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INTERVIEWS: K.W. JETER & ROBERT E. VARDEMAN

ORSON SCOTT CARD

JOHN BRUNNER

DARRELL SCHWEITZER

RICHARD GEIS

ALEXIS GILLILAND

WILLIAM ROTSLER



ALLEN MCQUINN

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AND BESIDES THE TEN
COMMANDMENTS, AN
ENGLISH-HEBREW DICTIONARY
FOR THE TRANSLATION THEREOF.



Next Issue....

Next issue is up in the air. A lot of the regular columnists will be with us, and I will be here, and probably Orson Scott Card will make another heroic effort...and there may be something from John Shirley...

But nothing else is in hand and in the pot. Somebody have an interview they'd like published? An article? (But keep in mind I no longer pay for material.)

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ALIEN THOUGHTS

RICHARD E. GEIS

HERE THERE BE ROTSLERS

Bill Rotsler has sent along another fat 9x12 full of cartoons and fillos, for distribution to those faneds who want them. As before, send me a stamped, self-addressed #10 business envelope (or a 5x7 would be fine) and I'll send a selection of his illos for use in your fanzine.

Your only obligation is to send Bill a copy of the publication in which his art appears. His address is:

William Rotsler
17909 Lull Street,
Reseda, CA 91335

[Remember, a 5x7 envelope requires at least 39¢ postage because of its 'off size'. So spake the postal service. Don't blame me.]

AN UNLIKELY INVESTMENT

L.W. Currey, Inc., an Antiquarian Bookseller in Elizabethtown, NY 12932, sent me their Winter-Spring 1985 fantasy and sf catalog.

Imagine my surprise and pleasure to note that my three self-published limited edition mimeographed novels are listed. And at heavy prices:

CANNED MEAT--\$30.

STAR WHORES--\$25.

THE CORPORATION STRIKES BACK--\$25.

Huh! So all you curious, interested SFR readers who bought one of those copies [only about 475 of each were available] are now holders of collectors items. Original price: \$4.

Gad, maybe I should publish again! Yes, yes, the third novel of the Toi King erotic sf series should be issued.

You may remember that Toi King is a member of The Sex Guild, a Companion One [the highest rating] and devastatingly beautiful and intelligent.

In this future of extensive space flight and 52 colony worlds,

sex-for-pay on Mother Earth has been legal for many decades, and the Sex Guild which trains and certifies Companions is well established and trusted; its graduates and members are hired by space and planet corporations and wealthy individuals.

Trouble is, Toi keeps getting into trouble...

Maybe next issue I'll have something to offer.

DEPT. OF KORRECTIONS

Jim Stumm is the editor/publisher of LIVING FREE. Paul Doerr is the editor/publisher of PIONEER.

On p.58, SFR #54, I attributed LIVING FREE to Paul. Jim took umbrage. Three full pounds of it as a matter of fact. [A joke, Jim, a joke.] LIVING FREE is a very interesting, valuable personal journal of self liberation.

Personally, I'm into self-gratification...heh-heh. Pass the ice cream.

John Shirley is moving to Hollywood from NJ---will be there by now ---and in a phone call contributed these jokes:

'Trust me' in Los Angeles means: Fuck you.

A Polish actress came to Hollywood and fucked the writers!

HOW TO WRITE PORN NOVELS FOR FUN AND PROFIT

is the title of a book I wrote for Michael Hoy, editor and publisher, head honcho of Loompanics Unlimited.

I just got word from Mike that HOW TO--- will be published in May (about the time you'll be reading this), and that it will have 12 Alexis Gilliland cartoons in it,

including a Gilliland cover cartoon.

The book will run about 100 pages, I'm told, and probably cost \$7.95 plus \$2. shipping and handling charges.

It's written in a conversational style---you know me---and has also a lot of quotes from my early and late sex novels.

Some of the chapter titles are: 'Who Is Richard E. Geis, And Why Is He Writing This?'

'A Short History Of The Modern Porno Novel, 1960-1985, With Caustic Asides And Wry Truths'

'Writing Dirty Stories And Novels or Fun, A Hobby That Will Shock Your Relatives And Amaze Your Friends'

'Writing Porno Novels For Profit---The Nitty Gritty And The Down And Dirty'

This book gives real, honest-to-God detailed advice on writing sex scenes, sex novel structures, themes, the areas you can't enter, those you must enter. Yes, there are taboos in the porno field.





Heresy/Weird Ideas
Anarchism and Egoism
Self Publishing

This catalog is a litmus test of your real feelings about freedom.

THERE IS A CONSPIRACY among the artists who contribute to SFR. I know! I know! I'm on to you fellows. In spite of my asking you to ease off on sending me illos, you have sent more! My art box is overflowing! And you're doing this to me in order to impose obligation! In order to make me continue on and on with SFR, year after year, in order to use up all this artwork. [While you send more...]

I really do need some cover-size artwork. Beyond that, please, please, for the love of God, Montresor! No more illos. No more cartoons.

If you'd like to order a copy, the address is: Loompanics Unlimited
P.O. Box 1197
Port Townsend, WA
98368

Some other recent books published by Loompanics are WHO SAYS PARANORMAL ISN'T "IN" ANY MORE? The second hilarious work of Alexis Gilliland cartoons, with an Introduction by Richard E. Geis. \$5.95 plus \$2. s&h.

TECHNIQUES OF REVENGE, a compilation of ways to Get Even; chilling and effective. \$7.95 + \$2.

The newest Loompanics catalog is available and it lists and describes hundreds of "underground" books. As Mike Hoy writes in his Introduction to the catalog:

"So controversial are the books we offer that most magazines will not allow us to advertise. Bookstores and distributors will not carry our publications. Periodicals refuse to review our books.

"We know where we belong: we are the lunatic fringe of the libertarian movement. Because we do not believe in limits. We do not believe in laws, rules or regulations. We have contempt for censorship, secrecy and dogmatism. We don't give a damn about being "respectable." We don't care about anything except your right to find out anything you want to know. Nothing is sacred to us except scapiticism and self-reliance."

Some of the subjects and categories in this catalog are:

The Underground Economy
Tax Avoidance
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Conducting Investigations
Con Games and Swindles
Self Defense
Guns/Silencers/Knives/Bombs
Murder and Torture
Survival
Paralegal Skills
Sex, Drugs and Rock 'n' Roll

I've already pasted-up and closed the letter section. I'm days late getting this issue to the printer. And today a letter from Richard F.X. O'Connor, formerly the Marketing Director of Donning [see letters from R. Friedman and Kay Reynolds this issue], who confirms that he left Donning "under my own steam to launch my own firm, O'Connor House. Our parting was at my instigation and not Donning's, and it was amicable."

This is another response to Janrae Frank's letter in SFR #54.

Be seeing you next issue, barring death, alien invasion, the complete disintegration of the postal service, or the sale of a novel for \$1,000,000. or so.



GEIS NOTE: I AM ACTING IN BEHALF OF M.I.C. WHO IS OFFERING ASTOUNDING/ANALOG ON MICROFICHE BY ARRANGEMENT WITH DAVIS PUBLICATIONS, INC.

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A. E. van Vogt
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on sycamore hill

a personal view

by orson scott card

I never consciously made a decision to stop writing short fiction. I didn't even notice I had stopped until someone pointed it out. But then I wondered why.

It wasn't just because I was writing novels -- I wrote some of my best short stuff after finishing my first three books.

Maybe I stopped because I actually learned how to write novels. By the time I was through with HART'S HOPE, THE WORTHING CHRONICLE and all 1000 manuscript pages of WOMAN OF DESTINY, long treatments felt natural. I got used to having room to flesh things out. To linger a little. To build through lots of different scenes.

Even the few short stories I actually wrote in the last few years were really novel-length ideas struggling to get out. "The Changed Man and the King of Words," my last short story to see print, cost me tremendous effort just to cut it down to size. I left out a lot. And the story suffered from it. There were two stories before that, which were every bit as bad as the ones Ben Bova didn't buy when I was starting out. The story I wrote in the fall of 1983 was the first chapter of a novel. The editors noticed that fact and did not buy the story.

You think I didn't worry? I'm the guy who had forty-plus stories published from 1977 to 1981. Four Hugo nominations, two Nebula nominations, an absurdly high paper advance for my second novel. You know me -- the one Ted White accused of indecent exposure.

And now I couldn't write short stories anymore.

I couldn't even think of short stories.

Now, that may not seem like much of a worry. As long as I'm selling novels for a fair price, it's not as if my kids will starve because I've got nothing to send Ed Ferman.

I wasn't even reading short fiction; ever since I burned out doing my SFR short fiction review column, I hadn't opened a magazine more than a couple of times, just to read a story by a close friend. I don't think I read more than three SF novels I didn't write myself since 1982.

So when Mark Van Name and John Kessel invited me to the Sycamore Hill Writers Workshop, I wasn't sure. A workshop sounded good to me -- I liked teaching at Clarion, and really enjoyed teaching science fiction writing at the University

of Utah. Those were both workshops, and they were great. I said yes, definitely, count me in.

And then I realized that there was a key difference between those other workshops and Sycamore Hill. At Sycamore Hill, I was going to have to put my own stories at risk.

What stories?

I sent in my thirty-five bucks. I marked the days on the calendar. Then I buried myself in writing SPEAKER FOR THE DEAD and a script for the Hansen Planetarium. Halfway through SPEAKER I realized I had to throw away that draft -- a minor character had taken over and it wasn't the book I wanted to write. That was November. I started doing a long overdue story for George Martin's Campbell Award Winners anthology. This will be the story I take to Sycamore Hill, I thought.

But it wasn't a short story. A third of the way through, I knew it wasn't even a novella. If I told the whole story the way it needed to be told, it was a novel. I was doing it again. I still couldn't tell a short story if it killed me.

I left out chapters and kept it down to some 42,000 words and sent UNWYRM off to George. He told me he could tell where the chapters were missing and asked for changes. I made the changes, sent the new version, and then realized that I had half a novel sitting there and I knew what the other half was. Why not finish it? So I spent November and December turning UNWYRM into a novel, WYRMS. I finished it right after Christmas. Then I had to write a new version of the planetarium script and do my column for AHOY! magazine in a panic and here it was New Year's Day and I hadn't written anything short. I was committed to going to Sycamore Hill and I didn't have a story.

But all during the month of December, I had been working now and then on the stories I knew I wanted to write. They were set in Utah, the place I know best in all the world, in a future after a limited nuclear exchange and heavy biological warfare -- enough to decimate the population, cool the climate, but leave plenty of hope for the future. The Great Salt Lake was filling up, covering the most heavily populated parts of Utah.

My stories focused around people surviving. Not just any people, my people, Mormons, and the non-Mormons who live among them and must adapt to this curiously secular religion. I had first worked on this milieu back in 1980, when I outlined a play about a small

family of actors who traveled from town to town, putting on pageants on the back of their flatbed truck in exchange for gasoline and food and spare parts for the truck.

That story would be a novel, though, if I wrote it in prose, so I couldn't use it for the workshop. However, I had two more stories in that milieu vaguely plotted out. One was about a group of people who go to the half-submerged Salt Lake Temple to try to salvage some fabled gold that the Mormons were supposed to have hidden there. The other, set in a desert-edge community, was about a schoolteacher with cerebral palsy who uses a computer to synthesize his voice.

The only trouble was, it was Wednesday afternoon and when Gregg Keizer got off work that day at Computer Books, I would pick him up and drive us to Mark Van Name's house for the workshop. There was no time to write the story. There was barely time to finish up a couple of other things that absolutely had to be done so my family could eat while I was gone.

I was going to Sycamore Hill with nothing written, nothing at all. Oh, I could give them a fragment of WYRMS, but what a cheat that would be. I knew it was a good novel, of the kind I write, anyway, and what could they tell from a fragment? There was no way they'd want to read 300 pages, and no time to make eight copies even if they did.

