that a special 8 lb., high opacity paper, though very costly, will, if used for his zine, save huge amounts of money in postage costs, more than offsetting the paper costs.

I'm certainly thinking about it.

FANTASYBOOK #2 is available now. The December 1981 issue (I agree with Darrell---see his review of #1 in his Small Press Reviews---that the script logo on this magazine should be changed.) Some of the interior art is amateurish and brings down the professional image I suppose the editors want. The covers should have been switched, front to back, for more impact and excitement.

THE PATCHIN REVIEW #3, at \$2.00 single copy, is probably worth it; the frank opinions and sometimes

scathing criticisms of sf pros by sf pros is eye-opening. The pinpointing of genre flaws and editorial misjudgements and wrong trends is often right on. Charles Platt runs a schizophrenic ship here as serious-constructive rubs elbows with gossip and cheapshot.

THE PATCHIN REVIEW, 9 Patchin Place, New York, NY 10011.

AURORA SF is a home for Speculative Feminism. A good, very thought-provoking fanzine which views and reviews through the Feminism prism. A learning experience.

\$2.50 a copy. Send to SF3, Box 164, Madison, WI 53701.

NEXUS #1 is a new comic book from Capital Comics which presents a new super hero [Nexus] at \$1.95 per copy. 40 pages--color cover, b/w interior art---is very high. Nexus isn't all that new or different. Good artwork, though, and a good idea/story.

From: POB 908, Madison, WI 53701.

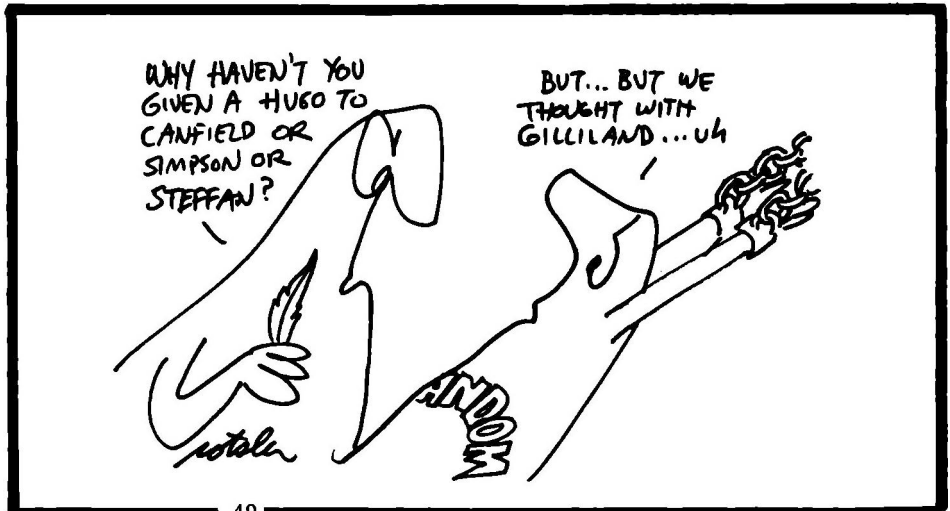
ELFQUEST, BOOK 1 is the first comic book I've seen worth its asking price...a hefty \$9.95.

This large-size, full-color Starblaze edition is simply superb in all directions, in every aspect. Wendy Pini's world of elves, their enemies, their quest is above all realistic and dynamic, with depth of character not often found in a regular sf novel.

The colors, the drawing, the printing are all super fine. This graphic art saga will be appreciated for generations. It is a work of art by all concerned.

Starblaze Editions, Donning, 5659 Virginia Beach Blvd., Norfolk, VA 23502.

SMALL PRESS NOTES CONTINUED ON P. 67



AND THEN I SAW....

BY THE EDITOR

TIME BANDITS (PG)

is an English fantasy Juvenile with a confused, un-rationalized storyline and an equally confused set of morals.

A 10-12-year-old boy follows a pell-mell, clutzy band of dwarves through a time portal that has appeared in his room after they tumbled in through another portal in his closet.

The dwarves have stolen a map showing these portals from a supreme being who is after them!

With the boy they narrow-escape their way through incidents and episodes in medieval times, ancient Middel-East...and into a time of legends where they encounter an ogre and wife on a grisly old ship who want to eat them for supper...an incident with a huge giant of a man who wears that ship like a hat...

Finally they are lured to a castle of darkness wherein is imprisoned the prince of evil who--with the map of time portals---can escape and let pure evil loose upon the world. The dwarves and the boy escape a dangling cage (over a void), steel back the map...and finally in the crisis battle the prince of evil with allies from the time-frames they've visited---I think. There was a tank, a clutch of mounted, armoured knights, bowmen, an advanced laser weapon...

Finally, to save their souls and the world, the supreme being intervenes, sets the boy back in his bed in his proper time and reveals that He had planned the entire sequence in advance to prove something to the boy.

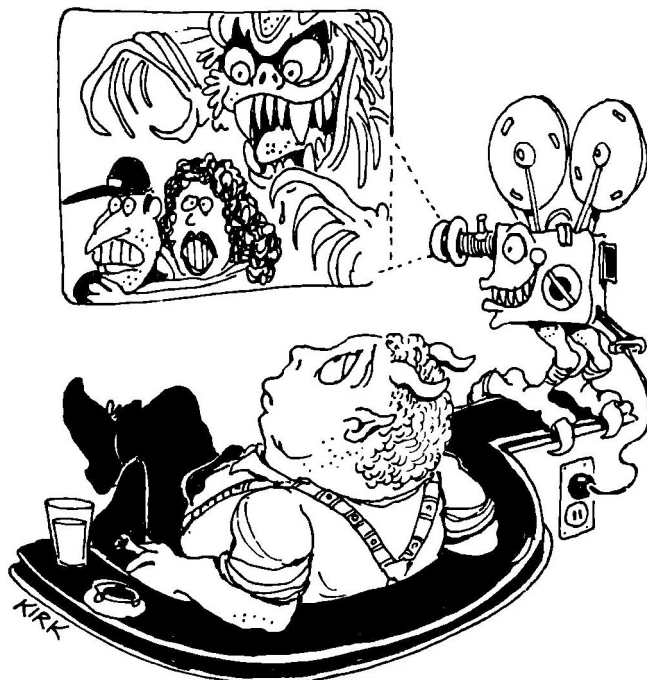
There is ambiguity and puzzlement all over the floor: was the time-hopping all a dream? But a piece of pure evil has caused a fire in the house, and one of the rescuing fireman is the same man who was a king in a time-trip episode---and he winks!

Also--the boy's parents [evil?] are destroyed as they touch the piece of pure evil in the toaster-oven.

Also--all those deaths, all that violence---real or not? Do pre-teen boys exist in an imaginary world of savage violence--and no sex? Does the supreme being want it that way?

No answers. No answers.

Sir Ralph Richardson played the supreme being with aplomb, a disdainful weary impatience. Sean Connery played the ancient king and the fire-



man with professional skill. Shelley Duval appeared as a mockery of a medieval lady who is robbed along the highway. David Warner played the prince of evil with relish and a hot cross bun.

The film is fun, funny, interesting and at times intriguing and full of wonders. Fine special effects. But it doesn't make a bit of coherent sense.

The dwarves steal every scene.

...ALL THE MARBLES (R)

is a more human comedy about a lovely down-and-almost-out team of women tag-team wrestlers and their clever, desperate, mostly honest manager. Peter Falk plays the manager. Two talented, lovely, tall, curvy girls play the team---the California Dolls.

The women tag-team wrestling circuit is the pits, but these three have dreams of making it to the big time. They eventually do, but the movie asks the viewer to believe the wrestling matches are straight, honest and decided in the ring, while the show-biz ring action, the holds, the "agony", all scream pre-arrangement and co-operation.

Some attractive nudity and natural four-letter language add to the movie. Yet the California Dolls seem, compared to the husky teams they wrestle, to be too frail to win honestly; alas the film fails to convince and becomes suspiciously like a poor excuse to show tits

and ass and to degrade women. One of the Dolls angrily says she isn't 'meat', but the thrust of the movie says she is.

Hollywood and TV continue to underline the male chauvinist, sexist party line.

STRIPES (R)

stars Bill Murray as a smart-ass self-oriented misfit with integrity (somewhere in his makeup) who loses his job, his girl and his options and who joins today's army for lack of anything better to do. He talks a buddy into joining with him.

Warren Oates plays the inevitable long-suffering, tough drill sergeant.

The plot deteriorates into an incredible farce toward the end as the scene shifts to Germany and a secret weapon and a fuck-up Captain.

The usual four-letter language, brief nudity, sex jokes. The army is presented as Nice. No racial problems, no real discipline problems... A fantasy.

SO FINE (R)

depends on farce and ribald humor and some slapstick as it weaves, ducks and bobs through a silly mob-in-the-clothes-biz story. Jack Warden plays Jack Fine, a womens clothes mfr. in debt to his eyeballs to Big Eddie, a 7-foot ruthless moron of the Mob (played by Richard Kiel---we know him best as Jaws of the 007 pictures). For some reason never told, Big Eddie wants Jack Fine's son brought into the failing clothes business, even

though the son---Ryan O'Neal---is a sincere English Lit. associate prof. at a small New England college.

Big Eddie has a hot-blooded blonde young wife who falls instantly in love with Ryan, and visa versa.

In the ensuing comedic cuckoldry Ryan O'Neal eascapes Big Eddie's bedroom in a pair of the wife's too-tight jeans which split over his cheeks. He desperately uses pieces of clear plastic to patch the oval splits and inadvertently creates a new sensation in peek-a-boo jeans.

Success saves the company but Big Eddie discovers his wife's infidelity and comes after Ryan with blood in his eye.

Chase, blunders, narrow escapes, etc. follow. The climax occurs on stage during an opera at the college auditorium.

This is an entertaining, broad comedy. SO FINE is a pun title. Sew it goes.

THE CRATER LAKE MONSTER (PG)

may be the worst low-budget monster movie ever made. The lake involved was not formed in a crater. The monster was hatched from a dinosaur egg preserved by the icy lake water for millions of years, when a meteorite plunged into the lake and warmed the egg.

The monster is hungry and eats every fish in the lake and a few people.

The plot is peopled by idiots, morons, and cliches, only one of whom (the sheriff) can act.

Do not waste your time or money to see this abortion.

FIRST MONDAY IN OCTOBER (PG)

casts Jill Clayburg as the first woman justice of the Supreme Court, and Walter Matthau as a crusty strict-constitutionalist justice. The two are attracted to each other and argue constantly.

It's amusing. But their arguments on points of law, logic, and freedom are often inept, badly chosen, and flawed...leaving an intelligent viewer to think the script writers second class and the producers dull-witted.

Clayburg is too attractive for the role and the producers couldn't resist putting her (and women) in her place by requiring a nude scene.

CADDY SHACK (R)

is a broad farce about a private golf course, its pompous president, its rich members,

and its poor, desperate, manipulative caddies...and a strange groundskeeper.

Ted Knight plays the pompous fool of a club president, Rodney Dangerfield plays the crude, rude, superrich guest, Chevy Chase plays the superior, casual, subtly demented golfer-member, and Bill Murray plays the weird groundskeeper whose mission in life is to rid the course of a new gopher/mole.

Everyone acts with relish, the comedy is fine, clever, outrageous. The gopher steals the movie.

SATURDAY THE 14TH (R)

is an inept spoof of horror/supernatural films which throws in everything from magic to vampires to alien creatures.

It misuses Richard Benjamin and Paula Prentis as buyers of an old, cursed house whose young son discovers an ancient book and releases a horde of monsters.

The movie disintegrates into a mish-mash of stolen, satirized bits and pieces from well-known horror/supernatural movies of the past.

SATURDAY THE 14th has a few good moments, a few nice comedy bits and touches, but isn't worth seeing to see them.

CHU CHU AND THE PHILLY FLASH (R)

starring Carol Burnett, Alan Arkin and Jack Warden is a fine, offbeat comedy about a bum who was a star pitcher for the Phillies twenty years ago, about a failed dancer-singer who barely survives by giving dancing lessons and by doing an outrageous Carmen Miranda act on the streets of San Francisco (for small change appreciations), and it is about the poorest of the poor who live hand-to-mouth in the semi-honest underground economy. Jack Warden plays a kind of Fagin role to a small group of terminal losers.

Chu Chu and the Flash manage to fall in love somehow through the comedy of errors involving a discovered briefcase containing secret govt. plans, the Mob, and their small-time attempt to sell the briefcase for a few hundred bucks. (Thinking higher is not in their world.)

This film opened at a second-run house and is in its first release. No advertising, no promotion. The powers-that-be have dumped it. They may feel it's a bomb. But see it if you can; it's better than 90% of the comedies given the Big Push.

THE LAST CHASE (PG)

has flashes of good sf in its painting of a Big Brother future for the U.S. [Total conformity, no cars, no privacy, no private enterprise.] But the story of an ex-racecar driver (Lee Majors) who finally has had it with the regimented bureaucracy, puts together his hidden, forbidden Porsche, and makes a dash across country from Boston to the freedom of independent, ecology, freedom-oriented California is riddled and raddled with idiotic plot holes and devices.

Majors' companion is a boy computer genius who is wanted by the government for sabotaging the federal system. They stop for aid and rest in a wilderness indian village and meet a few white people there who are survivalists and live free.

The evil government, resenting the escaping duo's guts and implied criticism, terrified of the symbolism if the two make it to California (a rebel, mobile TV broadcast unit is able to break into the TV network shows to inform the population of the escape's progress), drags an old, drunken jet pilot (Burgess Meredith) out of retirement, rebuilds an ancient sabrejet, and sets him to hunting the "escapees."

The plot sickens, but it pulls a few heartstrings along the way.

As usual---what a pity these idiot Hollywood types cannot get it through their plywood skulls that they cannot play fast and loose with science fiction films; there has to be internal integrity, consistency, truth. A script composed by a committee, each of whom tosses in a favorite sf element, simply doesn't make it. They could care less. Sf is for kids and morons, ain't it? Besides, this movie may have been put together as a tax write-off, so who gives a shit?

MOMMIE DEAREST (R)

is R-rated for the "child abuse" as Joan Crawford, parent of Christina, an adopted child, often terrorizes the girl with bizarre, overreactive punishments concerning dirt, self-reliance and pride. Joan Crawford, as played by Faye Dunaway (marvelously), is a cleanliness-obsessed perfectionist, terrified of failure, of losing her status, her fame and her fans.

Crawford was an example of the character-warping that results from a terrifying drive for success and money. Combined with a strict Catholic childhood (which she also inflicted on her adopted children) and strong sexual needs, conflicting hates and guilts, all this boiling, bubbling mental stew drove



her and in the end killed her as she resorted increasingly to alcohol to soothe or at least quiet the demons.

The film is lopsided, too ambitious as it covers Crawford's life from 1939 to her death a few years ago. We only see two of Crawford's adopted children (There were four, I believe) and the movie concentrates on four or five extreme instances of vindictive, eccentric, extreme punishments of Christina-as-a-child.

The ultimate punishment is leaving Christina and the innocent-of-crime younger little boy out of her will---cutting them off without a cent.

As the last scene shows, Christina, a fairly successful actress herself by then, decides to have the last word---by writing the best-seller book, *MMIE DEAREST*.

A flawed but absorbing film; Dunaway is made up to resemble Joan Crawford to a remarkable degree. Her part is raw and juicy and she chews a lot of scenery. There is a uniformly fine supporting cast.

BODY HEAT (R)

is the familiar plot of the man sucked into a love affair with a beautiful, sexy woman married to a rich older man. They decide to kill the husband...

From there it gets double-crossy and complicated.

William Hurt as the seduced, casual lawyer is excellent, Kathleen Turner is fine as the steamy wife, Richard Crenna is okay as the rich husband.

Hurt's law friends are scene-stealers (especially the deputy prosecuting attorney), and the production, photography, etc. are extra fine. Great editing. Great pace and tension. The male dialogue is raunchy real and the bits of business are lovely.

You may not agree with the last scene.

There is nudity and lovemaking, but it's almost incidental, in a way; it does underline the lust the lawyer and wife feel for each other.

I would recommend this one for its realism, tension, humor.

BUDDY BUDDY (R)

promises much with Walter Matthau and Jack Lemmon as stars, with direction by Billy Wilder, with a script by Billy Wilder and I.A.L. Diamond.

Alas... The film never reaches high comedy. True, Matthau as a methodical contract killer of three Mafia squealers who is beset by a suicidal wimp with wife trouble (Lemon) is chillingly and humorously convincing.

And Jack Lemon is funny as he pathetically and innocently tries to make friends---pours out his heart!--with a conscienceless executioner who is planning on killing him to eliminate interference with the planned and critically timed shooting of the most-important govt. witness against the Mafia (the first two witnesses were eliminated by bomb-in-the-mail and poison-in-the-morning-milk).

But this grim comedy is perhaps too grim, too cruel. Paula Prentiss as Lemon's bored, selfish wife who is living in a sexual self-awareness clinic with her sex guru/doctor (Klaus Kinsky, for Christ's sake!) is trapped in the character, and Kinsky is miscast horribly. He's a great villain as Jack the Ripper or as a vampire...but a comedian he ain't.

Still, and yet... It's a funny film. Watchable. Not a waste of time. But with all that talent in the works it should have been a hell of a lot better.

HALLOWEEN II (R)

reprises the last few moments of HALLOWEEN (the night he came back to town) and shows Donald Pleasance pumping six large calibre slugs into the escaped young man who has killed and killed and almost killed during that Halloween night.

Nothing seems to hurt this apparently supernatural menace as he persists (like a slow-moving zombie) in his one-track desire to kill the young woman played by Jamie Lee Curtis.

Pleasance hunts his homicidally insane escaped patient up one street and down another... In the meantime Curtis is taken to the local hospital, the creature learns her location...and the hospital, late at night, becomes a charnal house as nurses and employees as He kills them horribly one by one and seeks Curtis, chases Curtis...

This monster simply cannot be killed. Slugs simply put him down and out for a few minutes.

He seems to be wiped out for good in the last few scenes. I mean, how could even he survive what Pleasance manages in the way of a sure-fire coup de grace?

Yet I have just read in the paper that HALLOWEEN II did very well at the box office this year, and it seems likely that HALLOWEEN

III will be made.

What I object to most in these HALLOWEEN films is the unfairness of an implacable, unkillable monster; the poor victims have no chance at all. He's too smart, too strong, too immortal.

Some delectable nudity in this one, and a lot of very graphic, cringey death. [The death-by-fire of a teenage boy early in the movie, and the long look at his burnt, blackened corpse later in the morgue will haunt you for a while!]

FUNHOUSE (R)

is a low budget, cast-of-unknowns horror movie of exceptional quality.

It sets up the on-a-dare situation of two teenage couples deciding to stay the night in a carnival funhouse. They stumble into seeing a murder and are hunted among the funhouse mechanical monsters, ghosts, and naked machinery. The exits are all locked.

Hunting them are a retarded, terribly grotesque young man and his funhouse-owner father.

The tension never stops, the characters are very human, and the acting is very good. The deaths are grisly and often inventive.

There is one survivor.

This is one of the best of its kind. It doesn't cheat.

BUTCHER, BAKER, NIGHTMARE MAKER (R) is remarkable for the performance of Susan Tyrell, who twitches, mugs and chews the scenery (as an insane mother determined to have her way and protect her son, no matter who she kills!) to the point of ludicrousness on occasion. The killing rampage at the end of the film is so overdone as to be horror high camp.

RICH AND FAMOUS (R)

proves the excellent acting ability of Candice Bergen as a lifelong friend of Jacqueline Bisset. They part at college, Bergen to marry and be a housewife and mother, Bisset to go on to become a famous writer of an acclaimed novel of literature.

But then Bergen, portraying a girl and then woman from Atlanta, a soft accent, a down home value system, writes a super best-selling romance and eclipses Bisset.

This is a "women's picture" which is both subtle and bold. These "best friends" take blows, give hurt and joy, fight and

love. The film shows their sex lives, their basic drives, their men problems.

Bisset has most of the scenes but throughout plays, essentially, herself. Candice Bergen, marvelously in character, showing character change, steals the movie.

ONLY WHEN I LAUGH (R)

follows a stage star (Marsha Mason) from a months-long residence at a private drying out hospital for alcoholics back to her NY apartment and the basic problems of her life: pressures inherent in a stage career, and pressures inherent in her being a mother to a growing teenage daughter (Kristie McNichols).

Inevitably Mason is overwhelmed and takes that first drink...

This movie, scripted by Neil Simon, shows clearly his great talent with real/humorous dialogue. The clever, revealing, often brutally honest characters and their words make any Simon play or film well worth seeing. He is a national treasure for his wit and perception.

But his plots are unexciting, and his endings banal. They play well in DeMoines.

Kristie McNichols as a teenager angry and loving is good; she looks more masculine than one expects, however.

The supporting cast is excellent, especially James Coco as a frustrated, failing, gay, aging actor who loves (platonically) and is loyal to Mason.

LETTERS CONTINUED FROM P. 47

or female, or perhaps both. Matriarchies (like those which quite a few speculate existed right here on home base centuries ago) or egalitarian societies. Exotic cultures in which sex plays little or no role. Situations which can start in "normal" roles and end up differently, or vice-versa. Creatures with five breasts, or something not even faintly resembling genitals, or sexual glorification of cuticles. Why assume every other planet has a phallic/mammary hangup? That's the main reason nudes (especially the overdrawn -- pun intended -- females) don't make sense to my conception of science fiction. What's new about dominance/submission or s&m sex? Even a little imagination can go further into other existing (and just as interesting) Earth relationship types, from friendships to familial ties. I don't find it so hard to fathom men and women as platonic

friends interested only in a common goal, equally competent vertically without any horizontal necessity. Why stoop? It doesn't say too much about the author's ability at character development.

'Sorry if I've gone overboard and redundant, but as a woman who enjoys most types of science fiction (except, as a matter of personal taste, the violent "kill aliens and other enemies" kind), it infuriates me to see the art form brought low by stooping to the unimaginatively conventional. Aren't science fiction people supposed to be more open-minded about life's possibilities than, say, your average Harlequin Romance reader?

'One more thing, REG. Why do you feel that "the insecure young male" comprises "the natural, bed-rock science fiction readership"? Unfair!

'Your writers' news and tips also frighten me. Think I'll hold on to my 9-5, however distasteful, for awhile when I decide to "free" lance ... You express wonder at why so many people want to become pro writers at such risks. My theory lies in the nature of creativity and in the basic human need to communicate and to, perhaps, leave a legacy. Only in our creative output are we immortal. I'd never discourage creativity; just those who expect monetary reward in return.

'Clifford McMurray's Columbia report/travelogue is richly detailed, perhaps too richly. I loved the way the account drew me in until I could actually feel the surroundings; taste the anticipation (bravo for the observations-during-final-countdown paragraph!), but it also contained quite a few trivial and irrelevant digressions, which I thought tended to clutter (Dr. Pepper-dispensing machines) rather than enhance (in the way the sunburn episodes did). Overall, though, the work's phenomenal. Nice stream-of-consciousness writing. And within, one of the best arguments I've heard so far in favor of space travel. Adventure for the sake of same. Hooray!'

((Of course there are inherent limits on how new a new idea can be; too far out and it becomes incomprehensible to the readership---or too repellent---and the editor won't buy it. And, too, the human mind is only capable of human ideas, just as human society seems capable of a limited range of governments

OTHER VOICES

PATH OF THE ECLIPSE

By Chelsea Quinn Yarbro

New York: St Martin's Press, 1981
447 pp., \$13.95

REVIEWED BY SUSAN M. SHWARTZ

This fourth novel in Yarbro's Comte de Saint-Germain series takes her immortal and sexy vampire into thirteenth-century China and India. In China, Saint Germain (called Shih Ghieh Man) is forced out of a teaching post at the school at Lo Yang by xenophobia intensified by the approach of Temujim, also known as Genghiz Khan. He takes a post as alchemist to a female Warlord who fights a hopeless battle against Imperial bureaucracy and the Mongol hordes. Brave and tough, she is also a profoundly lonely woman -- which naturally appeals to Saint Germain.

Yarbro is one of the finest fantasy-horror writers going on her evocation of exotic backgrounds. Having done superb jobs in Renaissance Italy (in THE PALACE), Rome (BLOOD GAMES), and eighteenth-century France, (HOTEL TRANSYLVANIA), she researches the history, costumes, culture and occult lore of China and Tibet with meticulous care.