So I packed up the PCjr -- not the computer I usually work on, but the only one I owned that was small enough to carry and big enough to run a real word processing program. Whatever I wrote at

I'M UTAH SMITH, ARCHAEOLOGIST.
ALSO A DEVOUT MORMON.



the workshop I could print out on Mark Van Name's PC, so I wouldn't have to worry about taking a printer with me. I loaded everything into the rust-corroded '76 Buick B-210 so my wife could have the Renault, and drove up the road to get Gregg.

It was cold and rainy. Not surprisingly, for January in North Carolina. But we'd been spoiled lately, three weeks of summery weather -- I'd taken walks in my shirt sleeves. I didn't even bring a heavy coat or a sweater, but I began to realize right away that this did nothing to prove my intelligence.

Gregg brought his Osborne and a suitcase; we stopped for gas and I bought six liters of Diet Coke. I had visions of maybe not eating anything but the Coke, to shed some of the 45 pounds I'd picked up working at a desk the last two years. We drove I-85 and US 70 and then I managed to forget the name of the road we were supposed to turn on after that. We ended up driving right on into Raleigh, which I knew was wrong; we found a payphone, called, found out we were closer than I thought. Rain and darkness make it hard to find your way to a house you've only visited in daylight. But I also knew my mind wasn't working altogether right.

I was too nervous to see straight. I had to write a couple of stories in the next few days, and then listen to a bunch of writers tell me that I obviously must have had a ghostwriter on "Unaccompanied Sonata;" these little dreklings couldn't possibly come from the same mind. Not just writers, published writers, and the ones I knew, I had great respect for. John Kessel had pulled off the miracle and got a Nebula, Greg Frost had a novel that had actually earned out its advance, Gregg Keizer and Mark Van Name had given me plenty of opportunities to know they were gifted writers and perceptive critics, and above all, every single person at the workshop had sold at least two short stories since I had last sold one.

It was dark and wet and the coldest night of the year. Everybody had already eaten spaghetti when we got there. There was some left, but true to my resolution to starve myself, I drank half a liter of Coke and dragged my stuff down into the basement. The temperature of the basement made me wonder if maybe it was heated with geothermal energy and the earth was cooling faster than anybody thought. I went back upstairs.

There were a bunch of people sitting around the table laughing

and enjoying themselves. Gregg Keizer, as usual, immediately fit in and was part of the conversation as if he'd been drinking beer with these guys every day for years. I, as usual, hadn't the faintest idea how to get into anything. I've long envied that quality in Gregg -- without calling attention to himself, he can slide into any situation and within minutes it's as if he belonged there all his life. The only time I'm instantly comfortable is when I'm expected to perform. Give me an audience of ten or ten thousand, and I know I can hold them as long as I want; I've never had stage fright in my life. I enjoy even more the kind of conversation where the idea is what matters and the level of thought is very high. But when I'm with ten people, many of them strangers, who are in party mode -- banter, with no serious topic of conversation to attack -- I don't belong. I've got no small talk. I always sound stupid to myself and the glazed look on other people's faces tells me they usually agree. So I did what I always do; I retreated, avoided the group at the table, busied myself with setting up the computer, putting my Cokes in the fridge, talking to Mark's wife Rama.

Finally things got structured for a minute and I could fit in. We all met together long enough to decide whose stories would be done which days. This was Wednesday night. Tomorrow we'd do only two stories, one from Jim Kelly and one from Greg Frost. We set up four a day for Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday. Since I hadn't written a story yet -- the only one who had come unprepared -- they scheduled my first one for Saturday. I couldn't even tell them a title. Everyone was very polite about it. But I was sure that behind their smiles they were all calculating exactly how many pounds I was overweight. "Enough extra flesh on this boy to create four small dogs, or perhaps a third-grader. And he has the gall not to bring a story."

You're paranoid, I told myself. Get a grip on yourself, I said. Get me the hell out of here, I answered, get me back to where my wife and children cooperate to sustain the illusion that I'm a competent human being.

I took the stories for tomorrow -- and the next day -- and escaped into the basement.

As I lay there, my body providing the major source of heat for the room, it began to dawn on me that something was rotten in the atmosphere. Dear Teela Brown, the Van Names' most socially aloof

cat, had a look of innocence and complacency that was not to be believed. Was it so? Yes, indeed, a little pile of kitty poo in my boudoir. It was going to be a long night.

Houses in North Carolina are designed for summer. Lots of air circulating through the walls, that sort of thing. This is not as comfortable during a real cold snap. By morning I felt like I had spent the night in Gulag, stiff and cold. Ten people showering doesn't leave a lot of hot water either, and I had stayed up so late reading stories that I was not exactly the first to shower.

So I was not feeling at my best when we gathered around a group of tables in the dining room at ten o'clock. John Kessel read a formal statement but couldn't keep a straight face through the whole thing. We had some pretty simple rules. Everybody got a turn to talk about the story except the author, who kept his mouth shut until it was all over. After everybody had spoken, the author could then answer, if he was capable of speech.

And I mean he. About as many women as men had been invited, but each for her own reason, the female writers had all declined. So it was just us guys. The old locker room. I've never been half as comfortable with men as with women. Locker rooms always smelled like sweat and old spattered urine to me.

To my relief, this was no football team. Greg Frost, for instance, will be unable to keep a straight face in his coffin. Allen Wild has a pony tail down to here. Scott Sanders looks like a college professor among a bunch of freshmen who surprise him by being so young. Jim Kelly has a beatific grace and looks as sensitive as the young Peter O'Toole. Steve Carper looks like he's doing complex logarithms in his head, just for fun, and when he runs across an especially good one it's all he can do to keep from laughing. Not what you expect to find in the average locker room -- nobody was taped up and slobbering; nobody was mumbling, "Kill. Kill."

The most forbidding-looking guys at the table I already felt pretty comfortable with: John Kessel, spectral and intense, with more than a hint of maniacal intelligence. Mark Van Name, the only person there who I knew felt as vulnerable as me, but who always seems confident enough to perform brain surgery with blinders. And Gregg Keizer, whom I had met in my

writing class at the U of U (not that I had anything to tell him); even then, whenever I looked at him I had the vague feeling that I had just said something stupid but out of kindness he wasn't going to tell anybody. It took years, but I finally realized that this impression was absolutely right.

One thing I've always hated in bad workshop situations is when the critics vie with each other for the cleverest evisceration of the victim. The criticism of the first story made it clear that this group was not going to do that. Oh, there was some humor, but there was never any cruelty. I saw no evidence that anyone ever spoke without considering the feelings of the writer hearing the criticism.

And yet no one was ever sparing, either. If we hated a story, we said so. We also said why. And best of all, the comments were intelligent. When somebody pointed out something that I hadn't noticed, I always felt a little embarrassed that I hadn't noticed it. These guys knew how to read.

And I was going to give them a story?

There was only one bit of tension at that first criticism session. One of the writers did start making some comments that were on the level of, "You said here, 'Her eyes fell on the paper he held,' and I thought, There they go, plop-plop." I really hate that sort of criticism. In the first place, the



metaphorical use of eyes for gaze is perfectly legitimate. In the second place, nobody ever notices those things if they're involved in the story; they are a symptom of a failure to engage the attention and belief of the reader, not a problem per se. So I broke in and said so. I thought I was saying it politely. Afterward I realized that I had been brusque and had, in effect, put down one of the most perceptive and experienced critics at the table. I had visions of being put out of the workshop with bell, book and candle. Instead, because he was a perfect gentleman, he withered me with a forgiving look and went on. But the point was taken: Never again in the workshop did anybody make that kind of criticism of the language of a story.

After the first story, everybody else attacked an incredible pile of cold cuts; I, still determined to be ascetic, retreated to the basement. It was too cold to type, but I did it anyway, every now and then pleading with Mr. Scrooge to buy more coal. Actually, the PCjunior put off enough heat to stave off frostbite.

A funny thing happened as I was writing the story. I had just finished listening to a bunch of highly intelligent and talented men criticize a story. It was exciting, it made me feel alert, awake to the possibility of the story. And so I wrote, I began to feel at ease in the story as I hadn't with a short story for years. It came fast.

By the time 2:00 rolled around, I had the story about a third done. I had worked out a heavily expository opening in such a way that the reader only realizes the teacher is speaking through a computer and has cerebral palsy in a few gradual steps. I was worried, though -- to get some of the history and some of the social milieu across, I had included the teacher's lecture. Broken up with some tension between him and a student, but a lecture's a lecture no matter how you juice it up, and I was afraid it would be boring. Still, I couldn't see any other way. So I left it in.

We came back and did another story. This was a fairly artsy and ambitious one, interspersing lectures on Stonehenge with a cloning/incest/decadent-drug-society story. Just the kind of thing that makes me want to abolish the teaching of contemporary literature classes in universities. I mean, the writing was excellent, but the story took forever just to get from A to B. Like NEW YORKER stuff. But I could not help suspecting that part of the reason it put me off was be-

cause I have zero sympathy whatsoever with people who take drugs. I'm as compulsive as the next guy -- you don't get overweight by ignoring candy bars and driving past Burger King without stopping -- but people who deliberately wipe out their brains get no tears of sympathy from me when they wake up and discover they've got no mind. That's part of why I hated NEURON-MANCER.

Then, as the others commented on the story, I began to see virtues in it that I had been blind to, before. I also began to realize that they also saw the flaws I saw. That was when I really began to trust them to be good critics -- they saw what wasn't working in the story, and yet they also saw the power in it that made the writer want to tell the story in the first place. That was both comforting and frightening. When I finished my story, I wouldn't be casting it among fools; but if they hated it, I'd be compelled to believe them.

They all went out to dinner that night. I had deliberately brought only about ten bucks with me, to avoid the temptation to do exactly that. I never did go out to dinner with them on the nights they went. And it wasn't just because I had to finish a story, or because I didn't have much money, or because I wanted to lose weight. It was because I still was afraid of situations where there was no subject matter to discuss.

When I said I had no small talk, that really wasn't true. I can slip right in and be comfortable with any group of my own community. But this wasn't my community. These guys were Americans, not Mormons; those of us who grew up in Mormon society and remain intensely involved are only nominally members of the American community. We can fake it, but we're always speaking a foreign language. Only when we get with fellow Saints are we truly at home. If it had been a group of ten Mormons, I wouldn't have had any problem. We'd have a common fund of experience, speak the same language, share some of the same concerns. We could make jokes about the Mormon culture, talk seriously about things that you can only discuss with someone who shares the same faith. With this group though, relaxing would be much, much harder. I trusted their criticism, but once we were removed from the context of storytelling, they were gentiles and I would end up sitting and saying nothing or too much all night, feeling less and less comfortable. I know this from experience. So I was just as happy not to go.



Instead I stayed home and finished "The Fringe." The teacher betrayed the ring of smugglers and embezzlers; their sons left the teacher to die in a desert gully that would surely flood in the heavy rain that was coming. He struggled to climb only a few feet and the pageant wagon people that I'll use later in the long story came and rescued him. There's more to it than that, but by the end I felt worn out but exhilarated. I had written a short story. I had not left anything out, and it was definitely under 7500 words. Best of all, it was finished.

At the same time I was worried. This story, I thought, was probably OK; I wouldn't embarrass myself. But the second story -- it depended completely on exactly that sense of belonging or not-belonging that had kept me away from the theme that night. In fact, the comradeship, the exclusiveness of people who have the same faith and share the same culture was the subject of the story. I began to think I wouldn't try to write the second one. I wasn't sure I could bring it off, and if I failed, it would be excruciating, because it would be my own people who would be made to look ridiculous or unintelligible.

I wondered if anybody else there was feeling the same level of anxiety. I saw a few signs of nervousness, but most seemed relaxed and comfortable.

We had a new face -- Tim Sullivan had decided to drive down from DC and join the workshop at the last minute. He was a welcome addition, if only because he made Greg Frost seem solemn by contrast. The two of them sat together from then on during critique sessions, and the Greg & Tim comedy show kept us from getting too serious about Literature, for which we were mostly grateful.