My one problem with this book -- no, make that two -- was in its structure. PATH OF THE ECLIPSE really consists of two separate actions, linked by that high-altitude Tibetan pilgrimage; and Saint Germain's path from unhappy love and political turmoil to political turmoil and unhappy love is fairly predictable. But then, I do not read Saint Germain novels for plot twists; I read them for fascinating conjurations of long-dead cultures and for characterization: the vampire himself, his servant Rogerio, his long-ago lover, the Roman aristocrat Olivia, the boy Lama, Padmiri, an Indian princess ... the list goes on and on. Yarbro is, nonetheless, one of the most satisfying purveyors of a certain kind of horrific, sex-laced melodrama in the business, and if this book is slightly predictable, it delivers precisely what the reader expects and wants.



NOTES TO A SCIENCE FICTION WRITER

By Ben Bova

Houghton Mifflin Company
Trade paperback, \$5.95

REVIEWED BY TOM STAICAR

NOTES TO A SCIENCE FICTION WRITER was set up to show writers the pitfalls and errors to be avoided as they set out upon a career as SF writers. Sections dealing with character, background, conflict and plot are presented with Bova short stories as examples, followed by adjoining sections on theory and practice. Use of his own stories was not simply self-serving; its purpose was to allow him to report first-hand on the thinking processes which went on at each stage of planning and revision of the stories.

The revised section on slanting for markets is particularly useful, as are his insights into the way editors view the slushpile and the gems they must find there in order to keep the field going. An excellent book.

WORLDS

By Joe Haldeman

The Viking Press, 1981, 262 pp.
\$12.95.

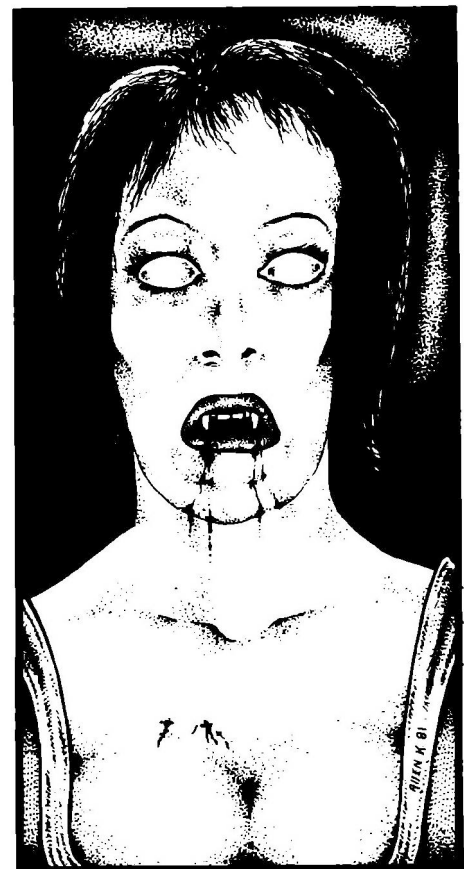
REVIEWED BY ANDREW ANDREWS

The year is 2084. Earth is rotting in pollution and overpopulation. Huge inhabited asteroids ("Worlds") orbit Earth. The asteroids are mined for minerals. They are Human-kind's Destiny.

Marianne O'Hara, a brilliant and witty political science student on the Worlds colony, New New York, decides to do postgraduate study on Earth for a year.

On Earth, Marianne becomes entangled with the U.S. government, the Lobbies. Most countries have nuclear arms. Essentially, Earth is the Earth of today: The U.S. in 2084 against the Supreme Socialist Union.

While at a management seminar, Marianne meets Jeff Hawkings, an FBI agent, fighting the underground



Third Revolution, who want to overthrow the Lobbies. The Third Revolution is a guerilla movement hell-bent on removing nuclear stockpiles by launching them.

In this near future, promiscuous sex is common public behavior. However, smoking cigarettes is illegal. Most families incorporate themselves for tax purposes.

The concept is sound and original enough, but the plot is familiar.

THE ENTROPY EFFECT

By Vonda N. McIntyre

Pocket Books (Timescape), 1981.
224 pp., \$2.50.

REVIEWED BY SUSAN M. SHWARTZ

THE ENTROPY EFFECT can stand on its own without Star Trek hagiography to justify its existence. McIntyre pumps new vitality into the main characters: Kirk fights a sort of spit-and-polish mentality; Bones isn't rampantly emotional all the time; Spock's inner war between his human and Vulcan sides is subtly and movingly portrayed.

The characters she adds redress the imbalance of male-to-female characters on the original show.

And these women are not of the "Captain-I'm-frightened" school. There is Hunter, for example, commander of a fighting ship and capable of commanding Sulu's hero-worship. (Incidentally, the portrayal of Sulu as a young officer facing career dead-ending is exceptionally good.) Mandala Flynn, chief of security, is prickly, ambitious, a superb martial artist, and a stateless, planetless individual. Add her security team, the feline, ferocious Snnanagfash-talli and the 250 cm. tall, heavy-gravity Changeling Jennever, who would much rather be a botanist, and two sketchily described but very interesting men.

These characters combine to deal with a theoretician, the brilliant and erratic Georges Mordreaux, who has developed a method for traveling in time. McIntyre's skill is all that saves him from being a Mad Scientist; instead, he is a Faustian figure to whom we can react with sympathy. In the course of the working out of the plot, Kirk is wounded by a spiderweb and it looks like everyone's most horrible fantasies are going to come true. McCoy turns off the life-support.

McIntyre takes about 200 pages of intricately worked-out plot to restore things to the status quo ... almost.

WHEN PUSSYWILLOWS LAST IN THE CAT-YARD BLOOMED

By Roger Zelazny

Norstrilia Press, Australia; American Agent: Chuck Miller, 239 N. 4th Street, Columbia, PA 17512. Paperback, 44 pp., \$5.00.

FREEDOM'S CHILD: NEW-WORLD POETRY

By Alicia Patti

Anlician Enterprises, Box 971, Grover City, CA 93433. Paperback, 48 pp., no price listed. Estimated price: \$5.00

REVIEWED BY NEAL WILGUS

These titles represent the two major schools of poetry which seem to have been waging guerilla warfare with each other for most of this century. Alicia Patti is of the "old school" -- which still uses those ancient devices called rime and meter and which strives to communicate because it has a message or a story to tell. Roger Zelazny is of the "modern school" which uses almost exclusively free verse and looks with disdain on stories or messages -- or even communication -- in its search for what a leading

speculative poet calls the "opaque".

Some of Zelazny's work, such as "Somewhere a Piece of Colored Light", "The Burning" and even the title poem, is mostly comprehensible on first reading and there is some enjoyment, even wonder, scattered throughout. And Patti's reliance on more traditional forms has its recognized drawbacks and limitations which she sometimes aggravates with totally unnecessary "thees" and "thous", apparently intended to enoble but only serving to distract from the main show.

Perhaps the real difference between these two is in content. Alicia Patti is an eager young optimist who sings praises to past giants ("A Tribute to Newton and Einstein", "Semmelweis: Father of Antisepsis" and others) and looks forward to a future in which the human race has the will to free itself from past tyrannies and go boldly out to explore the universe ("The First Colony", "New-World Dreams" and "Freedom's Child"). Zelazny is not necessarily a pessimist, but his poems are introspective at best and often too personal and subjective to communicate much, saying little about the world out there where we have to survive. Personally, I prefer Patti's philosophy as well as her school of prosody, but neither is In these days and Zelazny's verse may well be Just Your Thing.

PROFUNDIS

By Richard Cowper
Pocket, \$2.25, 207 pp.
Cover: Don Maitz

REVIEWED BY STEVEN E MC DONALD

PROFUNDIS, is a comic novel about the unfortunate Tom Jones, a dolphin communicator of remarkable stupidity and unusual gifts. The 21st-Century setting is after the holocaust (which seems to be a prominent theme again), the place is the gigantic submarine HMS PROFUNDIS, whose guiding computer, Proteus, prevented the sub's destruction, and the subject is the new Messiah. Cowper keeps the tone light -- the characters are basically a good grade of cardboard, and the narrative is fairly predictable, though great fun in spots. Some parts will be rather obscure to American readers unfamiliar with British politicians, though the tale of how PROFUNDIS came about is a classic piece of satirical nastiness.

DEATH'S ANGEL

By Kathleen Sky
Bantam, 212 pp., April, 1981, \$2.25

REVIEWED BY LINDA BLANCHARD

Kathleen Sky's second novel, DEATH'S ANGEL, like her first novel, VULCAN!, was not what I expected. It was neither fun nor easy to read. DEATH'S ANGEL was not even about my old familiar friends.

Shortly after a mysterious and debilitating disease affects our heroes, Kirk and Spock (and Dr. M'Benga) the Enterprise is assigned to carry a party of diverse ambassadors to a sensitive meeting to decide whether or not a detente will be established with the Romulans. As soon as the ship is under way, ambassadors begin dying at the hands of their various "Death Angels". Kirk and Spock are too weak and dazed by their recent encounter with the mystery disease to be able to solve the murders. McCoy -- professing to know too little about non-human physiology -- calls on the ship's veterinarian for help. When it becomes apparent that the officers of the Enterprise can't handle the situation, the Special Security Division -- in the person of Col. Elizabeth Schaeffer -- is called on to find out who or what is murdering the ambassadors.

Having shuffled our regular heroes into the background, Ms. Sky proceeds to lead the new protagonist up and down several pointlessly blind alleys, introducing the reader to several poorly-developed characters and finally bumping Col. Schaeffer's devastatingly beautiful (of course!) body into poor muddled Captain Kirk.

This novel was painful reading. The narrative was choppy and difficult to follow; the turns of plot led nowhere and worst of all, the major characters in any Star Trek story were barely used.

CHEKOV'S ENTERPRISE

By Walter Koenig
Pocket Books, 222 pp., \$2.25.

REVIEWED BY STEVEN E MC DONALD

Koenig's diary of his involvement in the making of STAR TREK--THE MOTION PICTURE, provides interested parties with a far more interesting overview of work on a big-budget movie than Susan Sackett's THE MAKING OF STAR TREK -- THE MOTION PICTURE; while it doesn't go into detail about the background to the script and production problems that dogged the movie, it has a fine

load of fascinating personal material, from the weird feelings on being back on a STAR TREK set after a ten-year hiatus to giving his all in a scene and discovering that his fly was open. Koenig has a lively style and a narrative talent that should do well with practice; his sense of humor is certainly sound, likewise his sense of structure.

For anyone who wants to know what it felt like, as opposed to the practically official version of what it was, this is worth attention.

KINGDOM OF SUMMER

By Gillian Bradshaw
Simon & Schuster, 283 pp., 1981
\$12.95.

REVIEWED BY SUSAN M. SHWARTZ

KINGDOM OF SUMMER is the second novel in Gillian Bradshaw's Arthurian trilogy. HAWK OF MAY was the first, and IN WINTER'S SHADOW will be third.

This novel, like the first, is set in an historically and archeologically accurate Britain in which Irish, Welsh, Saxon and Romanized British are fighting it out, against themselves and one another, and against the Darkness symbolized by Morgawse, Queen of Orkney and the mother of Gwalchmai (Gawain), the hero of HAWK OF MAY. The story is told this time by Rhys ap Sion, the son of a farmer who once befriended Gwalchmai and who takes him in after he is wounded and exhausted. Rhys determines to follow Gwalchmai wherever he goes. Since he cannot be a warrior (warriors start training at about age seven), he decides to be a servant. His sturdy commonsense and compassion protect Gwalchmai as he leaves Arthur's court for a quest of his own.

The combination of gallant, albeit introspective knight and sturdy servant provides for a certain tender amusement. We see Gwalchmai through Rhys's eyes as an almost magical being, but one possessed of what Rhys calls a "proud humility" that guarantees that he will be taken advantage of. Nevertheless, this humor, enhanced by the earthy realism of Eivlin, a girl Rhys meets, is only a part of the larger story, which is a quest by the Forces of the Light against the Forces of Darkness. In it, Gwalchmai once again confronts Morgawse and her son by Arthur, Medraut. Once Gwalchmai adored his younger brother and his mother. Now he must face them as enemies. Now, even more than earlier, Morgawse must be destroyed.

There is a deeply-satisfying,

almost mythic texture to Bradshaw's writing. It is moody, but never "sensitive" or "artistic".