Steve Carper had a story that morning that treated the void of space like a substance, which could randomly penetrate and turn things into obsidian; a weird and frightening concept. I had read Greg Keizer's story in an earlier version; it was about a human in an alien concentration camp which consisted of a perfect but unpopulated reproduction of Paris; one of Gregg's best. Allen Wold had a fun ghoulish-meets-vampire story, but it contained a sentence about heavy clouds releasing their load, which had struck some people as scatolog-

ically hilarious the night before -- including me. There were some clown-dump jokes before the session began.

But the knockout was Scott Sanders' "Ascension." Funny, disconcerting, literary without being dull for even a moment. We all wished we had written it. We even speculated that he was bound to sell it right away; unless he sent it to Ellen Datlow. I pointed out, who would reject it because of the punctuation.

That night they all went to have dinner and see a movie. I was tempted, but it was an old Hitchcock, one of the ones they've just re-released, and I wasn't in the mood for tension. So I stayed and worked for a while, writing the beginning of "Salvage" but mostly reading the stories for Saturday. Then I took off and drove in to Raleigh and saw JOHNNY DANGEROUSLY. An unbelievably stupid movie -- just what I needed.

Alas, when I came home, they were still gone, the house was locked up, and I couldn't get in. Jim Kelly and John Kessel had still been there talking to Jim Frenkel on the phone when I left; but of course they had finished and gone to join the others.

I contemplated sitting in my car with the engine running for a while. Instead I broke all my resolutions, drove to Burger King and ate more than God ever meant man to eat. That was it for my money supply, but by then I was hungry. I had a notebook with me too, and all of a sudden things fell into place for me with SPEAKER FOR THE DEAD. I knew how to begin the thing -- all my wonderful middles never worked because the beginning was totally wrong. And now it was right. I practically wrote the whole first chapter in about five hours, the smell of Cheeseburger Deluxe giving me an empty-calorie high. Who says Mormons can't have fun?

There was no doubt in my mind now. No matter what happened, this workshop had been worth it. I had written a story in about five hours, one that I thought had a decent chance of working; and now I had unknotted a novel that had been doing dirt to me for nearly three years.

On Saturday, I was last. Gregg Keizer's second story was a powerful fantasy about a woman who con-

jured the wind for a sailing ship by dripping her own blood into the sea. Mark Van Name had a story about a dream therapist working her way back to the painful secrets a nearly catatonic little girl was hiding from. John Kessel had a piece of his first solo novel, which was so beautifully written that it made me want to kill him, remembering the botch I made of my first novel. Even his synopsis was brilliant -- we all suggested he ought to try to get it published as is. It was filled with the author's self-questioning -- should I have this happen, or is the plot getting out of hand? There were some problems, of course, since it was a first draft, but it was plain that Kessel's debut as a novelist will be stunning.

I tried to be intelligent in my comments on their stories, but the truth is I could hardly keep my mind off my own. I kept trying to read Scott Sanders' notes on my story -- it was on top of his stack -- without letting anybody else notice that I was doing it.

When they got to my story, they were very kind; but it occurred to me for the first time that they thought my having written the story in a few hours right at the workshop was kind of a stunt. Actually, I always write quickly -- when I know what to write. I could not think up a story and write it in five hours. I have to think about it -- and not think about it -- for weeks, sometimes months or years; but when it's ready, it comes out in a burst. And this workshop had helped me more than they understood -- that story had not been ready when I arrived, but by the time I wrote it, the intensity of the concentration on storytelling, the ambient talent and intelligence, all had had a profound effect on me. It's not that it reawakened my old understanding of how to write stories. "The Fringe" was not like what I had written before. Most of my old stories, if I were writing them now, would have been novels this time. But "The Fringe" had to be a story. It was not an accidental story, it was an inevitable one.

That night we went to John Kessel's and Sue Hall's place for a stuff-it-yourself baked potato dinner. I had no shame; I ate two, to celebrate the vast relief that my story had passed muster.

We also restrained ourselves from murdering Scott Sanders: The February ASIMOV'S had just arrived, and there was the story we had critiqued only the day before -- that we had been sure he would soon

get published -- and lo! it was a miracle. ASIMOV'S had already fulfilled our prophecy. Not only that, but when he was directly questioned he admitted that his other story, which we were going to critique the next morning, had also been sold -- to the redoubtable Ellen Datlow. He was sheepish, and vowed that our criticism really was helpful; he still regarded the stories as works in progress. Besides, these were the only two SF stories he had written in recent years; most of his stories were mainstream. He was so sweet about it that we all agreed to forgive him, or at least pretend to. Truth was, his criticism of other stories was so perceptive and helpful that we should have paid him to come even if he didn't bring any stories at all. Still, it took some of the fun out of the criticism, to know that the stories had been sold. My only consolation was that he had sold the second one to OMNI, so he still had no idea whether it was publishable or not.

That night I was feeling pretty good, now that my first story had been found acceptable. I began to realize that a lot of my feeling of awkwardness was because of my uncertainty about my stories. I did not feel like hiding in the basement anymore. After reading the next day's stories, I wandered upstairs in my bathrobe. A lot of them were sitting around the tables while Mark Van Name read passages from Joe Bob's movie review column. The satire was bitter and delicious, and we laughed till we cried.

But on Sunday, I was burned out. Everything I said sounded stupid to me. Later, calm reflection assured me that my comments were indeed stupid. Fortunately, I noticed it in time and left most of the criticism to the people who were still making sense. We told Scott Sanders why his hunters-in-a-game-preserve-world story needed drastic revision, which it would never get unless the art department at OMNI decided they needed thirty lines cut out to make it come even with the bottom of the page. Actually, I loved the story, but I couldn't tell him that, could I? Not when he'd already spent the lousy two thousand bucks.)

Steve Carper had a comic story told as a series of articles in different magazines. Tim Sullivan's "I Was a Teenage Dinosaur" was not comic; but a story that begins with a guy running over a dog, taking the bleeding animal home with him, putting it in his bed for the night, and waking up to find it dead beside him -- my kind of story.



Poor Greg Frost made the mistake of calling his comic mystery story "Oobidids," which kept getting sung as "Oo-be-doo-be-doo" in our best Frank Sinatra voices -- but he did create the most engaging pair of aliens I have ever read in SF, two little furballs that copulate constantly in the messiest possible fashion.

That night I finished "The Temple Salvage Expedition" and Gregg Keizer and I drove back to Greensboro. He had to work the next day, so he'd miss the last day of the workshop; Scott Sanders and Steve Carper also left early to meet Monday commitments.

I managed to make a wrong turn on the way through Durham. I never get lost unless Gregg's in the car. Another bad guess took us halfway to Chapel Hill. I'm not as mindless as this sounds -- you have to have driven in North Carolina to understand. Signs are regularly posted just after the turn they warn you about. Lanes of traffic suddenly veer off and become highways going in the wrong direction. They put up highway number signs only if they feel like it. It's the locals' way of letting us Yankee carpebaggers know that we aren't as smart as we all think we are.

We did get home. My kids were asleep; Kristine wasn't, but I was terrible company anyway. I spent an hour getting the story to print out and then xeroxing the copies I'd need. Finally we were able to talk. I woke the kids up enough to tell them I was home -- Emily had been waking up with nightmares every night I was gone. Charlie did his normal midnight-is-really-morning routine, and seemed happy to see me. It is good to remember that the workshop wasn't the real world. It seemed hard to believe, though, that I had only been gone four nights and days. The experience had been so intense it seemed like much longer.

Bright and early I was back on the road to Sycamore Hill. Jim Kelly had finished his story only the night before, and I hadn't got a copy yet -- I had to get there in time to read it before the 11:00 session. I got there and handed around my story, and then settled down to read Jim's "Rat." In five minutes I was in love. It was simply one of the most wonderful stories I've ever read. And he had written the last half of it on Mark's PC/XT upstairs -- the other story that was written, in part, at Sycamore Hill. It's the story of a rat who is smuggling drugs; he swallowed several ampules of it and now is doing his best not to defecate them until he can get

safely back to his apartment -- which ain't easy. Making a rat believable as the protagonist of an urban drug-smuggling story ain't easy, either, but Jim did it. You'll notice the story when it's published, believe me.



Allen Wold's story was an admitted item of juvenilia -- he has not written very many short stories in his life, and all his published work is in novels. I thought of going back to my trunk and pulling out some of my earliest plays, and I decided that by contrast Allen's early stuff looked very, very good.

They were kind to "Savage." The thing that had worried me most -- that the intensity of the religious elements in it would put them off -- turned out not to be a problem at all. Though few there had particularly strong religious impulses, the sense of holiness that the story depended on seemed to work.

I realized then, that this milieu -- of Mormon country underwater, the survivors struggling to keep civilization alive -- was viable; more important, I was viable. I had written two presentable short stories for the first time in years I felt as good as I had actually lost all 45 pounds while eating as much as I wanted.

We spent the afternoon cleaning up the mess we had made of Mark's house. The carpet was new enough that all our footscuffing had raised more furballs on the carpet than a thousand cats. We vacuumed, moved beds out into the garage, and set up for a party for local fans that was scheduled for that evening -- the formal ending of Sycamore Hill. The party was a party -- I figured I wouldn't be good for anything until I found some people who wanted to talk about things they really cared about; I do know how to listen.

But I was still cresting from the exhilaration of the workshop -- I don't know if I seemed stoned to anybody else, but I was as close to manic as a good Mormon is allowed to get. The party ended up being a lot of fun.

And then I went home.

I spent the next several days doing the revisions that the workshop had suggested; then I sent the stories off to my agent. Ordinarily I would have sent them to the magazines myself, but at least one of them I figured had a fair shot at getting into a non-genre magazine, and Barbara Bova handles my non-genre short fiction sales. Besides, I wanted to show off to both Ben and Barbara that I was actually doing stories again. I even went crazy enough to make some more copies and send a few to other people -- a college dean in Utah who has been following my fiction; a critic for a Mormon intellectual journal who had just done a thoughtful piece on science fiction; a few others. What they thought, getting a story out of the blue like that, I have no idea -- but I was celebrating.

I don't much care who buys them, actually (though I care very much that someone does). The workshop's response to the story was better than a check. In five days I learned to trust their judgment and value their good opinion. I don't want to get maudlin about this, but they made a real difference in my writing -- and my confidence about my writing -- in those few days. We didn't become intimate friends; we're not going to sell our houses so we can live close together from now on, or anything like that (though, come to think of it, Mark's hot tub might be worth living closer to).

We exchanged gifts that to me, at least, came at a crucial moment. The burst of creative energy that I unleashed in me is still going. I know I'll coast back down to normal after a while, but then maybe it'll be time for the second annual Sycamore Hill Writers' Workshop. With any luck I won't be a paranoid wreck coming into the conference -- but if that's what it takes to get the results I got, I'll be ready.

I can start warming up now: What if they don't let me back? What if they hold the second annual Sycamore Hill and don't tell me till it's over? What if they thought my criticisms were so stupid that they invite everybody else and leave me out?

Ah. Back to normal. Feels so good.

K.W. Jeter is best known as the author of the infamously controversial *DR. ADDER*. He was also one of Philip K. Dick's closest friends in the last year of the life of that widely respected writer. That was the basis for an afternoon's extensive discussion in Mr. Jeter's Nob Hill San Francisco apartment, on October 27, 1984. However, in the course of editing the interview (down to a mere 15,000 words) for publication in the Philip K. Dick Society Newsletter (Issue #5, December 1984, write to: PKDS, Box 611, Glen Ellen, CA 95442), some valuable portions had to be sacrificed. In particular, it seemed a shame not to be able to share the author's confidences regarding *DR. ADDER*. Adding a sense of urgency to this process was the fact that K.W. Jeter and his wife Gerry were planning to relocate to Spain in November, making future opportunities for interviews unlikely.

SFR: There seems to be a lot of violence in your writing in *DR. ADDER* and again in *SOUL EATER*; it seems to be focused on women. I gave that some thought, and what I read in your books was more of someone who was disgusted by it than someone who felt it himself.

JETER: Yeah, it takes a certain amount of perception, which I think would be unlikely in a real doctrinaire feminist, but it's easier to read *DR. ADDER* as an anti-male book than as an anti-female book.