A WORLD CALLED SOLITUDE

By Stephen Goldin
Doubleday, 1981, \$9.95

REVIEWED BY DEAN LAMBE

On an uncharted planet whose star is hidden within a dust nebula, Birk Aaland has played Robinson Crusoe for 11 years -- his Friday a sophisticated robot of alien manufacture. Although the Makers, the original humanoid inhabitants, had killed themselves with biological warfare, the Makers' robots have maintained their cities, complete with art museums and advanced weapons, for over two thousand years. When his ship full of mutinous human prisoners crash-landed, the ro-



bots were able to save only Birk, who became master of the world.

Birk's solitude is broken when a second human ship crashes, a military vessel that may represent the dictatorial government that destroyed all that Birk loved on Earth. Again the robots can save only one, Lieutenant Michi Nakamura. Birk is torn between his strong desire for human companionship and his fear of human duplicity. Michi, whose ship was crippled during the unprovoked alien attack on her colony world, must convince Birk of the governmental changes within the human Commonwealth of Planets. She seeks Birk's aid in alerting the Commonwealth of the alien threat. Birk, whose knowledge could save millions, refuses to break his exile for an Earth that rejected and tortured him. Then the murderous aliens land....

Although the plot is straightforward with few surprises, Goldin

has achieved very fine character development. Even the robots are alive in this one. Since Doubleday doesn't seem to believe in advertising, search out this novel. It's worth extra effort.

THE MOON'S FIRE-EATING DAUGHTER

By John Myers Myers
The Donning Company/Publishers
5041 Admiral Wright Road, Virginia Beach, VA 23462, U.S.A.
1981, 176 pp., \$4.95

REVIEWED BY W. RITCHIE BENEDICT

Way back in 19-ought-49, a book was created that became something of an underground legend. It was THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW of its time for science fiction fans. I refer, of course, to that work full of literary allusions and illusions: SILVER-LOCK. A few years ago, Ace released a new edition. I only have had the opportunity as yet to read the first few chapters, but I was most definitely impressed and amazed at the scope of the vision of the author. Now, after more than thirty years of waiting, he has come out with a sequel.

It is more of an original that stands on its own than a sequel.

Dr. George Puttenham, a professor of Economic Geography meets some weird characters while leaving a campus bar (weirder than most that is), and before you can say "PRINCETON REVIEW", he is back in ancient Sumer via a certain Ninshubur and a chariot of swans. Your standard sword and sorcery novel this is not.

Before he gets back to home-sweet-university, he rubs shoulders with everyone from Voltaire to Twain and there are balladic contributions by the score. Sort of the Monty Python of ancient literary society.

Readers who ate up the original like hot-buttered walnuts, will find the new outing to their liking. I was somewhat off-put until I got used to the rhythm of the language.

FIRE AT THE CENTER

By George W. Proctor
Fawcett Gold Medal, 220 pp., \$2.25.
c. 1981, 1-44417-8, 1st printing,
July '81.

REVIEWED BY STEVE LEWIS

I don't really get it. In one way or another most time-travel stories are built about the premise that

going back physically into the past must somehow effect the future. Sometimes there's a "damper" effect that minimizes long-run changes. Sometimes visitors from the future can only view and cannot otherwise make their presence known. And sometimes whole histories of civilization are wiped out.

On the very first page Proctor effectively clears the air of any such highfalutin speculation by positing the following law: What is past is past. History is unchangeable.

So how is going back to the Age of Dinosaurs to retrieve two prime specimens of *tyrannosaurus rex* at all possible? It happens, and no one has to worry about the history of the future, or so Proctor says.

But, time-travel doesn't play all that important a role in the story. It's more of a spy or mystery thriller, in a futuristic setting, as Nils Kendler of the LofAI Psi Corps is forcibly paired up with a female agent named Caltha Reneret to discover why the inhabitants of the planet Morasha are being subjected to worldwide sieges of mass insanity.

And so this straight-forward action story, while it reads well, never really says anything new. What surprised me the most was the, um, prudishness and the juvenile attitude displayed toward everyday male-female relationships. When they meet for the first time, our hero and heroine are forced into a mutual antagonism so phoney you'd think you're still reading THE SATURDAY EVENING POST. Later, of course, they find themselves falling in love

Though not really worse than about fifty percent of the science fiction being written today, this is still kiddie fare.

NEW VOICES 4

Edited by George R.R. Martin
Berkeley, 262 pages, \$2.25.

REVIEWED BY ROBERT SABELLA

This is the annual anthology of stories by the John W. Campbell Award Nominees for Best New Writer. The cover blurb claims that "today's best new writers choose their own best stories" but that is an outright lie. These are all original stories solicited by Editor Martin. The anthology is currently running five years behind the awards so that this volume contains the 1976 Award Nominees. It should also be the last volume since Berkeley recently cancelled the series.

Approximately 50% of the book is

taken up by long novelettes by John Varley and Joan Vinge. Both are among the best writers in the field and they are at peak form here. Varley's "Blue Champagne" is a love story filled with all his usual excitement. It also contains his finest characterization since "Options". It takes place in a Bubble in lunar orbit which serves as a super-vacation resort for rich Earthlings. Between wining and dining they swim in an awe-inspiring solid sphere of water. One visitor is Megan Gallo-way, a worldwide television celebrity, who falls in love with Q.M. Cooper, one of the lifeguards. At first both seem stereotypical of their backgrounds: she is self-centered, spoiled and used to using people for her own benefit; he is shallow, over-

ultimately weakens the depth of his love for Megan. Still that cannot take away from the believability of the rest of the story.

Joan Vinge's "Psiren" is also a love story but that is where the resemblance ends. Her lovers live on the edge of fear and suffering, their lives so tortured that their affair is almost certainly doomed from the start. Cat is a burned-out telepath trying desperately to recover his gift. Ineh is a telepath so powerful she can break right through his defenses. However, she is an enslaved entertainer, forced to spend her nights filling customers' minds with joy. Cat becomes a regular attendee where he tries to indicate his feelings for her, not knowing himself if they are love, his need of her gift or concern for her condition. These are not rich, pampered lovers but rather survivors in the war of life. They grip your emotions from the very start and leave you drained by the last page. It is a stunning achievement by Joan Vinge.

There are three other stories by M.A. Foster, Arsen Darney and the late Tom Reamy. All are worthwhile reading, especially Reamy's since it is one of his two surviving stories. The Varley and Vinge stories are so good that this volume is a must buy. Scrounge up \$2.25 and you will not be disappointed.

THE DOOR IN THE HEDGE

By Robin McKinley
Greenwillow Books, 216 pp., \$8.95.

REVIEWED BY SUSAN M. SHWARTZ

Robin McKinley is one of the most promising of the newest generation of fantasy writers. As when she wrote BEAUTY, she retells in THE DOOR IN THE HEDGE some of the oldest and loveliest of fairy tales. Here, in McKinley's exquisitely-wrought prose, are the stories of the princess who was stolen by fairies, the classic about the princess and the frog, the story of the hunt of the hind and the story of the twelve dancing princesses.

McKinley is deft at portraying characters -- frequently lonely, quiet ones who learn to find healing in the events of their stories. For example, the princess whose father ignores her, but whose love for the brother who has always been her champion rescues him and heals her land. Or the story of the soldier who has lost health, hope and future during twenty years of warfare, until an ostler's tale helps him win



sexed and unable to understand love much less experience it. Gradually, as they both learn more about each other, the reader begins to understand them better. Megan becomes a truly sympathetic character while Cooper, through his growing love for her, becomes a more mature person.

One weakness with love stories is that they are among the most predictable of stories. With rare exceptions one of two outcomes is likely: either the lovers will eventually overcome myriad obstacles to their happiness or they will succumb to them. While Varley does not rise above this, his ending is a logical outcome of his characters' backgrounds. My only complaint is that Q.M. Cooper seems to flipflop between shallowness and maturity which

a throne. McKinley, in these stories, is afraid neither of great beauty nor of great evil. She has the gift of taking these stories and retelling them with love and gentleness, not the sort of arch cutesiness that makes many retold fairy stories acutely unpleasant.

SHIBUMI

By Trevanian
Ballantine Books
440 pp., \$2.95.

REVIEWED BY STEVEN E MC DONALD

SHIBUMI, the fourth novel by the mysterious Trevanian, returns to the sardonic assassin format of THE EIGER SANCTION and THE LOO SANCTION, after the author's sidestep into detective fiction with the excellent and complex THE MAIN.

The assassin here is Nicholai Hel, and despite his background, he isn't a patch on the bizarre Jonathan Hemlock of EIGER and LOO.

The theme -- this time it's a power company conspiracy controlling the world for profit. Trevanian cheerfully evinces dislike of everyone bar a handful of his characters, and the Japanese characters who make up the flashbacks. As far as the writing goes, there are occasional glimpses of the wit and character that distinguished Trevanian in the earlier books; mostly, the writing is mediocre, and there are times when mediocrity descends quickly into shambolic amateurishness.

IN JOY STILL FELT

(The Autobiography of Isaac Asimov, 1954-1978)

By Isaac Asimov
Avon, 828 pp., 1981, \$9.95

REVIEWED BY JOHN DI PRETE

The prospect of reading this illustrated, 828-page autobiography of science fiction's *bon vivant* may paralyze the reader, but if you've enjoyed Isaac Asimov's introductions to his other books (such as THE HUGO WINNERS Volumes) or his feet-wetting self-ramblings in the EARLY ASIMOV volumes, you'll devour his insights about John Campbell ("When John Campbell accepted an item, he did so with a check. When he rejected one, however, he would ... do so with a long letter"); Robert Silverberg ("He was one of the brightest people I had ever met, but somehow an unhappy one"); Poul Anderson ("The sound of his (folk songs) will wrench

the heart of any music lover"), etc. etc.

Deeply absorbing, fascinating and readable, broken down into easily-accessible chunks of memories.

A pleasure to read.

THE ARBOR HOUSE TREASURY OF HORROR AND THE SUPERNATURAL

Compiled by Bill Pronzini, Barry N. Malzberg and Martin H. Greenberg.

Arbor House, 1981, 599 pp., \$8.95, Paperback.

REVIEWED BY ANDREW ANDREWS

Assembled here are the classics and masters of the horror/supernatural genre. The selection is as diversified as it is definitive.



Pronzini and associates have chosen a melange of shockers (including "Hop Frog" by Edgar Allan Poe; "The Hand" by Theodore Dreiser; "The Screaming Laugh" by Cornell Woolrich -- all from the collection's first section, entitled "Grandmasters") and horrors (including "The Valley of the Spiders" by H.G. Wells and "Bianca's Hands" by Theodore Sturgeon) that mark the field of the supernatural as perturbing and exciting.

In the book's second section, titled "Modern Masters" there are present-day twists on old themes and alarmingly new ideas to madden your mind, from "Sticks" by Karl Edward Wagner to "The Mindworm" by C.M. Kornbluth. Also included are stories that resemble science fiction but

in a category separately speculative, such as "Camps" by Jack Dann and "Passengers" by Robert Silverberg.

There's an introduction by Stephen King. Included is his story, "The Crate".

All styles of horror and supernatural are assembled in this treasury. While the collection still excludes masters such as Ray Bradbury (his "The Small Assassin" would have fit perfectly) and Harlan Ellison (his "The Prowler in the City at the Edge of the World" could have been included), the collection is positively engrossing.

SUNFALL

By C.J. Cherryh
DAW Books, 158 pp., \$2.25.

REVIEWED BY SUSAN M. SHWARTZ

SUNFALL'S Michael Whalen cover shows a procession of ruined cariatids, and, skulking between them, a robed man clutching something that might be a robot or a weapon. In the background is a vastly-engorged, reddened sun. As the prologue tells us, the six stories of SUNFALL take place at a time when Earth is old and tired. Those people capable of moving offworld have departed; the ones remaining on Old Earth, under the red, dying sun, have drawn into cities, each of which has its own peculiar character.

For example, the story about London, "The Haunted Tower", invokes all the many hauntings of England, from the Romans to the two little princes in the Tower of London and shows how such hauntings can make even the weakest person strong. "The General", the story of the chief of chiefs of barbarians at the gates of Peking, postulates not just a character like Moorcock's Eternal Champion, but instead, a sort of Eternal Triangle -- Arthur, Lancelot and Guinevere living out life after life in conflict with a Mordred.