SFR: That's exactly what I'm saying.

JETER: I saw that. It will be ironic if I wind up with this misogynist label applied to me. I know I'm running that risk. One of the next books I'm hoping to do for TOR is another horror novel which will be called *WANTIS*. When I sent the outline for it out to my agent, I said, "Look, I know what I'm risking here, that a lot of people with blinders on about these kinds of things are going to

say, "This, on top of *DR. ADDER* really proves that K.W. Jeter is a woman-hater, he's got some kind of kink, he likes to talk about women being degraded and mutilated and killed." But it's completely the reverse. If I write about those things in horror novels (and to some degree *DR. ADDER* is a horror novel), it's 'cause those things horrified me.

SFR: Exactly. But people think you make it up! That's another point, too, that ---

JETER: Yeah, that these things wouldn't exist if people like me didn't talk about them. Then loonies read my books and say, "That sounds like fun. Let's do that." Which is hardly, probably never, the case. Most sexual maniacs, murderers, mutilators, all this sort of thing, usually can come up with their ideas themselves, out of their own heads. A few cases have been documented about somebody being inspired by something. There was a German sex murderer who got worked up into doing his deeds by going to the Catholic High Mass. This got him worked up and he'd go out and kill somebody, a woman.

But the whole business of what goes on in *DR. ADDER* -- I wrote about it because it was a puzzle to me. It still is a puzzle to me why there is such a capacity for -- both men and women -- to voluntarily degrade themselves. What happens to some, not all, but some of the women in *DR. ADDER* is really a metaphor for a condition that men and women in real life have, that voluntary drive towards degradation and subjection to another personality. And as it relates to women, it was really puzzling to me because of my personal background as a kid.

Looking back on it now, I see that I had an unusual family situation when it comes to how women were regarded. I was raised by blue collar Amazons. My mother and her sisters (quite a few of them, my aunts), were just a really strikingly unusual group of women. Especially given their soc-



ial class, blue collar working class.

These were women who were extraordinarily gutsy and self-motivated. Whatever they put their minds to they pretty much did. And it wasn't until I grew up and realized that other people didn't have mothers and aunts like I did that I realized it was something unusual. It's perfectly normal for me to think of women as people, 'cause that's how I grew up.

My wife claims that I have more women friends that I relate to on a real friendship level than I do men friends. I think that stems from the way I was raised as a kid, that I was surrounded by these women, my mother and my aunts, who didn't shrink from whatever project they took it into their heads to undertake.

I remember coming home when I was in junior high school, either eighth grade or ninth grade -- I came home from school and the whole house was going *kachunka kachunka kachunka kachunka* -- *chunka*, y'know, big machinery noises. I thought, "What the hell?" I wandered to the back of the house and my mother and my aunt Peggy had a full-scale full-bore printing press going. I mean, not just some little hand-cranked mimeograph or little letter press that you do in the books of poetry on, I'm talking about a printing press, the size of a Volkswagen. The whole thing, offset press, professional layout.

My mother had been working at the publications department of the local school district. She heard about a printing press for sale from the repair man who came around to service the school district's machines. She bought it. She and my aunt went in together on it, had it delivered home, while my father was out working. She and her sister had just decided to go into the printing business. They were always doing this kind of thing. This didn't faze me. I just came home, saw the printing press and thought, "Hey, this looks like fun." So I would play around with it a little bit too.

It wasn't until I was older, as I said, that I realized that other people's mothers didn't go out and buy printing presses. When the big feminist thing started happening in the 60s, reading people's accounts of growing up female in *MS. MAGAZINE*, and all these social expectations about how women weren't supposed to do these sorts of things, it was like reading accounts of life on Mars. I didn't see it happening around me, but I guess this is the norm.

SFR: Well, I think that it's true -- this is my opinion, but others hold it as well -- that one of the major limitations imposed on women is imposed by women themselves.

JETER: Absolutely. But I realize that some of the things that my mother and my aunts did they had to do on their own because they could not get professional level employment. They couldn't have gotten a job in a printing plant. So there were some social barriers. But in terms of just undertaking things, that mental attitude of being a shrinking violet -- in my case, I never saw it. When I see this kind of thing as a social norm, it still is very puzzling to me. And that was part of the genesis of the things in *DR. ADDER*. If I wrote about women degrading themselves, or allowing themselves to be degraded, it was because that is genuinely puzzling to me.

SFR: Yes, I can see that very clearly. In fact, with all the graphic demonstrative aspects of *DR. ADDER* --

JETER: Graphic, I'll object to. I don't think there's any graphic depiction there.

SFR: You mean the actual results of it or --

JETER: Oh, okay, there is some depiction, but even then it's spoken of in very metaphoric terms. You don't really see any of the actual acts of amputation. You don't even see any actual sexual acts in the book.



SFR: Yeah, there aren't pages and pages of lurid description. In fact, it's interesting that in *DR. ADDER*, the most profound degradation for a woman is not to have all four limbs lopped off and her anatomy surgically changed to suit some perverse whim. It's junkie balling, where they deny their self and their body becomes an artifact for other people. I think that that's as good a defense of the ideas that you were putting forth as anything.

JETER: The whole notion of the sexual attractiveness of amputation probably has a very limited appeal. The fact that I was able to discover that letter to *PENTHOUSE* magazine, which I actually discovered after I had written the book, the fact that there are people who are sexually stimulated by amputation, I'm sure that's a very limited phenomenon. To me, there's more metaphoric value. That is, a sym-

bol of the whole process of viewing the other person as an object. As an object that can be modified and changed according to your tastes. With that point of view, the person's mind itself becomes an object or part of an object just as the leg is. If you can cut off the leg, you can cut off the mind, if that's something that is more suitable to your tastes. That's really a metaphor for a whole category of sexual relationships that certainly includes the way that some women look at men.

Speaking of which, my wife, for laughs more than anything else, will buy an issue of *COSMOPOLITAN* magazine every once in a while. She's not that kind of person, though. We both think it's really a very funny magazine, but you have to have a cynical sense of humor. 'Cause if you start taking it seriously and really look at what the magazine says, it has a sexual attitude that is equivalent to, if not worse than, the sexual attitudes of the men in *DR. ADDER*. The magazine, month after month, is stuffed with articles and cartoons that completely reflect the attitude of one sex looking at the members of the other sex with just that kind of rat-like objectifying approach, turning the other person into a thing which can then be exploited for either monetary or sexual advantage.

SFR: It's very manipulative in tone.

JETER: Oh, yeah! To me, that is horrifying. That magazine is more horrifying than any level of general circulation men's magazines, *HUSTLER*, *PENTHOUSE*, anything like that. Those magazines seem quite healthy --

SFR: By comparison. Well, they're less subversive. When you approach them, you know what you're getting. They have a clear identity which shapes your attitude, which doesn't happen with something that seems to be innocent.

JETER: There's a certain stupid naive boys larking about in the mudpit, or we know it's dirty and filthy but ain't it fun, essentially harmless, she asked for it anyway and hey she had a good time attitude in the men's magazines which some people profess to be so horrified by. Whereas, *COSMOPOLITAN* would not get banned under any of the proposed anti-pornography legislation that is apparently getting through some state legislatures. It wouldn't trigger any of those criminal penalties. But to my mind, it is more degrading to both the women who read it and take it seriously and the men they then become involved with, than things

that would get banned, like PENT-HOUSE and HUSTLER. It's odd. That kind of attitude, represented metaphorically by the sexual relationships in DR. ADDER, operates at a level of disguise that is very hard to detect. Most people don't realize.



SFR: That was what was so exciting about the book. When I started reading it, I remember standing up and paging through it, deciding whether or not to read it in earnest. And I was on the fourth page, I think, and already they were in the chicken brothel ---

JETER: My books move pretty fast.

SFR: I thought, this is just bizarre. I can't believe that I'm actually reading this. And it was not that I was shocked at the content, but rather that it had been published at all. It denied all my expectations of what would be in any book's pages. Then, that aspect held my interest, the idea that here was a book that on each page, I could not possibly know in advance what I was going to be getting.

JETER: Mission accomplished, then.

SFR: As I got deeper into it, it was very thought-provoking. Ultimately, that's what drove me to read it again, and now more recently, a third time. The promise in it of a very effective analytical approach for thinking about things that most people tend not to think about, that we try not to acknowledge.

JETER: I think that for a lot of people, this subject just triggers a blanket condemnation, that it's not supposed to be thought about. You're just supposed to detect it and kill it and be done with it. There really isn't any attempt to find out why, or what it means that these things exist. Or what general phenomena are these things subsets of.

Did you read the Spinrad review of DR. ADDER?

SFR: No, I haven't. Where did he review it?

JETER: ASIMOV'S. Isn't that funny? He says something in his review that I'm really glad about. I'm also really glad that Spinrad reviewed the book because in some ways, more even than Phil's stuff, Spinrad was more of an inspiration for DR. ADDER. BUG JACK BARRON, in particular. That shows up more than anything else, that deliberate piss-you-off attitude. In the review, Spinrad, he says "one feels empathy for characters that would

no doubt send one fleeing in terror and loathing were they to be encountered in real life." I was glad that he had picked up on that, because I had that conscious goal in mind.

I wanted to make sympathetic people that were usually just written off as purely dislikable, those are the villains, and that's all you need to know about them. That is how most books, especially in genre fiction, treat that kind of character. That's just a bad person and that's a given. A book then essentially deals with how to get around or deal with those kinds of people. I thought it was a worthwhile goal to take people you would never be sympathetic with in real life, and use the medium of the book to project yourself into those people's minds and find out why they work like that. This is something that is going to come out more in some of my future books.

SFR: It does come out again in SOUL EATER, I think.

JETER: It comes out in SOUL EATER, yes, but it's going to come out very strongly in this book called MANTIS, which I'm hoping will be another horror/suspense novel for TOR. It's a little ways down the road; it'd be about the fourth book I'd be contracted for right now. It's very much a simple story where the manner of presentation makes it complex because it's told -- and you know, I'm certainly not the first person to do this -- within the viewpoint of the person doing the horrible things. But what I think what's going to make this book unusual is that the person is much more analytical about why he does these things. The usual case, I think, such a character is portrayed as simply being stupid. He doesn't have an analytical grasp of why he's doing these things. He just accepts them as the things he does. He sees them as okay, so what's the problem?

SFR: There's a parallel to that in people who are self-destructive, who are constantly asking themselves, "Why do I do this? Why do I do this? I keep doing the same things again and again." And you are saying that you're going to externalize that.

JETER: Yeah. All sorts of compulsive behavior have that in common. I've fought a tendency all my life, towards procrastination. With a depressive personality, which I don't regard as fixed, (I have an ideology about these things that they can be changed), like most people who have habits or compulsive behavior that they wrestle with, a large part of that wrestle-

ing is sitting there thinking, "Why do I do this? Why don't I get out of bed and do the things I want to do and not lie here like a slug?" On and on and on and on. Everybody does that sort of thing. Alcoholics do it; drug addicts do it.

SFR: So why not some hell-bent violent monster?

JETER: Yeah. Why not a kind of person who's got a definitely violent link? Especially in this book, MANTIS, it's going to be a sharply divided personality. In one person doing what Phil did in three people in VALIS, where the characteristics are separated out for better clarity.

When I sent the outline to my agent, I warned him. I said, "Look, I realize this is going to cause trouble for us because some people, who aren't very perceptive or who are very doctrinaire about these issues, are going to say, 'Obviously, K.W. Jeter grooves on this kind of behavior, if he can write this kind of book where he makes this character sympathetic because he actually likes that behavior himself.' I'm going to reap a harvest of people kicking me around on that basis.

SFR: Not necessarily. I think that anybody's audience is split. They're not all one way or the other.

JETER: Oh, sure, I probably won't get into any more trouble than everybody does. But as soon as you get your name on anything, there are some people who are going to read everything else you write as just more of the same.