Like LeGuin's Orsinian tales, these stories are organized around one particular reality, oddly different from our own. Like Vance's Dying Earth stories, Cherryh's fantasies contain a profoundly moving interaction between living people and a dying world; the descriptions of the Jades and Onyxes living in their palaces along the river Sin in Paris are as chic as anything Vance -- or that fine exponent of the decadent, Tanith Lee -- has done.

Cherryh's sinewy, restrained prose, with frequent, sometimes bewildering point-of-view changes,

force a reader to put a great deal of understanding into her stories.

SCIENCE FICTION PUZZLE TALES

By Martin Gardner
Clarkson N. Potter
148 pp., 1981, \$4.95

REVIEWED BY JOHN DI PRETE

Ever since the spring '77 inception of ISAAC ASIMOV'S SF MAGAZINE, the delightful puzzle short-shorts of Martin Gardner (a long-established writer and columnist for SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN) have proven to be successful, regular treats for the brain-teaser and SF fan. Gardner's "SF Tales" actually form a witty, thinly-veiled disguise for Gardner's stock-in-trade: knotty devices of annoyance, thought-provokingness and originality.

Most of the puzzles produce ticklish nerve-stimulation in the brain's cerebral layers -- the amusement reflex. Perhaps the book's only drawback, for some readers, may be the overly mathematical (algebraic, geometric) portions of the book; but otherwise, fascinating reading.

A unique feature consists of an idea using three Answer Sections, instead of one. The first answer poses another problem, to which the solution appears in Section II, finally ending up in the last section.

Inspiring fun.

DISTANT STARS

By Samuel R. Delany
Bantam Trade Paperback, Aug., 1981
352 pages, \$8.95
Produced by Byron Preiss Visual Publications, Inc.
Cover by Michael Whelan

REVIEWED BY DAVID A. TRUESDALE

I was especially overjoyed to receive DISTANT STARS, a beautiful (Whelan wraparound cover), over-large collection of short fiction including an absorbing introduction by Delany, an entire novel (EMPIRE STAR), the Nebula-winning "Time Considered as a Helix of Semi-Precious Stones", as well as an original short story -- all laced throughout with art (some 60 full-page illustrations) from seven different artists.

But I was fooled, and more to the point, disappointed. Aside from EMPIRE STAR and "Helix", the remaining five stories were either slight, obscure or uninspiring, and the "new" Special Effects by Digital

Effects/Computer Program by David Cox, was an experiment that failed. This is an attempt to overlay visual images slightly out of synch with each other in order to portray the out-of-synch realities in "Helix". The effect is terrible. The visual reality is muddled, unattractive and hardly worth the effort. I've a hunch that for all Byron Preiss' packaging talent he overreached himself on this one and someone at Bantam should have stepped in and said, "No. You've gone too far on this one; it just does not work".

MATHEW SWAIN: HOT TIME IN OLD TOWN

By Mike McQuay
Bantam, 1981, \$2.25

REVIEWED BY DEAN R. LAMBE

When supposedly the most creative decorate 40-year-old Saturday morning serials with Hi-Tech special effects, we know that Hollywood is dying. Does the reappearance of the flippant, hard-boiled gumshoe as "the 21st Century private eye" signal the death of SF?

Matt Swain, mouthing lines that must have given Bogart cancer, stirs from his seedy office when he hears of the death of a former client. After a bit of banter with local Texas cops, Swain is hired by Silas Grover, rich and decrepit father of the murder victim. Old Silas, a bio-nic marvel, knows that the cops are not being paid enough to be interested in the case. Grover's two daughters -- sexy and wacko -- and the family butler toss in a few enigmas, and Swain quickly finds himself at odds with billionaire Rick Charon. What rotten fruit hangs in the Grover family tree? Why does Swain's rich girlfriend let him eat crackers in bed? Fortunately Swain has friends in low places, some of whom become extinct in messy ways.

The discriminating reader will find similarities with Chandler's THE BIG SLEEP and Hammett's THE DAIN CURSE. McQuay apparently believes that imitation is a high form. Never mind that "Sam Spade" ill fits this future, or that the derivative writing style can only be sustained for the first few chapters, there is a whole series building here and the un-read will love it. All the author's science seems to have come from old Sci-fi B movies; it's a treat for refugees from common sense. McQuay really thinks that the moon has a "dark side". Those who believe that Hiroshima, Eniwetok and Three Mile Island are surrounded by two-headed people will appreciate the quarantined mutants of Old Town, central to plot and city in this tale. While the American Tobacco Institute will love Swain's two packs before breakfast, the Meddling Morons are appeased by the cover illustration of a distinctly unlit "cig" in our hero's loose lips.

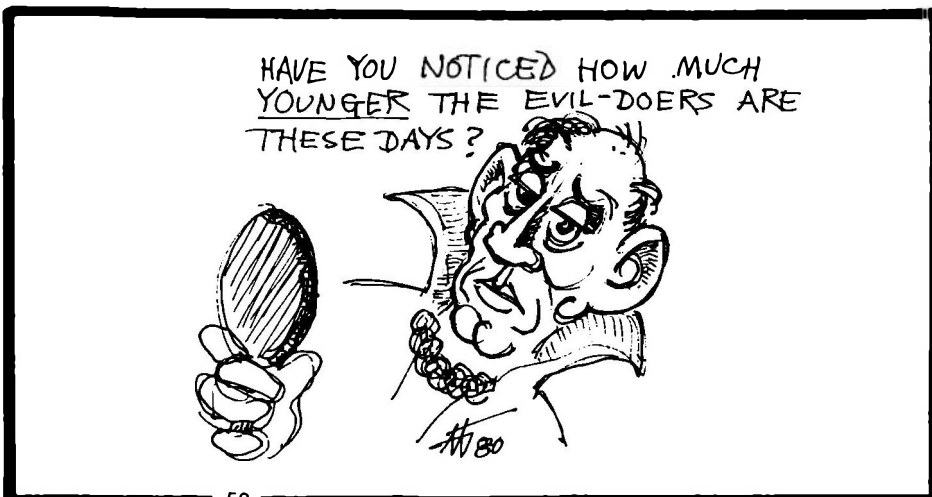
Akin to a TV series, Matt Swain might simply be turned off, but Mike McQuay claims to teach a course in science fiction writing. Sigh. "What a crapshoot. What a goddamned crapshoot."

THE "PENDEX": AN INDEX OF PEN NAMES AND HOUSE NAMES IN FANTASTIC, THRILLER, AND SERIES LITERATURE

By Susannah Bates
Garland Publishing Inc., 233 pp.
\$22.50

REVIEWED BY TOM STAICAR

Susannah Bates took up the challenge of SF, fantasy and thriller pen names and has published her results based upon years of scholarly research in THE PENDEX. Rather than toss any likely name into the book she has relied upon verifiable, reliable, printed sources for each entry. Eliminating many sources



which might have allowed her to sell a 1,000-page manuscript of dubious merit, she utilized only certain sources which she knew to be accurate. Private communications, rumors and other sources were not admissible evidence. Her experience gained from thirty years of collecting allowed her to locate often obscure sources of reference and she always tried to find two or more sources of verification for a name.

The value of THE PENDEX to scholars, researchers and general readers is enhanced by its scholarly accuracy. Cold trails are made fresh again in THE PENDEX as new primary sources are added to the available literature by given writers now that additional pen names and house names are revealed. Collectors and scholars should find this book useful, and libraries would do well to add it to their reference collections. Bates has compiled a valuable work tool for those who seek to uncover information in these fields.

GALACTIC EFFECTUATOR

By Jack Vance
219 pp., \$2.25, Ace, 27232-0
Cover art by Mattingly

REVIEWED BY PAUL MC GUIRE

Jack Vance, who has been awarded not only the Hugo and Nebula but also the Mystery Writers of America's Edgar, has written a most enjoyable science fiction mystery. In the farthest corner of his Gaean Reach is the planet Maz. This world is inhabited by incredibly fierce alien warriors, but is divided and controlled by three interstellar empires. To this world comes Vance's laid-back investigator Miro Hetzel, who becomes involved with smuggling, intrigue, a bizarre kidnapping, assassination and warfare, all leading to a conspiracy of interstellar importance.

This adventure covers the first 147 pages. After three blank pages, there is a second Miro Hetzel investigation included in the book. This one begins with the unique crime of a man's seminal glands being forcibly exchanged by transplant with another's, denying him the right to father his own children.

The novel is listed as a juvenile, "14 and up" is the phrase Ace uses. Like any intelligent and well-written juvenile, it can be enjoyed just as much by adults, but unlike most books of any label, this one was written by a master of artistic entertainment.

DEPARTMENT OF SILLY SCI-FI:

SPACEBREAD

By Steve Senn
Illustrated by the author.
Atheneum, 1981, 216 pp., \$9.95.
ISBN: 0-689-30830-2
Atheneum Pub., 597 Fifth Avenue,
New York City, 10017.

REVIEWED BY FRED PATTEN

This is one of the weirdest novels I've encountered in 31 years of reading SF. I'm almost ashamed to admit that I sorta liked it. Of course, Fritz Leiber has already written stories starring his housecat, but Gummitch was a respectable cat-type cat. SPACEBREAD is, as far as I know, the first example of space opera in the grand tradition whose dynamic heroes are apparently the author's pet cat and a fig off his fig tree.

The story isn't bad. It's no-wise original and it's lousy SF, being a particularly blatant example of hack pulp melodrama stuffed inside a space suit. In this case the adventure, set on the primitive planet Ralph, is a standard Middle Ages soldier-of-fortune romance. The characters are all cardboard, but Senn can establish some really likeable good guys and some really his-sable villains with just a few words. However, every time I'd start to get wrapped up in the action, I'd get jolted by a description that reminded me that it was a little green fig who was creeping up behind a brutal guard to clobber him with a wine bottle, or that it was a fluffy white Persian cat (female) who was offering to take on all comers in a bar-room brawl. I imagine that the author had his tongue firmly in cheek as he wrote the long purple passages in which the little round figlet pledges to make his barbarian-warrior fig ancestors proud of him, or in the "today I am a fig" scene, but the whole concept is just too bizarre for me no matter how deadpan he presents it.

If Senn has one other fault than intrusive silliness, it's his penchant for tragic death scenes. A sympathetic supporting character can't last for more than a couple of chapters without getting raygunned or run through, and expiring in Spacebread's arms as she tearfully pledges to add him to the list of all the others she'll avenge.

Damned if I know what the intended readership of this novel is. It's presented in a Young Adult/Adult hard-cover format with an appropriate vocabulary. The characters are adults and act in mature ways. Even the fig, who is obviously a callow youth

when he is introduced, exhibits admirable common sense. But the funny animal/fruit protagonists are so infantile that almost anybody over the age of 8 would be embarrassed to be caught reading this. If you happen to be babysitting a 6-to-8-year-old and want a book to read that has something to offer both of you, SPACEBREAD will probably do fine.



THE WORMS OF KUKUMLIMA

By Daniel Pinkwater
E.P. Dutton, 152 pp., \$10.95
ISBN: 0-525-43380-5

Some day an SF novel will be printed on used greasburger wrappers. That novel will undoubtedly be by Daniel Pinkwater, who "has what he understands to be the largest and most complete collection of false noses in the non-communist world." Pinkwater is the author of LIZARD MUSIC, the widely acclaimed novel about a civilization of intelligent lizards who worship a golden statue of Walter Cronkite.

On page 9 of THE WORMS OF KUKUMLIMA it is proven that Los Angeles does not exist. The novel is really about a scientific expedition to Darkest Africa by Sir Charles Pelicanstein, Seumas Finneganstein, and Ronald Donald Almondotter to find a civilization of intelligent earthworms from outer space. They find many interesting things as they tromp about and get sidetracked all across East Africa, such as a discarded pinball machine with "a picture of Gamal Abdel Nasser, the former president of Egypt, on the backboard." Anyhow, I won't reveal the horrible secret of the giant earthworms (except that it involves crunchy granola), but the explorers sure do have an interesting experience and it all ends in a big party at Wimpy's in Nairobi.

The dustjacket includes a photograph of the author in one of his Free World false noses.

BLOOD COUNTY

By Curt Selby
DAW Books, #436, June, 1981.
176 pages, \$2.25
Cover by Ken W. Kelly

REVIEWED BY DAVID A. TRUESDALE

BLOOD COUNTY is a much more sensible effort than most, albeit incorporating all the elements that would make a plausible -- and frightening -- movie.