SFR: Well, I don't think that DR. ADDER is pornographic at all. Especially since most of whatever happens that could be considered pornographic is in your head, triggered by the text. In fact, I think that's what may have disappointed some people, that after wanting to read it for so long, then getting it in their hands, it wasn't as scathing as they thought it would be. It didn't burn in their hands the way they expected.



JETER: I never intended it to have that kind of a build-up around it. I thought I was writing something straightforward, and normal -- normal, within the new wave confines that I had thought would be the new norms for science fiction then. And if I had been a writer who had already published other things and who had some kind of reputation, if it hadn't been my

first book -- that more than anything else impeded its publication. It would have been a very easy for Phil to have gotten a book like that published.

SFR: True. I'd have to agree there. But part of it has been the financial risk the publishers thought they might be taking with an unknown author and a very bizarre property. Whether people would buy it and whether there would be a backlash against it as well, that was the big risk.

JETER: Oh, absolutely. Especially since right at the time that I put it out on the market, trying to sell it, the interest rates started going up and the economy went into a big slump. Publishers operate on a margin that is dictated by the business conditions, primarily the interest rates. That's where they get their operating capital. And if they realistically project a sales return on a book that is less than the interest rate, then they can't publish it. If you expect them to publish it, you are expecting them to do something against their own business interests. That's hard.

There is a publisher in England, and I actually talked with the editor when I was in London years ago, and he really, really, really wanted to publish it. But he had the expectation, the problem, that here was the interest rate which in that period in England was astronomically high -- it was that kind of interest rate that brought in the Thatcher government -- and here was the rate at which he could realistically expect the book to sell, a book by an unknown writer. The discrepancy between the two was so great that he just couldn't do it. To ask him to do it was to ask him to risk losing his job.

I felt a wave of sympathy for this man. He didn't go into publishing to get rich, with a sheer gross mercenary attitude. No-body goes into publishing with that kind of expectation. If they want to do that, they're better off selling insurance. He went into publishing with a certain amount of idealism. There were books that he wanted to publish, and he had been able to publish some of them. And here was another book he wanted to publish, but he just could not. He was as constrained by factors as real as the factors of gravity keep you from flying. Economic factors are as hard and rig-

id and cruel as physical factors, that if you jump off the edge of a building you're going to break your leg.

We were in a pub -- he could not buy my book, so he took me out for a drink -- and he just kept shaking his head saying, "I can't do it, I can't do it. There's no way I can do it. It's what I want to do, it's what I went into publishing to do, but I can't do it." Now, maybe he can do it. We're hoping that because DR. ADDER has now been published over here, and has had pretty good sales and pretty good reviews, and I have had other books published since then, and there will be a British sale pretty soon ...

SFR: I tried to research you, by the way, to find out what other books you had written. I was only personally aware of three: DR. ADDER, MORLOCK NIGHT and SOUL EATER. In fact, you've written others. Right?

JETER: There were two Laser books. Roger Elwood contacted me and said, "Hey, we need lots of material. Do you know any other guys?" And I said, "Well, there's a guy I went to college with, and I read a couple of short stories of his while I was in college. Maybe he could do a book for you, too." That was Tim, Tim Powers. He did two Laser novels also. Then, by that time, the Laser series folded and we went on to bigger and better things, eventually. Well, both of us went through one period where we didn't get anything else published.

SFR: And MORLOCK NIGHT came then, after the two Laser Series novels? I remember laughing out loud when I reached the point in MORLOCK NIGHT where they go down in the sewers. Then they're down there forever. And I thought to myself, THIS IS so much like what happened in DR. ADDER. At some point they go down in the sewers, and God they're just down in those sewers for the longest time, until the next phase of the novel.

Sewers provide for you or whoever, an interesting freedom in that you're not talking about some extra-galactic environment, you're talking about something that is very much down to earth, but at the same time, you can make up almost anything you want about it. After all, who knows anything about sewers? In fact, from my own guesses, I wouldn't suppose that they are all that subterranean. How many layers down could a sewer system actually go? Especially in L.A.



JETER: Certainly not to the point of there being a submerged Atlantis. But a lot of the stuff about the sewers that's in MORLOCK NIGHT is accurate, based upon Mayhew (Henry Mayhew, Victorian author of the four-volume set, LONDON LABOUR AND THE LONDON POOR). There were large numbers of people who made their living, one way or another, from the London sewers. One of the really fascinating things in this Mayhew book is that Victorian London, in terms of recycling -- these people that do these great organizations to recycle your trash and your deposit bottles and that sort of thing, that's nothing compared to the way life was in Victorian London for some people. There were people who engaged in the recycling business of dog shit. Really. They actually made a living combing the streets looking for dog shit, which was then used in tanning leather. And it was referred to with a funny euphemism. These people weren't looking for dog shit. They called it pure. Obviously short for pure dog shit. They called themselves pure hunters and they would comb the streets picking up all the dog shit they could find, and then selling it to leather tanners.

Apparently, dog shit isn't used for tanning leather anymore, but connoisseurs of leather, like professional tanners back in Victorian England, could actually tell the quality of the leather by smelling it and tasting it, determine what quality and quantity of dog shit was used in it.

SFR: How fascinating.

JETER: So, part of what shows up in MORLOCK NIGHT, all the business with the sewers, is something I just found very interesting in these non-fiction accounts of Victorian England. The fact that sewers keep showing up in DR. ADDER and MORLOCK NIGHT, is because what you said about them is certainly true, that it gives you this world that is actually very close to ours in some ways, but you can say whatever you want about it. It's a very fertile field, so to speak.

But I think there's also a certain psychological resonance to sewers too. It's like cavemen. In a Jungian sense, these things represent secret knowledge, or knowledge that we don't want to think about, that we hide. In that sense, I guess I've over-used the idea.

On the other hand, the L.A. material in DR. ADDER is somewhat



dreamed up, or just made out of visits and longing for L.A. At the time I wrote it, I didn't know as much about L.A. as I do now. The Orange County stuff is very close to how I actually felt, living there. You could get the daylights beat out of you by people who just didn't like the fact that instead of wearing short-sleeved shirts, the way everybody else did, you preferred to wear long-sleeved shirts.

SFR: Seems incredible for someplace in southern California, the mecca of ---

JETER: Oh, yeah, it's supposed to be cool and laid back. But you're supposed to be cool and laid back in the same way everybody else is cool and laid back.

SFR: Do you have any upcoming novels you'd like to mention here?

JETER: Well, I just finished another one for Bluejay, called THE GLASS HAMMER. Next year, I'll be writing another one for them called INFERNAL DEVICES. And I just contracted for another horror novel for TOR which will be called DARK SEEKER. Then I should be hearing from them shortly about this second one for them, called MANTIS.

SFR: I can see that as long as you can keep that many contracts going, you can live anywhere you want to.

JETER: That's the great thing about being a writer. You can be an expatriot easier than you can in any other business. Certainly easier than any other art or creative form, because it can be done through the mail. Especially at the lower levels of recognition. It would be very hard for a painter or sculptor at the beginning or intermediate levels to be anywhere except the centers of the art world, like New York or Los Angeles. You have to be on the spot to sell your stuff. It's not until you get up into the higher levels that you can be that independent. The very highest level would have been somebody like Picasso, where he had a castle on the coast of Spain someplace, and people came to him. Then all of those creative fields that depend upon dealing with other people, like playwrighting or choreography, even music ---

SFR: You don't have that isolation.

JETER: Yeah, you have to be on the spot, or at least have the ability to go back and forth. For a writer, there's a negative side as well. It gives you this tremendous freedom, which in some respects is a purely economic free-

dom to take your business wherever you want to and do it by mail, but the negative side to that is that it can easily lead to tremendous isolation, sheer loneliness. It's probably the only field in the world, at least until computer programming came along, where you could be a tremendous success at it, making millions of dollars a year, and never see another human being. Look at J.D. Salinger, living almost like a hermit, and at the same time generating a lot of money.

SFR: That's functionally part of it all, though. The more time that you spend socializing, the less time you can spend at the typewriter. That lowers your productivity. If you have a name that sells, and if you do write well, by talent or skill, the more that you write, the more money and recognition you're going to garner.



JETER: Yeah, but there are factors that weigh against your productivity even then. Isolation should enable you to produce more, but just like almost any other human endeavor people get into writing as a way of winning love from other people. You're really hoping for recognition and attention and a pretty girl (if you're a man) and a handsome man (if you're a woman) and the opposite (if you're a homosexual). It can seem a very cruel twist of fate.

I saw this with Phil. He

had achieved, especially in the last few years of his life, astonishing levels of recognition. Astonishing, compared to what he had ever expected. In one sense, he was gratified by it, but in another tormented by it. Here he was, a world-wide recognition, world-wide name, all this money coming in, and being alone. This seemed very cruelly unfair, what good was all this if it didn't translate into the same sort of pleasures that a truck driver or an accountant could expect out of life? There was a Goethe line that he would quote when we talked about this. I don't remember the exact line, so I'll paraphrase it. "The simplest pleasures that a peasant with his wife considers normal are denied to a writer."

SFR: Thank you, K.W. Jeter.

DR. ADDER, FREAK HORROR SHOWS, AND LIGENTIA POETICA

REVIEWED BY PROFESSOR ALEXANDER B. NEDELKOVICH, M.A.

I was afraid, when I looked at K.W. Jeter's book, DR. ADDER and noticed Philip K. Dick's afterword praising the novel, afraid that Dick has praised the novel more than anyone reasonably could or should, and that therefore my respect for Philip K. Dick would have to be reduced. I read the novel, not an easy task, then Dick's afterword, and felt a great relief: Dick seems to defend, most of all, the right of the artist to use any kind of talk, even the dirtiest, any filth and horror, even the gruesome, if that suits his artistic purpose. No one today intends (I hope) to oppose that: Let the writer write any way he wants. That is his privilege. Thank you, Philip K. Dick, for not really saying much more in that afterword.

And the readers, of course, have the right to not like and not read any specific book: to reject it.

DR. ADDER is a 230-page book divided into two parts with rather meaningless and irrelevant titles, namely, "Proud Flesh" and "Laudable Puss." The cover illustration is splendid, and superbly printed. Inside there are some dozens of black-and-white illustrations, more or less naive and amateurish, many of them rather disgusting. The events shown in this novel happen in some unspecified distant future, in U.S.A. What the novel is about is ...

Well, let us approach it this way. In my country it is not uncommon for little boys in junior grades of elementary school to play "heroes" before the little girls by, for instance, bringing a live cockroach in a matchbox: the little "hero" opens the matchbox a little, so that the horrible black thing which is moving inside can be seen; he waves the matchbox at the faces of the little girls; they scream and run; and he struts about, a hero. Make it a live frog, green and cold, in the hand. Or an earthworm thrown across the classroom during the break. Same thing. And there is a verbal equivalent of such "bravery." You tell your little friends about a dinner made of dead cockroaches cooked in puss, or some such thing.

That is what DR. ADDER is about. It is an attempt to amaze the reader with the amount of filth and garbage put together.

It shows unconvincing characters inhabiting a society that can not exist. A good dystopia ought to work; this one does not. The society is falling apart, people migrate into the sewers -- except that the vast majority lives well and comfortably, above ground, in big pyramidal buildings which are well kept and protected. People live "digging up canned goods" (page 135) except that the production and marketing of goods is going on quite normally. All is falling apart, but all TV sets work, everybody has hot and cold running water, streetlights work. Police are very efficient (p. 153) but in one long street and the surrounding "Rattown" people shoot each other madly, all the time. The universities have been abolished (page 127), but high schools function perfectly well, and people with post-graduate skills abound. The U.S.A. has crashed and been forgotten by the world, but the morning traffic is quick and thick and strong, streets passable, and oh what driving skills one of the characters shows us! -- nobody mentions any fuel problem.

Not much better is the narrator's knowledge of politics. For him, "bourgeoisie" is "a clean bed" (page 147) and revolution something like a hippie sit-around with LSD and other narcotics piled up in the middle. (There are people in this world, today, who in a really pessimistic mood, sometimes begin to suspect that there are many Americans whose knowledge of politics is at that level.)