The story takes place in a backwater mountain village -- Blood, West Virginia, and centers around a female news reporter who discovers that the local folk are being quietly bled, quart by collected quart, by the Baron-on-the-hill. The fact that they submit quite willingly and have done so for generations, is but one anomaly to be found and rectified by the twin protagonists -- the news reporter who refuses to leave the dangerous hidden valley and let things be, and the half-brother of the evil Baron Duquieu, Clint Breen.

As the pieces unfold one by one (and the pace is a fast one, with a terrific opening scene after a brief first chapter), we see brutal murders, a gigantic increase in the number of the grisly un-dead as they stalk the countryside, scenes so gory they could have been straight from NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD, and a genuine sympathy for Clint Breen as he struggles with his split inner self -- half-human and half-Lamprou, one of the living dead.

BLOOD COUNTY is a romping good vampire thriller with more of the good stuff and much less of the trite and cliché than one might at first glance expect.

And Curt Selby? A pseudonym for none other than Doris Piserchia.

THE THIRD GRAVE

By David Case
Arkham House, hardcover, \$10.95

REVIEWED BY TOM STAICAR

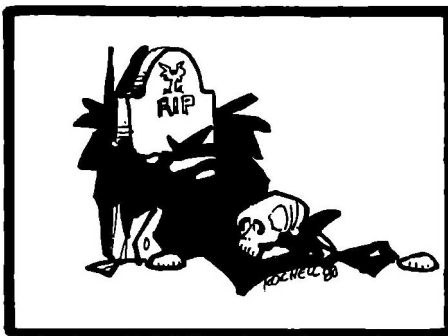
David Case has just the right touch for a novel of this type. A native of New York, now living in England and Greece, he has a natural talent for concocting believable novels of the macabre and the weird.

The book begins as hieroglyphics expert, Thomas Ashley is called upon to interpret some ancient writings found during an archaeological dig in Egypt. One visitor is particularly interested in the meaning of the symbols -- the mysterious and obviously evil Lucian Mallory.

Belly-dancers, tight-lipped

townspeople who all seem to be hiding ominous secrets, and the lair of Mallory himself, with its shelves of ancient texts and its laboratory, all have their roles to play in building the mood of the novel. The inevitable, though always welcome, lovely young woman in peril arrives on cue in the person of Arabella Cunningham. She is oddly infatuated with the older Lucian Mallory and his promises of immortality.

Case makes no attempt to surprise or unsettle the reader who has come to an Arkham House book (with its superb Stephen Fabian cover and interior illustrations) to be chilled by the unknown. We expect the villain to be evil, the woman to fall prey to him, and the hero to be hopelessly stymied as the last chapter approaches. The manner in which the plot unfolds is the mark of the better horror writers, not the in-



novations in plot which are better suited to mainstream novels.

Case's strong point here is his gradual addition of weird background information -- allusions to the BOOK OF THE DEAD, mentions of types of Egyptian curses, the worldview of the Egyptians, and their attitudes toward death and immortality. Speculation about the nature of life and the possibility of devolution rather than evolution as a result of greatly-expanded lifespans form the basis of the fictional story of Lucian Mallory and his work.

THE THIRD GRAVE is a fine novel which should delight lovers of weird fiction and also satisfy the needs of SF and fantasy readers who are looking for a high-quality novel of the unknown.

HELLO AMERICA

By J.G. Ballard
Jonathan Cape, 1981, £6.95
ISBN: 0-224-01914-7

REVIEWED BY ANDREW TIDMARSH

This is an amusing book that reminds his readers (how could we for-

get?) of the author's immense comic talents. He describes a re-colonisation of America during the twenty-first century that occurs during "that far longer safari across the diameters of (our) own skulls".

The desertified landscape is as familiar to us as are its archetypal characters. The youth, Wayne, born in Dublin of an Irish mother and -- perhaps? -- a German father, who, "like his unknown ancestors before him ... had come to America to forget the past, to turn his back forever on an exhausted Europe". (It is ironic that Ballard's fictions are better received in Europe than in America.) Captain Steiner, who, having "beached the leaking Apollo as planned on the silk bank beside the Cumard Pier, in the very space occupied by the great Queens ... had returned to his own country, where he would soon ride again, one foot on the stirrup, the other with luck on space itself". (An example of a prose that -- I have long wished to write this -- resembles a strand of beads fashioned from glass, alternately translucent and opaque; alternately sensible and ... stupid.) Saxon-complexioned Professor Anne (formerly Anna) Summers (formerly Sommer), "brought up in the American ghetto in Berlin", upon whose breath-taking waist-length, blonde hair, we (you, I, J.G. Ballard) are lowered into "the last place on Earth where dreams (can) still take wing". (America? Surely not. Space is the final frontier (that man, by voyaging to the moon, has crossed)). Charles Mason "a middle-aged man lying on a surgical couch in front of a battery of television screens ... naked except for the towel around his waist", nevertheless the forty-fifth President of the United States, having succeeded the "last U.S. President-in-exile, President Brown (a devoutly religious nonagenarian who had died sixty years before Wayne's birth in a Zen monastery in Osaka".

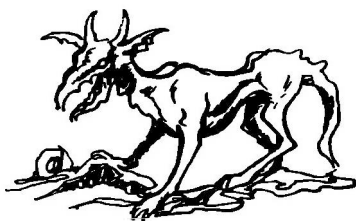
I mock a ... good book, I think because provided with so many ... good quotes. "On all sides was a secret but rich desert life. Scorpions twitched like nervous executives in the windows of old advertising agencies. A sidewinder basking in a publisher's doorway paused to observe Wayne approach and then uncoiled itself in the shadows, waiting patiently among the desks like a restless editor. Rattlesnakes rested in the burrow-weed on the window-sills of theatrical agents, clicking their rattles at Wayne as if dismissing him from a painful audition".

Perhaps I ought to have read at a faster pace, or from pages 1 to 224 on the same day. Had I done so, I would not have examined as closely as I have the above passage, in which

the word "window" appears twice, and the (contradictory) words, "restless" and "rested" are separated by no more than two others. A minor criticism, from which I conclude that, though Ballard can be said to write well, he is not a writer whose style another ought copy. His books are distinguished by the clarity of his vision, rather than by their logical construction: emotional peaks and troughs occur as though at random, whenever an especially vivid metaphor is coined, a narrative bridge required. That there exists no story (in the sense of a continuous recital of facts) in HELLO AMERICA, may be confirmed by referring to "The Index" (published in BANANAS: The Literary Newspaper, Summer, 1977) of "the unpublished and perhaps suppressed autobiography of a man who may well have been one of the most remarkable figures of the 20th Century". The content of the novel could be re-presented in the form of an alphabetically-ordered list of characters and events without significant loss of meaning. Ballard's method, to quote his greatest admirer, Barry Malzberg, is "to set up a few characters ... moving amidst various symbols and events in the fictions which are controlled metaphors ... and then, as the work (begins) to fuse toward climax ... to hit the metaphors rapidly, one after another, noise and colour, until at last they (spin), (move) into one another ...". The emotional impact of the work derives, in part, from the reader's knowledge of the metaphors employed, in part, from the quality of the author's prose, how obvious or obscure are his references.

A reader to whom America was an unfamiliar territory would learn, from HELLO AMERICA, nothing, would judge the book upon its merits as poetry. The frequent banalities, the lapses of the author's concentration, would be excused because, elsewhere, Ballard had demonstrated his ability to "keep a diary of (his) extraordinary visions".

Alas -- the relevant anthologies are THE DAY OF FOREVER, VERMILION SANDS, THE ATROCITY EXHIBITION and LOW-FLYING AIRCRAFT -- for me, "the old dreams (are) dead, Manson and Mickey Mouse and Marilyn Monroe (belong) to a past America, to that



city of antique gamblers about to be vapourised fifty miles away. It (is) time for new dreams, worthy of a real tomorrow, the dreams of the first of the Presidents of the Sunlight Fliers". It is time for new dreams from J.G. Ballard, one among us in whose pre-cognitions (no matter how incredible: the Presidency of Ronald Reagan!) I believe.

How much more selfish can I get? Is not to have been amused enough?

STRANGE SEAS AND SHORES

By Avram Davidson
Introduction by Ray Bradbury
Ace Books, Aug. 1981, 219 pp., \$2.25

REVIEWED BY DAVID A. TRUESDALE

Originally published in 1971, the seventeen stories in this collection date from 1958 through 1971 and for the most part first saw print in either GALAXY or F&SF. They still read very well, but are not the easiest things in the world to classify.

What they are not is science fiction. What they are can best be described as an oddball amalgam of the Sturgeon-Bradbury type fantasy in that they deal foremostly with the effects on, or reactions to, strange situations or bizarre circumstances by very fallible, very human people.

Take, for instance, "The Sixty-Third Street Station" and a poor bloke conned so cleverly into stepping off a subway where there happens to be no scheduled stop; and for just what macabre and deathly reason? No, I won't. Read it for yourself.

Or better yet, read "The Vat", "The Goobers" or "The Certificate" for gemlike examples of the shock short story so difficult to pull off and so ingeniously perpetrated by Davidson.

And I think words akin to ingenious, oddball, etc. are perhaps (in any one of several ways) the most remembered aspects of these stories, for in virtually every one there is sensed some slightly askew, odd-angled perspective that renders the story a uniquely Avram Davidson creation; whether it be a wryly humorous reworking of a standard, cliched theme ("Paramount VI", first contact -- "Take Wooden Indians", time travel for a most peculiar reason) or a bleak and grimly realistic set piece exhibiting without qualm or reservation what generations of inbreeding can do to a small colony of seriously degenerated space settlers who are naively befriended by a family



of newcomers -- and the inevitable slaughter (of the reasonable, sane outsiders) that ensues ("The House the Blakelys Built").

In short, STRANGE SEAS AND SHORES is just what the title implies, and hence may be a little too off-the-wall for those who gorge on hard Science Fiction or more traditional, adventurous strains of fantasy -- but if you're even a little like me you'll find this collection a surprising detour from sameness.

NEW DIMENSIONS 12

Edited by Marta Randall & Robert Silverberg
Timescape (Pocket) Books, 1981
223 pp., \$2.50

REVIEWED BY ANDREW ANDREWS

Marta Randall has assumed the helm in what is now the second decade of the New Dimensions series. She selects stories on her own judgment, different from Silverberg; but the quality's the same.

The best includes "Pain and Glory" by Gordon Eklund. The Cohens are empathists; they've been so for generations. Papa Isaac is dying of cancer; his family is breaking apart. Squabbles and petty jealousies clash. Papa's son Kelly has inherited the power to experience people's suffering. How he copes with his father's death and his troubled family while learning to adjust to his own adulthood creates a very poignant story.

"Elfleda" by Vonda N. McIntyre explores love and lust between a centaur and a unicorn. Manufactured by humans to roam in wide-open pastures to amuse humans, these fabled creatures learn to crave freedom and flee for their lives.

"Walden Three" by Michael Swanwick examines life in an L-5 Colony. It examines society, and individuality and makes for a disturbing read.

These stories are wholesome and unique speculations on the human condition as it confronts the fantastic. They cannot be called "science fiction" anymore; that term is too limiting. They surpass the nuts-and-bolts stuff and leap into a wonder all their own.

THE BEST SCIENCE FICTION OF THE YEAR #10

Edited by Terry Carr
Timescape Books, 1981, 434 pp., \$3.50

REVIEWED BY ROBERT SABELLA

Virtually all readers of this magazine know that Terry Carr's annual anthology comes closest to being a genuine Best-of-the-Year volume. For those new to science fiction, suffice it to say that six of Terry's twelve selections this year were nominated either for Hugo or Nebula Awards or both. This anthology is must reading for fans of short-to-middle-length science fiction.

Howard Waldrop's "The Ugly Chickens" has already won the Nebula Award which is slightly surprising since it is science fiction only by the broadest definition of the term. It is a cute and occasionally funny story about an ornithologist's search for the last surviving dodoes. Although basically a trivial story it is nice to read something entertaining that is not deadly serious all the time.

Another Nebula winner is Clifford Simak's "Grotto of the Dancing Deer", a fine balance of mystery and characterization about the identity of the primitive artist of two-thousand-year-old cave paintings. Simak's professionalism shows here since the mystery is solved halfway through the story but he still keeps the reader's interest with some fine observations on human nature.

"Giguangagap", by Michael Stanwick, resembles a John Varley story in that it is offbeat enough to feel genuinely futuristic yet is realistic enough to be genuinely moving. Physical contact is about to take place between humans and aliens for the first time. In prior communication with the aliens suspicion has been aroused that their motives are less than friendly. Yet the contact

must take place which creates understandable conflict in the person selected to meet them.

George R.R. Martin and John Varley are two of the very best science fiction writers to emerge in the Seventies, yet their approaches to writing are quite different. Martin is not a great innovator, but he takes the vast body of science fiction and molds some damned fine stories out of it. "Nightflyers" is a ghost story transplanted into deep space, complete with technological spirits and a vast legend that is worth a whole story itself. Martin is the best pure storyteller in the field and he is at the peak of his form here.

By contrast, John Varley is the field's leading innovator. "Beatnik Bayou" is his unique look at education, justice and, most importantly, approaching maturity. Varley has lost none of his creativity while his plotting has become tighter and his characters have begun to breathe real life. He is currently science fiction's most important writer and should continue to be so if he does not get too hung up writing adventure trilogies and movie novelizations.

Bob Leman's "Window" is one of those stories that I hesitate to say much about lest I ruin it for some reader. It is likely the single most horrifying story I have ever read. I don't like the horror fad which has overrun movies and books, but Bob Leman and George R.R. Martin have adapted it so skillfully to science fiction that I cannot help but approve.

There are six other stories by people like James Tiptree, Jr. and Philip K. Dick, all good and combining to form the best single science fiction package of each year. This book is highly recommended for all science fiction fans.

CITIZEN VAMPIRE

By Les Daniels
Charles Scribner's Sons
New York, May, 1981, 199 pp., \$9.95

REVIEWED BY JAMES ANDERSON

The city of Paris in 1789 is just about the last place one would expect to find a vampire. But Rhode Island writer, Les Daniels has surprised the fantasy world once again in CITIZEN VAMPIRE, his third novel featuring the vampire "hero", Don Sebastian de Villaneuva.

THE SILVER SKULL, the previous book in this series, ends with Don Sebastian finding peace and tranquility among the stars with the immortal gods of Tenochtitlanian Mexico. In this latest adventure, the vampire is rudely recalled to Earth by an ambitious French magician and his benefactor, the beautiful Countess de Corville.

Don Sebastian is none too happy at being torn away from eternal bliss, especially when he finds himself caught in the midst of the conflicts of revolutionary France. And to make matters worse, Sebastian becomes tangled in the affairs of two opposing women, the aristocratic Countess, and the revolutionary Madeline, both of whom know his secret.

Despite the plentiful flow of blood in the streets of Paris, Sebastian finds it difficult to find nourishment without creating an army of undead that would arouse suspicion in this unfamiliar world. He resorts to playing the role of a ruthless murderer who rips out his victim's hearts after cutting their throats.

CITIZEN VAMPIRE, in addition to being a top-notch fantasy, is also a superlative work of historical fiction. Les Daniels presents an interesting and accurate portrait of revolutionary France, complete with the guillotine, the Bastille, and the *Bals des Victimes*, the dance of victims where citizens of the revolution dress like the dead in bloody finery and toast the beheading of famous nobles. Some of the minor characters of the book are among the most interesting and infamous personages of history: The Marquis de Sade and Robespierre himself. These are presented as believable human beings rather than as stock figures of history.

CITIZEN VAMPIRE is an absorbing novel of historical fantasy that combines the vampire myths of Rumania with the morbid reality of 18th Century France. It is a book that will change the reader's notions about the typical vampire tale.

THAT'S A PREDESTINATION
DETECTOR. PUSH THE BUTTON
AND IT BUZZES. IF IT DOESN'T BUZZ,
EITHER YOU HAVE FREE WILL OR
YOU NEED NEW
BATTERIES.



THE HUMAN HOTLINE

S-F NEWS BY ELTON T. ELLIOTT

REMEMBER THE ADDRESS FOR THIS COLUMN IS: ELTON T. ELLIOTT, SFR, 1899 WIESSNER DRIVE N.E., SALEM, OR 97303.

COMMENTARY

After much thought, my business associate, Thaddeus Dikty, and I concluded that the non-performance of certain clauses in the contract between New Media Publishing and our company, S.F. Productions, Inc., made further effort on the magazines intolerable. In a letter dated October 20, 1981, we so informed Hal Schuster of New Media Publishing.

Both magazines, S F BOOKLINE and SCIENCE FICTION NOVELS, are dead. Both titles are the exclusive property of S F Productions, Inc.

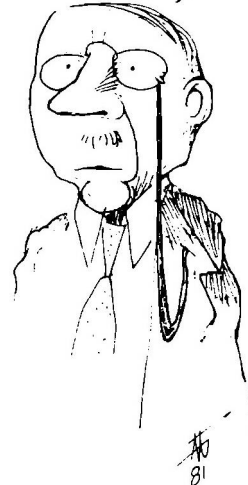
On to other items -- The recent court ruling against the teaching of creationism in the classroom was of great benefit to science fiction, since most science fiction stories accept the Darwinian theory of evolution. Science fiction books and classes in the public schools could have come under criticism had the fundamentalists succeeded in their opening wedge to gain control of the minds of our young people. Already some fundamentalist parents are refusing to let their children view TV shows such as STAR TREK, because one fundamentalist minister declared the character of Spock represented the Devil. The playing of certain games such as "Dungeons and Dragons" has been attacked as attempts to convert good upstanding fundamentalist Christian children into Satanists through the use of occult powers. I kid you not. Some preachers have warned their congregations not to allow their children to see STAR WARS be-

cause George Lucas also produced RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK, which they consider blasphemous. As Ben Bova said when he told me he felt the U. S. is headed towards a religious dictatorship, "Robert Heinlein's been right about everything else, why not about that?"

One piece of good news: Most economists are predicting a pick-up in the economy in the second or third quarter of '82. This would be of tremendous benefit to the publishing industry where a smooth cash flow is more difficult to sustain than in most other areas of the economy. However, if the Reagan administration does run up a deficit of over 100 billion dollars as predicted, then interest rates could climb over the 30% mark, effectively dousing any economic recovery. Recent speculation about just such an occurrence sent the stock market down 17 points in one day. Let's hope this doesn't happen: If publishers bet on recovery, expand their programs and inventories and sales do not pick up or should actually reverse themselves, some publishers might be forced out of business as might some science fiction programs at some larger New York publishing houses. Cheer up: As you can see I've passed my lessons in The Richard E. Geis School on the subject of Pessimism 101.

A HUMAN SACRIFICE? I DON'T APPROVE, BUT INTELLECTUALLY YOUR CASE IS COMPELLING.

WHOM DID YOU HAVE IN MIND?



MAGAZINE NEWS:

AMAZING:

From bi-monthly to quarterly.

ANALOG:

Thirteen issues per year.

ASIMOV'S:

George Scithers, ASIMOV'S editor since its inception, has resigned. His staff of first readers, including Darrell Schweitzer, has also left. The new editor will be Kathleen Maloney, former executive editor of Bantam Books.

Scithers and his staff of first readers lived in Philadelphia, the rest of the Davis editorial operations are headquartered in New York. Davis wanted a full-time editor in New York; this was a reported area of friction, as was cover and art control which Davis took away from Scithers last year. (ANALOG editor Stanley Schmidt also lost art and cover control.) Scithers' resignation had been rumored for some time.

Circulation at ASIMOV'S had dropped from over 100,000 at the beginning of 1981 to 80,000 at year's end. Possibly as a step to keep subscribers and halt the circulation plunge Davis has finally decided to put wrappers around their subscription copies, to take effect in January, '82.

ASIMOV'S remains at thirteen issues per year. New Editor Maloney promises more Isaac Asimov in the magazine, science fiction as well as science fact.

FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION:

Monthly.

FANTASY BOOK:

Beginning in December, have a bimonthly schedule. Have not seen a recent issue.

GALAXY:

In limbo.

OMNI:

Executive Editor Ben Bova, in an exclusive interview, reports that OMNI is "profitable -- in good shape." As for the possibility of an OMNI science fiction magazine, he says that Omni Publications is "still kicking it around".

As for rumors that Omni Publications are interested in buying out Davis, Bova scotched them: "Nothing could be further from the truth".

QUEST/STAR:

Announced bimonthly. Have not seen a recent issue.

RIGEL:

Announced bimonthly. Have not seen a recent issue.

SCIENCE FICTION DIGEST:

Announced bimonthly -- the first issue was out in September; I have not seen a subsequent issue.

SCIENCE FICTION NOVELS & S. F. BOOKLINE

See commentary.

PUBLISHING NEWS:

Gregg Press has suspended all science fiction publishing until existing inventory is decreased.

Filmways, the communications and media conglomerate is reportedly in the process of liquidation. Ace is a subsidiary company. No concrete word on any possible sale of Ace.

Davis which recently announced editorial changes at ASIMOV'S (See Magazine News), has dropped its SCIENCE AND ELECTRONICS magazine as well as its COMPUTER magazine.

Their Vice President, subscription director and newsstand circulation director have all been let go. Rights director Constance Drenzo, with the company since its inception, has resigned.

Berkley has announced expansion from their current three, to four books a month, as of mid '82.

Starlog Press has ceased publication of FUTURE LIFE.

Ace Books has announced a juvenile fantasy line to be distributed through their Tempo imprint to be edited by Terri Windling, also the Ace fantasy editor.

Hank Stine is now Editor in Chief of Donning's entire line. Kay Reynolds has been named editor of a new line of graphic novels which Donning/Starblaze will be publishing in 1982.

Tor Books became self-sufficient in its cash flow in September -- impressive, since their first title only came out in May.

AUTHOR NEWS:

Michael Resnick has sold a novel SIDESHOW, to New American Library, set for September 1982 publication, the first of an open-ended series titled "Tales of the Galactic Midway". The next two of the series are tentatively titled THE THREE-LEGGED HOOTCH and THE WILD ALIEN TAMER; both will be written in early 1982. Resnick has sold an erotic suspense/horror short story called "Watching Marcia", to THE ARBOR HOUSE TREASURY OF SUSPENSE.

Jack L. Chalker is working on a large fantasy novel, THE RIVER OF DANCING GODS. Then he will begin MEDUSE: THE MAZE IN THE DIAMOND, the final book in "Four Lords of the Diamond" tetralogy. The third book, CHARON: A WALK IN THE DARK, is turned in to Del Rey and will appear in the fall of '82.

His mainstream novel, THE DEVIL'S VOYAGE, has sold to Japan. The BBC is considering doing MIDNIGHT AT THE WELL OF SOULS as a radio serial.

Ben Bova is doing the text of a book for Abram's, ROBERT MC CALL'S VISION OF TOMORROW by Ben Bova, scheduled for release late in '82. Robert McCall will do the paintings.

Isaac Asimov has finished 70,000 words of the first draft on the new Foundation novel, to be about 125,000 words on completion. Doubleday has announced over a million dollars in subsidiary rights offers have been received by their subsidiary rights department for the Asimov Foundation novel, LIGHTNING ROD (this info from SCIENCE FICTION CHRONICLE).

Damon Knight has sold a novel, THE MAN IN THE TREE, to Berkley.

Michael Moorcock has sold THE CITY AND THE AUTUMN STARS to Timescape.

Ray Faraday Nelson has sold a novel, THE PROMETHEUS MAN, to Donning.

Cliffron D. Simak has turned in a novel, SPECIAL DELIVERANCE, to Del Rey, along with an untitled fantasy novel.

Berkley has renounced rights to THE LAST DANGEROUS VISIONS, the long-rumored three-volume encyclopedia-length anthology edited by Harlan



Ellison. The original contracts were never signed by Ellison and the \$50,000 advance never paid. Now, over two and a half years after the reported sale, Ellison returned the contracts, evidently with changes unacceptable to Berkley who decided the original offer was void after this long delay.

This anthology was originally sold to Doubleday, then to Harper and Row (where in 1973 a tentative table of contents showed 77 stories), then to Berkley in 1979 where 113 stories were reportedly bought; the number has purportedly increased in the last two-plus years. (One report had over 150 stories already bought.)

Jim Frenkel has reportedly bought mass market rights to Somtow Sucharitkul's MALLWORLD, from Donning.

LOCUS reports that Jack Dann and Gardner Dozois have sold an anthology titled UNICORN to Ace.