The hero, Adder, is producing amputee-prostitutes for perverted customers. He does that in only one street, and yet he seems to have the power almost like a pres-

ident of the U.S.A.; but nevertheless, he travels up and down that street on his motorcycle, unescorted, while bullets fly all around ... and if in that very same street, a kid behaves arrogantly toward the proprietor of the hamburger stand, that proprietor will just wink an eye and the police will grab that young person and take him away, to his parents! The world of fathers is really, really very nasty -- they make robbers who look like the amputee (legless, armless) prostitutes. They also eat little boys alive! (Thus they prove that their opponents are right in every way and that "everything" should be destroyed.)

In the end the hero symbolically burns his society, by setting fire to his own flat and a few nearby flats. It seems that all U.S.A. has been burned down to the ground ... except that everybody is watching the hero's subsequent TV speech.

That is a mass of nonsense.

There is a sign which sometimes helps us to make sure that the writer has been straining to make his book shockingly filthy: in such writings, people vomit much more frequently than would seem probable. A novel starting off with vomiting is, oftentimes, a novel trying to be nasty and not succeeding. They vomit all over the place in DR. ADDER. And get shot, cut up, torn to pieces, pulped, drowned in blood, puss, piss etc. etc. See the cockroach? See the writer heaving a plate with a live-earthworm salad splashed with puss right into your face?

K.W. Jeter amply proved that, within a framework of nonsense, he can write disgustingly. He can. (He -- or she.) But why should anybody read such an unpleasant heap of rubbish?

LETTER FROM K W JETER
1 Salisbury Rd, Larkhall,
Bath, BA1 6QX England
January 22, 1985

'Andy Watson informs me that you will be printing in your REVIEW the interview he did with me on 27 October, 1984. He also sent me the text of a review of my novel DR. ADDER by Alexander B. Nedelkovich, which he also informs me you have accepted for publication.

'While Nedelkovich is certainly free to express whatever opinion he wishes about my book, he does

not have the right to misrepresent the opinions held by someone else. It is repellent that he does so with an author whose work he professes to admire.

'A simple reading of the Afterword Philip K. Dick wrote for DR. ADDER makes it clear that he went a good deal beyond merely defending "the right of the artist to use any kind of talk." Rather than "...not really saying much more" than that, Phil Dick expressly refers to the book as "...not just a good novel: here was a great novel." Elsewhere in his Afterword, he uses the words "powerful, original, daring" to describe it, as well as "a masterpiece, a truly wonderful novel." I dislike quoting praise given to me; however, I want to make it clear that Nedelkovich deliberately misleads the reader as to what opinion Phil Dick held of my book. Quite simply, he lies about the matter.

'As to a few of his other points:

'The phrases "proud flesh" and "laudable pus" are old medical terms. I would have thought that a professor of English, even in Eastern Europe (as Andy Watson informs me Nedelkovich is), would have had the resources available to determine this.

'I've lived in numerous places in the USA where it was a common sight to see people digging through the refuse bins behind supermarkets for discarded vegetables and dented cans, while (to use Nedelkovich's words) "the production and marketing of goods is going on quite normally." Nedelkovich, despite his nationality, is apparently ignorant that a standard Marxist criticism of a capitalist society is that it is inequitable in the distribution of the goods it produces. Perhaps the official line handed out in Soviet-dominated countries is true, and they have no starving people foraging through the rubbish heaps for something to eat. Or perhaps it's not my knowledge of politics that's at fault; it's Nedelkovich's knowledge of reality.'



You Got No Friends In This World



HOW TO USE THIS COLUMN

These are reviews of science fiction short stories, novelets, and novels published from January to May 1985. Out of the nearly 200 stories I read, I have chosen to discuss 123 stories which I feel are important, because of excellent or daring writing, thoughtworthy ideas, or a plain tale of unusual power.

My silence about the remaining stories also constitutes a review of sorts: Either the story was too poorly done or too slight to be worth calling it to your attention, or I was too stupid to notice its merits. If you are a writer whose work is ignored here, please assume the flaw is in my mind and not your tale.

BY ORSON SCOTT CARD

It is proof of my self-destructive nature that I volunteered to do this column again. After all, when I did it several years ago I managed to burn myself out so badly that I couldn't even bring myself to read short fiction for several years. It was only last summer that I opened a copy of *PFS&F* and discovered that I could actually get through entire stories and enjoy them.

So why am I doing this again?

Because somebody's got to do it. When I quit the first time, nobody really continued the work—not with the same breadth, anyway. So I'm back, committed to reviewing all the new stuff published in 1985. Whether I'll have the mental strength to continue after that is impossible to predict. Whether it took mental weakness even to attempt it this year is impolite to say. Whether you'll be writing to Geis, begging him to drop my column to make more room for Elton and Darrel, is unspeakable to contemplate.

IS HUBBARD HUMAN?

I have a low opinion of those who, for their own profit or power, promote other people's faith in a lie. Only murderers, child molesters, rapists, and torturers get assigned to lower infernal circles in my private conception of hell. So the appearance of the name "L. Ron Hubbard" on a book is generally reason enough for me not to buy it.

But Hubbard did an end run around religious bigots like me, who prefer churches led by people who believe in their own doctrine. Returning to science fiction after a few decades of cynical exploitation of other people's religious dedication, he not only published an SF book, he managed to become a benefactor to young writers. He launched a writing contest with a very nice set of prizes and a quarterly schedule. As judges he enlisted such reputable sci-fi personages as Gregory Benford, Algis Budrys, Stephen Goldin, C.J. Moore, Robert Silverberg, Theodore Sturgeon, Jack Williamson, and Roger Zelazny. And then he modestly had the winners' stories—and others—published in an anthology entitled *THE L. RON HUBBARD PRESENTS WRITERS OF THE FUTURE*.

How could I continue to boycott Hubbard when the only people I was harming were young writers whose first or second sale appeared in Hubbard's book?

I bought the book. I read the book. And there are some wonderful stories in there. In fact, three of the stories made my list of the 15 Standout Stories of the first five months of 1985 (see box).

In David Zindell's *SHANIDAR* (WuFu) a surgeon named Rainer illegally alters Goshvane's body to be like the Alalo, humans who genetically altered themselves to be *home planetarians* and who now live as cave-dwellers in the wild country far from civilization. Goshvane succeeds in winning the trust of the Alalo, but fails to become fully primitive at heart; it costs him his wife and child and brings him to despair. In a Kipling-esque ending, man and ape weave together to give his struggle meaning through his dead son, Shanidar.

Zindell has chosen a most difficult form, the frame story, but this is one of the rare cases where the tale could have been told effectively no other way. Who tells the story, and to

whom, is as important as whom the story is about. His training as an anthropologist shows in the perfect plausibility of the story, the power of his evocation of a primitive community; the grace of his language may owe something to his having studied under J. R. Bryant, Bishop, and Gene Wolfe. But his ability to tell a tale that feels, not only believable, but also exorcistically important—that is the thing that will make him a major writer in our field, if he wishes to be.

A PARENT'S FEAR

I'm not the only one who puts child molesters among the worst of human vermin. They traditionally fare quite badly in prisons, where ax murderers look down on them; in the New Testament, Jesus speaks of them with unusual loathing. But those of us who have young and beautiful children live with that constant, unspoken, irresistible fear that one of our children will be Used, Harmed, Destroyed—and by someone that we and they both trust.

Nina Hoffman's *A STEP INTO DARKNESS* (Cpu) speaks directly to that fear. Gail is a young girl whose mother is starting to fall in love with an attractive, charming, wonderful man—whom Goblin loathes. She doesn't tell this to her mother, because her mother is so happy to have found him; instead she confides these feelings to Sylvia and Alex, the immigrant couple who live downstairs.

Sylvia has powers that enable her to detect that the mother's lover is, indeed, one of that monstrous, nonhuman species that molests children. But the mother remains blind to the danger too long. At the end of the story, I agreed with Nina that the molesters are not human; I felt all the horror that the mother felt; to realize how close she had come to destroying her daughter; and I wished with all my heart that there really were benign witches whose power could reach out and protect helpless, trusting children. Maybe if you don't have kids it won't mean as much to you.

Just as, if you've never been happily, devotedly married, Randall Crump's *ARTIST'S WIVES* (WuFu) means much more. Anthony has cared for his dying wife with that painful mixture of love for what she was and resentment for what she is; now she is dead, and he carries her out and buries her in the woods and the house. But the next morning, there is her body again, lying in bed, demanding attention. He buries her again, beside the first corpse; finally there is a vast grave that is still so large enough to hold her that he has lost in losing her. The love and anguish in this surrealistic tale make it a true story of the way a man and woman who have fully merged their identity can never be pulled apart.

QUESTIONS OF LIFE AND DEATH

Not all the best stories appeared in *WRITERS OF THE FUTURE*, fortunately—some of the best you've heard around for a while also managed to tell tales that meant more to me than a half-hour's entertainment. Gregory Benford's *TIME'S RUB* takes place at the end of entropy, when two mostly-human creatures are imprisoned in their desperate attempt to escape their enemies by a bored immortal, who offers them a guessing game with impossibly high stakes. They must

choose between immortality and mortality; but they don't necessarily get what they choose. The outcome depends on how the immortal has already guessed that they will choose, so the guessing is a paradox a thousand layers deep.

It is unfortunate that Benford trusted his readers so little that he actually included a diagram of the choices in his story—I don't know about you, but I find it a bit jarring when a storyteller suddenly turns into a lecturer; it breaks the flow. But the tale is so good that I forgive this insult to my intelligence, and expect to see this story in anthologies for years to come.

The characters in Gregory Frost's *IN MEDIA VITA* (Av's Jan) face the same sort of choice, except that it is not so clearly presented to them. In a world where death, including aging, has been cured, there is no excuse for anyone being mortal. Yet a few stubborn souls persist in their determination to waste away and die of a disease whose source seems impossible to find.

But they do find it, and cure it, and in the process Greg affirms what every child who's ever optimistically known: that life in isolation is not life; that only through the bonds that tie us to other people do we create the meaning of our own name and discover the story of our own life.

In fact, I will go farther and say that this is the only meaningful difference between good and evil: that good is that which affirms the order that all love all human beings to taste as much joy as they can have without forcing harm on others; and evil either exploits or destroys that order. In practical terms, the perfectly good person is the one who says, "I am willing to suffer any denial and any pain so that the rest of you can have happiness," a perfectly evil person is the one who says, "I am willing for the rest of you to suffer as much denial and pain as it takes for me to have everything that I want."

In these terms, the very act of telling a story is a good act. It creates in its audience a common memory; and those who find that memory important and true become a community. Storytellers, however they might affect a pose of fashionable despair, even to the point of believing that they believe in nihilism, are optimists and believers or they could not open their mouths to speak. The difference between what we believe

ABBREVIATIONS and ISSUES REVIEWED

- Amz = *Amazing Stories* (Scitners) Mar, May
- Ang = *Analogue* (Schmidt) Jan, Feb, Mar, Apr, May
- Av's = *Isaac Asimov's* (McCarthy) Jan, Feb, Mar, Apr, May
- PFS&F = *Fantasy & Science Fiction* (Verma) Jan, Feb, Mar, Apr, May
- F = *Fantasy* (Windling) Jan, Feb, Mar, Apr, May
- FF = *Far Frontiers* (Pournelle/Benn) anthology (Benn Books) 1 & 2
- Mid = *Midnight* (Grant) anthology (Tor)
- Omi = *Omnis* (Dawson) Jan, Feb, Mar, Apr
- TZ = *The Zebra* (Klein) Apr
- WuFu = L. Ron Hubbard Presents Writers of the Future (Budrys) anthology (Bridge Publications)

that we believe and what we truly believe is rarely made plain; storytellers lay themselves bear with every story they tell. Storytellers do not believe in death except for the sake of life; they do not believe in pain except as the price of joy; they do not believe in destruction except as the harbinger of creation.

Few stories are explicitly about the choice between identifying with a community and rejecting it; primarily because all stories are implicitly about it. These five stories that spoke most powerfully to me have this matter at their root, though I doubt that the writers were particularly aware of it. It is in their nature to affirm; it is only when a writer consciously twists his story to serve a preconceived polemical or philosophical end that stories seem to negate and despair.

But if you examine them, all five of these tales testify to the unquestioning faith of the storyteller that life exists in the connections between human beings; that death comes when the connexion is broken or despised or exploited; and that life is better than death, hope better than despair, and order better than chaos.

ROMANCE IS ALIVE AND FLYING

When you began reading this column you weren't bargaining for a piece of Uncle Oren's Philosophical Pie. I wouldn't have liked any of those stories one bit if the authors had openly discussed the matters I just expounded. In storytelling, such honesty is disgusting; I'll have none of it.

Instead I love the old-fashioned romance, tales of heroes facing seemingly insoluble dilemmas, which they resolve through their wit, their strength, and their goodness of heart. Put in those terms, of course, the romance sounds trite. But good writers have been making that tale fresh and new for thousands of years, and will for thousands to come.

Take, for instance, **THE TENSOR OF DESIRE** (F&SF May). Wayne Wightman's request to his excellent GARGLETON practically begs to be a movie; after all, the great popular movies are all romances, like **STAR WARS**, **INDIANA JONES**, and **GONE WITH THE WIND**. The protagonist, Lanyon, works in a station that mentally probes alien life forms on as-yet-unvisited worlds, to gauge which of them will be both valuable and amenable to service as exploitable labor. Things at the station have been falling apart—probers are driven mad when their probes fail due to defective replacement parts, and Lanyon is no longer willing to play along with the corrupt system that is exploiting and destroying them.

Perhaps the best explanation of Lanyon's character is in the words of a friend who says, "I was wondering what you were going to do as a follow-up to gutting those probe-senders on your section and burning the clothes off the firm's representative with the cutting torch. . . . I mean, I was wondering what you could do after something like that." But I know the answer to that now, too. You're going to do any goddamned thing you want, aren't you?"

"Why not?" answers Lanyon. "They put me on leave. I've got a lot of time to fill up."

But his real feelings are not so

devil-may-care. He is the perfect romantic hero, willing to sacrifice anything for the sake of the people who without him would have no other savior. The story is as awashbuckling and spectacular as you could hope for.

The same kind of romance plays through four other stories. In John Park's excellent **THE SOFTWARE PLAGUE** (FF 2), a future society permeated with human-computer linking is threatened by a self-replicating program that penetrates and takes over human minds, as well as computers. In a world as densely created as the one in, say, **NEURONANCE**, the narrator takes the software antigen to the source of the disease, in time to save his world but too late to do it without dire cost.

KARTIGATE (Anig May), by J. Brian Clarke, uses a delicious old standard: humankind has found a powerful alien artifact that was deliberately left for us, if we can figure out how to use it. Gila Mayland is charged with discovering the key to open the gate that must connect Earth cheaply and quickly with the stargate that at present is two years of space travel away; David, her counterpart among the friendly alien Phullis, is

IN THE BEGINNING,
THE LORD SAID "BOOT
UP!" AND THE UNIVERSE
WAS OFF AND RUNNING!



searching just as hard to find Phulligate. I cringed when I realized the bad guys would be (get this) a Big Corporation. But Clarke did a good job of putting new twists in that old yarn, and I was delighted from beginning to end.

George R.R. Martin's series character Haviland Tuf is eccentric and engaging, and Martin has assembled on Tuf's ship as vicious a crew of traitors and scoundrels as you could hope for this side of Dallas. They have stumbled on a **PLAGUE SHIP** (Anig Jan-Feb) abandoned by a warring empire, and all are trying to get control of it before the ship—or their "partners"—can kill them. Like all good heroes, Tuf just wants to be left alone. . . . And in fact he triumphs through perfect placidity, with never a malicious act.

Connie Willis unfortunately chose a needlessly convoluted structure for her **THE CURSE OF KINGS**, so from beginning to end it is difficult to figure out something as minimal as what the hell is going on. Nevertheless, it is my pleasure to assure you that the story of archaeology and hideous disease on another planet is well worth the wade through thickening flashbacks.

UNMASK YOURSELF

The coming-of-age story has long been a staple of science fiction—I have been guilty of more than a couple myself. Keith Roberts has done a fine job of it with **KITEMASTER** (Aniz May), a follow-up to his **KITEMASTER** from last year. The link between the young man's first love, his first flight, and his first murder is painful and compelling, despite a rather tedious ending.

Geel Bandino tells another story of discovering quite to your surprise who you really are. **THE SHADOW OF THE STABLELIGHT** (F&SF Apr) depends on the premise that all human beings have elfin blood which can be touched and awakened in them. Tied with a plot involving an abused life, it is surprisingly gentle and forgiving story for one with so much action and violence. The only distraction was the viewpoint character's irrelevant homosexuality. She might also have had an old-fashioned scar and a taste for fried pork rinds, but if it doesn't affect the story, why bring it up?

TALES OF LOVING WITCH-WOMEN

Because we males fancy ourselves to be quite in control, when a woman makes us turn to jelly we can only assume that she is a witch. Thus there is a long tradition of stories about men who fall in love with supernatural women. One of the best stories this year is Lucius Shepard's **THE JAGUAR HUNTER** (F&SF May), a delicately wrought tale of a man who knows a secret way to kill jaguars, though he does not do it anymore. His soulless wife helps him to undertake the killing of one more jaguar; but during the hunt he meets the magical woman who sets him free from his wife's black-and-white television world.

Those who have noticed Shepard during this last year, as he became the only writer to appear on the short list to be Nebula finalists in a year he was still eligible for the Campbell Award, will not be surprised that the language of the story is exquisite and the human relationships are strong and true.

Pat Murphy's witch woman is really an alien explorer named on the map; she is befriended by a hammock-seller who knows he is not a very good man, but finds his salvation in adoration of her. **ON A HOT SUMMER NIGHT IN A PLACE FAR AWAY** (Av's May) is almost worshipful, as it ends in a cave that evokes memories of Merlin.

In **OVERNIGHT GUEST** (Mid), Craig Shaw Gardner gives us a man who knows he should be content with his wife, and yet dabbles with the heart of a lover who makes him feel—and in fact become—very young again. He finds out the hard way that you can't have it both ways. **CORCONISSA** (Av's Jan), by Richard Pirtill, has a demigoddess with a deadly underwater boudoir; it is because the man who loves her is not fully created that the story feels alive.

And as long as we're dealing with stories of perilous love, it's hard to resist **THE MAGISTRATE'S PILLOW** (TZ Apr), in which Gordon Linnar creates a tale of magic-aided cuckoldry so delightful that it would not seem out of place in Boccaccio's **DECAMERON**, if the **DECAMERON** had been set in Japan.

ALTERNATE TIME-STREAMS

One of the favorite themes of sf writers is the idea that each of our choices creates two different worlds,

one in which we chose one way, and one in which we chose the other. John O'Habbin deals with this idea directly: a superbomb keeps suffering inexplicable and unlikely accidents that keep it from becoming functional, until someone finally realizes that in any universe in which the **BOMBADA DRYVING** (Anlg Feb) actually works, mankind would cease to exist. Humanity survives only in the increasingly unlikely timestreams where the bombs don't work.

More lovely by far is Charles L. Harnesse's **O LYRIC LOVE** (Amz May), in which a former graduate student invents time travel so that he can please a teacher he adores. The teacher, a cripple, is obsessed with the minor poet Robert Browning, who is far over-shadowed by his wife, Elizabeth Barrett; the student sends Browning the inspiration for a great poem that saves him from obscurity—but at the cost of diminishing Elizabeth's career. Recounting the bare plot cannot explain how poignant the story is.

Two stories deal with wives who chose between ordinary but happy marriages and far more interesting, independent lives. Now they are brought to the timestream in which they made the other choice. Lisa Tuttle's **NO REGRETS** (F&SF May) is the stronger tale, even though it is about that hideous literary figure, the modern literary poet. I have an aversion to stories about writers, and am positively revolted by stories about academic life. However, these are the staple of li-fi, in which academics get to pretend that they feel things that the rest of the world is too bovine to understand. Trust Tuttle to force me to like a story that should have been detestable; the poet's anxious glances at the unchaste husband and child that haunt her house are heart-breakingly sweet. Susan Casper's **SPRING FEVER** (Mid) takes a more bitter view; the woman chose the home and family, and now yearns for the more exciting life she would have had if she had chosen her drag-racing boyfriend. She discovers, when she jumps from one timestream to the other, that life is pretty dull no matter what you choose. Probably true, but not much fun to read about.

A WORLD OUT OF CONTROL

Much of life is spent trying to get control over things that seem to treasure our few small predictabilities: the cycles of the days and seasons, the embrace of gravity, the hardness of steel and concrete. Alas, we also, in order to live, must depend on the persistence of the impossible: we trust in our friends and family, in the value of money, in the steadiness of our employer or the honesty of our client, in the skill of the surgeon and the taxi driver. When some or all of these trusts fail, we are hurt, sometimes badly, always at least a little bit afraid. The world reveals itself as being almost entirely out of our control; we feel our weakness.

Many writers deal with this directly, telling tales of the most common failures: low, danger, and death. But some deal with it in grand metaphors of helplessness, like Kafka's tale of the man who wakes up to find himself a giant cockroach. Jim Aikin's **MY LIFE IN THE SINGLE** (F&SF Feb) is a li-fi story. The hero, who had been comfortable in the quite regular world of a professor of mathematics, finds himself transformed

into a baboon or chimpanzee, living in a vast jungle where many traits compete for a fragile harvest of bananas. Aikin has the good taste not to point out the obvious connotations to normal human behavior (has the mathematician been transformed, or has he merely come to understand at last what has been going on all along?); what I appreciate most is the character's half-unaware recounting of his own gradual degradation. I'm afraid that this story may be something of a minority taste, if only because the action is so rare, and the impact of the story is intellectual first and emotional second; but I think it is one of the best so far this year.

Instead of a sudden change, the protagonist of **TOURISTS** (Av's Feb) slowly discovers his helplessness. Near the end of his visit to the Middle East, he finds himself stranded in a tourist-oriented ancient city, unable to get to the airport; it is only after some time trying to get help from the natives that he finally realizes that all the natives here are stranded tourists. Author Lisa

fied, for the barrier seemed to have neither cause nor, in the end, much effect. At least, though, Davis took the dilemma seriously. With the much more colorful disaster in **BLOODFALL** (TZ Apr), T. Coraghessan Boyle does a wonderful job of showing the ghastly consequences of a rain of blood from the sky—but then throws it away with an infuriating joke ending, as the bloodfall is replaced by a shiftfall. Boyle actually had me caring about the characters—wasn't I a fool? It is a vile trick to play on readers, to lead them to empathy and then tell them that the writer never cared.

MAGNIFICENT MESSINESS

Scott Russell Sanders' **ASCENSION** (Av's Feb) has the same problem that Connie Willis's **CURSE OF KINGS** had: It begins by confusing you with information that only makes sense when you get to the end. The work stories in stories here the climax is everything. It doesn't in stories where getting there is almost all the fun. In this case, forgive the confusion and read it anyway. The wit



Goldstein has him do the only sensible thing. He hunkers down and starts selling trinkets to the next batch of tourists.

In Michael Green's **MEASURING THE LIGHT** (Wrfu), the sudden change in the world is a vast number of domes that suddenly appear in pairs around the world. Hans Reuser gets a dome in his barn in Germany. Instead of panicking or yielding to the attempts of authority to keep people from the domes, he accepts and explores this sudden change—and a vast, inexplicable Rapture carries him away from the Earth. It was a judgment day, but no one knew it.

Far more mundane are the concerns of the people trapped behind invisible, impenetrable barriers in **WHAT HAPPENED ON CRANBERRY ROAD** (Amz Mar), by Grania Davis. In enforced isolation, they begin to restructure their community to make it livable in its much-reduced world; but the isolation is lifted far too soon for any enduring change to take place. Despite the good writing and likeable characters I was left unsatisfied.

of the writer and the charm of the characters will win you over as the mayor's husband, an incompetent surgeon, closes himself into a space suit for reasons that seem like madness—but turn out to be greatness.