John Manchip White sold DEATH BY DREAMING to Ace Books.

Michael McCollum has sold LIFE PROBE to Del Rey.

Glen Cook has sold a science fiction trilogy, "The Starfishers" to Warner.

LIZARD ASK NOT by Barry Longyear, which takes place 250 years after CIRCUS WORLD, has been sold to Berkley.

Lynn Abbey has sold a book to Ace, DAWN WOLVES.

Ace will publish the three Telzey books by James H. Schmitz, THE UNIVERSE AGAINST HER, THE LION GAME and THE TELZEY TOY, in a uniform edition.

Robert Silverberg has sold to Tor first paperback rights to two juvenile novels, GATE OF WORLDS and ACROSS A BILLION YEARS.

WIZARD by John Varley has 210,000 copies in print after a third printing of 25,000 copies.

Granada Books bought British rights to Arthur C. Clarke's 2010: ODYSSEY TWO for \$230,000. Hayakawa Publishing bought Japanese rights for \$50,000. Clarke receives none of these monies until Ballantine

earns back their \$1 million advance through rights sales, after which he gets 75% of all sales.

Stephen King and Peter Straub have sold a collaborative work for \$2 million +, THE TALISMAN, to Viking and Coward, McCann and Geohagan.

FIRESTARTER by Stephen King has over 2.5 million copies in print in the Signet edition as of August 1981. Peter Straub's GHOST STORY, is currently at the top of the best seller charts; the movie version opened in the theatres in December.

Philip Jose' Farmer's next novel is A BARNSTORMER IN OZ. The hero is Dorothy's son.

MOVIE/TV NEWS:

Sensing a publicity bonanza, Paramount has reportedly shot two endings to the new Star Trek movie; in one ending Spock lives, in the other he dies. Trek fans are unhappy that Spock might be killed. One group of fans, who are also in the legal profession, took out an ad in a Hollywood trade paper, pointing out that Spock's death would cause lost revenues from the sale of movie tickets, discs and videotapes. Paramount is being coy about which ending they will use. In any case, even the unused ending would be of interest to hard-core fans.

Milton Subotsky has renewed the movie option on Robert Asprin's ANOTHER FINE MYTH.

The Conan movie is set for December, '82 release.

PBS stations KCET -- Los Angeles and WNET -- New York have announced plans for a series of shows based on science fiction short stories. Stories by LeQuin and Budrys have already been acquired. More info next issue.

Philip Jose' Farmer's novel, TO YOUR SCATTERED BODIES GO, the first book in the Riverworld series has been optioned by ABC-TV for production as a mini-series. The script is already completed.

BOOK NEWS:

Absent this issue -- will return next issue.

CONCLUDING WORDS:

The column this issue is shorter than usual due to personal details which cut down my writing and research time.

Thanks to all who sent cards and kind words this Christmas -- I do enjoy and appreciate them.

LETTERS CONTINUED FROM P. 53

(large scale) and types of economy (large scale).

((In the last analysis the enduring themes and elements of sf stories are what people buy over and over and over, through the decades. Editors and publishers have to give the buyers what the buyer wants to read! And shoot-em-ups in space, for instance, is one of the major stock, sure-fire sellers...and is supported by the young male reader to satisfy an instinctual/biological need. He conquers and triumphs vicariously. In my opinion instinctual/biological needs (all unconscious) underly all the genre fiction to one degree or another. I see nothing wrong or shameful about that.

((The argument that people "should not" be slaves to their gonads or pituitarys or other glands is idiocy. And yes, there has always been a power struggle of a kind between males and females, and because most men can beat up on most women (basic power equation) women will lose in certain areas of society. And while most young women have strong sex appeal to most young men, women will have that "weapon" to use.

((Nature or evolution has discovered that this biological/instinctual setup works---the species survives and prospers. Our present high-tech civilization will last only as long as most of the planet's mineral wealth can be easily used. These are extraordinary times---a golden-age blip in the life of our species. Our instincts and our body plumbing are designed for survival over the long haul. What we were we will be; what we are we will never be again. That's my bedrock worldview. Time will tell if I'm right.))

LETTER FROM SHELDON TEITELBAUM
Rehov Mordechai Anelevitch
23/2 Holon, Israel
29 November, 1981

'I wish to comment upon a disturbing phenomenon that I became aware of during my attendance at Denvention as representative for the Jerucon 82 Organizing Committee. My purpose in doing so is not to pick a quarrel with anyone, but simply to express my puzzlement.

'To wit, a fair number of the pros whose names feature prominently in our convention brochures, pointed out that they never had any intention of attending the Congress. Con-

sequently rumor abounded that this was some kind of rip-off operation, and pretty damned chutzpahnik at that.

'I have no intention of naming names, but allow me, please to verify the situation at least as far as I see it, and allow as well, that I may be entirely off the beam in my conclusions. According to Dr. Nachman Ben Yehuda, who attended the 1980 Worldcon, each of those persons listed on our brochures announced his or her intention to make it to Jerucon. Indeed, this was not recorded in writing and consequently notarized, but where I come from, a verbal contract is as binding as the written sort. I am not hinting at any gross miscarriage of justice. People can and do change their minds and as long as money has not exchanged hands, nobody gets hurt (not much anyway). As well, I accept entirely Barry Longyear's comment that it is unfair to hold a man who may have been sleepless, ill-fed and harried for three days, to something he might have said in passing at a party. Fair enough, and Mr. Longyear was gentleman enough to point out the exigencies of the situation. Nevertheless, these comments were taken in good faith, often in the presence of witnesses, and if Dr. Ben Yehuda regarded them as commitments, naively or otherwise, this hardly constitutes the makings of a rip-off. I think that many of the individuals who complained that their names were being bandied about were aware of this, or I expect their complaints would have been a great deal louder than they were. You just had to see the vapid expressions on the faces of certain writers, when I tried to follow up on their original statements. "Israel, oh, yes, that's somewhere in the Middle-East, hmmm..." Maybe I had bad breath. I just don't know.

'I wish to state for the record that Jerucon '82 will take place this summer as announced, though the site has been changed to the Diplomat Hotel (5 stars) in Jerusalem, and that a number of pros will be in attendance, as well as leading academics in the field, notably Richard Erlich, Thomas Dunne, David Ketterer, Jon Robert Colombo, Paul Lewis, Raymond Thompson, Roderick McGillis, Tom Moylan, Michael Larsen and Beverly Friend. The list of participants now numbers over 60 and I figure, as the winter progresses, that it will number threefold, not to mention those who are attending for their own enjoyment.

'Our motivation in organizing this thing is varied. We are interested in contributing to the legitimacy of science fiction studies

within Israeli academic institutions. We feel that this will be good public relations for the country, in that many who are exposed to it only through the media can witness first-hand the reality of Israel and not just the shit that comes over the tubes. And finally let's not forget that this whole shebang was suggested in the first place by some of those very people who now go blank at its mention. Be assured that we're not in it for the money nor for our health. It's kind of difficult making a living here and the hours are a little rougher than what many Americans are used to, and what with the army, reserve duty and the normal hassles of stocking the pantry, you can be sure that organizing Jerucon means going without certain other things.

'On the other hand, I would like to thank especially Jaqueline Lichtenberg, Cherry Weiner, Forrest Ackerman, Robert Adams, Marty Cantor, Janice Gelb and Ed Bryant for their help, consideration and enthusiasm during my stay in Colorado. It was a pleasure meeting you folks. Next year in Jerusalem, eh?'

SMALL PRESS NOTES CONT. FROM P. 49

THE SPACEGAMER, #46, December '81. If you're not aware of it and are "into" sf & fantasy games, **SPACEGAMER** is available. Articles, reviews, letters, news, etc. about gaming. Available from The Space Gamer, POB 18805, Austin, TX 78760. \$2.50 for a single copy.

This is a well done special interest zine, professionally set up.

SF AND FANTASY WORKSHOP Sept. 1981.

A monthly news and writing-tips/instruction letter. Good how-to bits and mini interview (from the writer's angle) of James Gunn. This could be a great help to beginning sf writers. \$10 brings membership in **SF & FANTASY WORKSHOP** and a sub to the newsletter which is published monthly. Other Workshop activities are mentioned. Send to: 8125 S.W. 21st Street,

Topeka, KS 66615.

Editorial Director: Alan R. Bechtold; Asst. Director: Kathleen Woodbury.

MIRIAD #4, #5 is devoted to the visual end of the sf-fantasy spectrum---movies, the visuals magazines like **HEAVY METAL**, and the artists and creators of these visuals.

Professionally done, slick paper, full-color covers... photos, portfolios, and also some serious analysis and opinion. Taral reviews fanzines...

MIRIAD is a very nice attempt to

cover as much as possible of the sf/fantasy field for the newest-generation of fans and enthusiasts, with an accent on the visual media.

William P. Marks, publisher, writes that Hania Wojtowicz is now editor.

Single copy price: \$2.00.
Miriad Productions, 61 Warner Av.,
Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M4A 1Z5.

KADATH Vol.1, No.4---July 1981. Devoted to weird and fantast fiction, this special, limited edition magazine in an English edition, is published in Italy.

Excellent artwork, with text contributions from Manly Wade Wellman, H. Warner Munn, Darrell Schweitzer, Frances Garfield and Mike Ashley. The Jim Pitts cover is really fine work, full-color, on very heavy gloss stock.

KADATH is a highly collectible item. \$4. single copy. From:
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Corso Aurelio Saffi 5/9,
16128 Genova, ITALY.

INDEX TO THE SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINES---1979 is available for \$4.50 by mail. Compiled by Jerry Boyajian and Kenneth R. Johnson, it covers all the prozines, including **DESTINIES**, & **GALILEO**. It lists fiction, nonfiction, editorials. It has an author index and an artist index.

Also available is a 1980 Index, and listed as becoming available in January, 1982 is the 1981 Index. All \$4.50 by mail.

Send to: Twaci Press, POB 87,
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By Lahna Diskin

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SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #35 Interviews with Fred Saberhagen and Don Wollheim; "The Way It Is" by Barry Malzberg; "Noise Level" by John Brunner; "Coming Apart at the Themes" by Bob Shaw.

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #36 Interview with Roger Zelazny; A Profile of Philip K. Dick by Charles Platt; "Outside the Whale" by Christopher Priest; "Science Fiction and Political Economy" by Mack Reynolds; Interview with Robert A. Heinlein; "You Got No Friends in This World" by Orson Scott Card.

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SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #37 Interview with Robert Anton Wilson; "We're Coming Through the Window!" by Barry N. Malzberg; "Inside the Whale" by Jack Williamson, Jerry Pournelle, and Jack Chalker; "Unities in Digression" by Orson Scott Card.

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #38 Interview with Jack Williamson; "The Engines of the Night" by Barry N. Malzberg; "A String of Days" by Gregory Benford; "The Alien Invasion" by Larry Niven; "Noise Level" by John Brunner; SF News by Elton Elliott.

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #39 Interview with Gene Wolfe; "The Engines of the Night"--Part Two by Barry N. Malzberg; "The Nuke Standard" by Ian Watson; "The Vivisector" by Darrell Schweitzer; SF News by Elton Elliott.

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #40 Interview with Robert Shekley; 4-way conversation: Arthur C. Clarke, Harlan Ellison, Fritz Leiber & Mark Wells; "The Engines of the Night"--Part Three by Barry N. Malzberg; Darrell Schweitzer; SF News by Elton T. Elliott

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #41 Space Shuttle Report by Clifford R. McMurray; "Chuck's Latest Bucket" by David Gerrold; Interview with Michael Whelan; "The Bloodshot Eye" by Gene DeWeese; "The Vivisector" by Darrell Schweitzer; SF News by Elton T. Elliott.



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view with Philip K. Dick; Interview
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Silverberg That Was" by Robert
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of a Legend" by Algis Budrys.

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"Flying Saucers and the Stymie
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SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #26 Inter-
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Larry Niven; "Noise Level" by
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Richard Henry Klump; ONE IMMORTAL
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SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #27 Inter-
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SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #29 Inter-
views with John Brunner, Michael
Moorcock, and Hank Stine; "Noise
Level" by John Brunner; SF News;
SF Film News & Reviews.

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #30 Inter-
views with Joan D. Vinge, Stephen
R. Donaldson, and Norman Spinrad;
"The Awards Are Coming" by Orson
Scott Card; SF News; SF Film News
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