BENRATH THE SHADOW OF HER SMILE (Av's Apr) begins with the compelling image of a statue of the Virgin on a church in France. It is World War I, and an explosion has toppled the statue. But she does not hit the ground; she remains poised, dipping toward the ground, supported by nothing, but unwilling to fall. So also the war lingers on, well into the 1930s, an endless battle along the endless trenches. The writing is powerful, the characters and images real and strong; I only regretted that the ending reveals it to be a private reality, and therefore small.

Mary Frances Zambrano tells of an old woman who has been to the bottom of an incredibly tall building; there was no exit, so now she laboriously climbs to the top. Even if there's no way out there, either, what else can she do but climb? Her encounter with the gang that controls one floor provides the plot of

the compelling story **A WAY OUT** (WuFu). In **RIFT** (F&S Apr), Robert Grossbach deals with surrealism much more lightly. A pair of alienated deep-sea divers find the ancient plug the keeps the Atlantic from draining away—and pull it out.

ESCAPE FROM REALITY

What do you do if your life is unbearable? John Kessel shows us a man who can't remember anything he did since just before he decided to go into politics, many years before; the reason, we discover, is his unbearable guilt. **A CLEAN ESCAPE** (Av's Mar) is a powerful idea story that raises a profound question: If you have lost the memory of your terrible crime, are you thus made innocent?

In **ONE LAST DANCE** (WuFu), Dean Wesley Smith tells the sweetly haunting tale of two people living out the crippled remnants of their lives in a retirement home—but they find a way to be young and in love, after all. James Turpin's **THE PERFECT DAY** (Amz Mar) seems to be a Bradbury tale of a young boy living an idyllic childhood until a dangerous stranger comes. Only gradually do we realize that the stranger is trying to retrieve a man who has taken insane refuge in the memory of an impossible good childhood.

I am not a fan of Alan Dean Foster's work, so I was quite surprised at how much I liked **COLLECTIBLE** (F&S Apr), the story of a woman whose agonized loneliness brings a live dragon to fill out her collection of stuffed and painted ones. Only that the dragon, which seemed completely inappropriate, spoiled it for me. And in **REVENGE OF THE CAT-LADY** (F&S Jan), Avram Davidson gives us a spiteful old biddy who actually listens to her TV—and profits gleefully from what she learns.

THE ALIENS WILL FIX IT

Will aliens come like angels to patch up our problems? In **BATTER** (TZ Apr), Lois McMaster Bujold brings an alien to visit a desperately harried housewife. All he wants is household ammonia (and a little bleach); in exchange, he gives her an off-switch for her children and an on-switch for her husband. It's funny enough that I didn't want to examine the ethics of turning other people on and off. In **THE WOMAN WHO SAVED THE WORLD** (Av's May), Susan Palwick has a woman a woman, but not so lightly treated—situation. Inadvertently she gets an alien to make everybody in the world wonderful and good. But she forgot to include herself in the list of those who were being—and now she discovers that even when all the outward causes are removed, much of her misery remains.

Some of the staff of a hospital hopes that visiting aliens will cure the hopelessly birth-damaged babies in their ward, but the aliens only say that the babies should have been aborted in the first place. However, **SOMETHING OF VALUE** (Amig Feb), by James White, does not approve of this heartless view; even more-advanced aliens were testing, not curing, but the unconscious visitors—and they failed the test.

WITH TONGUE IN CHEEK

Bumor is hard to do well, but a few stories did it. Bradley Denton, in his **TOP OF THE CHARTS** (F&S Mar), finds that aliens are the source of those secret messages that populist preachers

are always finding recorded backward on rock discs. William Wu's **HONG'S BLOFF** (WuFu) is a deliberate combination of western and sci-fi, complete with a shootout and a sidekick who comes to the rescue. And Ken McCormack's **AIRMAIL** (TZ Apr) concerns the efforts of a bureaucratically-inclined deity to get George Green to kill himself, so his soul can be put into a bit of plankton, where it belongs. The error obviously has happened before—everything George receives is a form letter, like those sent out by collection agencies (or so I hear . . .)

Two non-stories are worth seeing. Larry Trice's **EF BOOK OF LISTS** (TZ Apr) is really a parody of the style of many writers in our field. And Carol Deppe's letters to the editor in **Amazing** (Mar) are genuinely hilarious. I couldn't decide if she was kidding a persona or really is what the letters make her appear to be—I'm hoping for the former, in which case we can look for good stories from her someday.

HOLOCAUSTERY

I like science fiction better when it anticipates future concerns than when it merely reflects contemporary fashions, so I have a hard time being interested in the current spate of "can-we-or-shouldn't-we-get-rid-of-the-bomb stories." After-the-holocaust stories have a long tradition in science fiction—our field has been aware of the consequences of nuclear war for some time. But in the tales that were written to persuade us to a particular course of political action, the story values are often sacrificed to the writer's political agenda. The result is generally rather stupid stuff. Too many polemicists start from the premise that anybody who disagrees with them must be either a fool or a monster. That premise leads to unbelievable characters and didactic writing, and the story can—and does—go hay.

It is one of the virtues of **FAIR FRONTIERS**, however, that when they chose to publish polemics on disarmament, they got excellent spokesmen for both sides. Ben Bova's **NUCLEAR AUTUMN** (FF 2) is a brief but sharp revelation of how an enemy might use the threshold of nuclear winter against us; in a story that is really an essay, it is a virtue and not a flaw that the characters merely stand for political positions.

The companion story, John Brunner's **TALION** (FF 2), raises more literary expectations. The main character is a man who is struggling to maintain public order and recover from a near nuclear winter, and we identify strongly with his compassion and his pain. Which makes it all the more maddening when, at the end, Brunner seems to take sides against this good man and cast his lot with a bunch of self-righteous prigs whose moral response to disaster is to afix blame for it. However, consciously or not, Brunner actually argues for the other side; no matter what your politics, this story leaves your sympathies entirely with the main character, and therefore against those who punish him. Brunner's utter lack of comprehension of the military mind also leads him to gross caricaturization of the air commander. If the story had been worse-written, the falseness of this character would not have been so painfully noticeable.

Much less overtly polemical are Frederik Pohl's **PERMI** and **FROST** (Av's Jan) and Steven Popkes' **DEATHWITCH** (Av's Feb). Pohl's grieving narrative of life among the few survivors clinging to Iceland's geothermal heat during the nuclear winter is powerful and real—until he throws the whole damn thing away in just about the stupidest ending I've seen since the infuriating close of Goldmann's **THE PRINCESS BRIDE**. And **DEATHWITCH**, well written as it is, commits what is to me an unpardonable sin: the author expects us to sympathize with a character who acts in favor of death and against survival of the species.

Far and away the best of the post-holocaust stories is Gregory Benford's **TO THE STORMING CUL** (F&S Apr), and not just because it is not polemical at all. I only wish it were a novel, as it takes us with a group of survivors on a quest for a computer that might have outlasted the war. The bitter-sweet ending deals also with the death-choice—but it is shown as a sort of madness, and the hero chooses life.

Joseph Calabro's **DOES IT MAKE A SOUND?** (TZ Apr) is well-written, but after carefully developing a will-to-survive story, he turns it around with no justification whatsoever and opts for the death-choice ending. Steven R. Boyett's **EDGE** (F&S May) may be more despairing yet, even though it seems quite hopeful and sweet. Fairies come and open a bridge for unselfish people to cross into safety in another world, before the holocaust destroys them; the protagonists qualify. The tale tastes good, until you realize that in fact fairies may be our only salvation



15 STANDOUT STORIES

For the power of the plain tale:

David Zindell **SHANTIMAR** (WuFu)
Nina Hoffman **A STEP INTO DARKNESS** (WuFu)
Linda Shepard **THE JACAR HUNTER** (F&S May)
Wayne Nightman **TENSOR OF DESIRE** (F&S May)
Keith Roberts **KITECADET** (Amz May)

For the idea the story's heart:

Gregory Benford **TIME'S RUB** (Av's Apr)
Randell Cornu **ANTHONY'S WIVES** (WuFu)
Gregory Frost **IN RED VITA** (Av's Jan)
John Kessel **A CLEAN ESCAPE** (Av's May)
Barry Malzberg **QUARTERMASTER** (F&S Jan)

For the way they're written:

Bruce Sterling **DINNER IN ADOGNAST** (Av's May)
Nancy Kress **OUT OF ALL THEM BRIGHT STARS** (F&S Mar)
Jim Aikin **MY LIFE IN THE JUNGLE** (F&S Feb)
Harlan Ellison **WITH VIRGIL ODUM AT THE EAST POLE** (Omni Jan)
Phyllis Eisenstein **SMALL OUT OF SPACE** (F&S Apr)

from the holocaust, and then it turns to ashes.

GOVERNMENT IN ACTION

Ben Bova's **PRIMARY** (Av's Feb) is that rare thing (nowadays, at least), a genuinely extraterrestrial tale. A computer programmer seems at first to be a campaign aide to a presidential candidate; he has developed a program to predict the consequences of various possible events, using the data in the vast national computer network. His candidate may win or lose—but the real contest will be won by the programmer, whose decision-aiding program is judged best by the White House computer. **THE DYING KINGDOM** (Av's Jan), by Thomas Wynde, reads like a fairy tale, with a science fictional subject matter; but it is actually an allegory of the ebb and flow of political power, and as an idea story it works very, very well.

THE OLD RESCUE PILOT

Out on a high-tech mission, a bunch of guys get stuck with a dilemma: One member of the team (and the whole society) will die if they can't solve a technical problem in time. We watch the clock count down as, just in the nick of time, they make it. You've seen this story many times. And it is retold well in several stories this winter. Two of them are set in the environs of Nemesis, a dwarf star that may be our sun's deadly companion. Poul Anderson's **PRIDE** (FF 1) is not, surprisingly, a pretty good guided tour of Nemesis. **RIDE & DARK HORSE** (Anlg Apr), by Bob Buckley, proves that two writers dealing with essentially the same basic story can make them surprisingly different.

GERTRUDE (Anlg May), by P.M. Ferguson, has a smart-alecky man with a high-tech cyborg caterpillar tractor trying to dig a trench for a load of asteroid-melted steel to land in so it won't bounce and destroy Luna City. Kenneth W. Ledbetter's **PATERA CROSSING** (Anlg Mar) has men wading through lava in pressure suits to get to safety.

It is no accident that three of these four stories are in **ANALOG** and the fourth in **FAR FUTURE**. The only changes in this formula in the last 40 years are cosmetic: women are more likely to be one of the guys, and the science reflects a few decades of discoveries. The main weakness in all four of them is that the final victory is not the result of any special ingenuity; in every case it's just dumb luck. They happened to come almost-too-close but not quite; their best efforts happened to be good enough, but it could just as easily have gone the other way, and the difference wasn't under their control. It has about as much significance as when a car coming the other way jumps the median strip and happens to miss you by three feet. You're glad he missed, but nothing you did had any real effect on the outcome. It hardly makes you a hero.

MAGICAL OBJECTS

Another formula that is even weaker comes from urban fantasy. The story centers around some object that has mysterious and dangerous magical effects. The rest of the story is spent in trying to get rid of the object or shut it down, usually requiring the characters to find out the story behind it. Ramsey Campbell's **OLD CLOTHES** (Mid) is good because he's an excellent writer who can still surprise us in the details, with

his tale of an old coat with all kinds of goodies in its pockets—which lead to all kinds of trouble. **ROTHMA** (F&SF Mar), by Daphne de Jong, attempted much more with parallel tales of people who owned a little figurine at different times, but I never managed to care enough about either plot for the story to work.

When the magical object is a machine that comes to life, the results can be fun. **MY OLD CAR** (F&SF Jan), by Thomas Wynde, is a wonderful story about recovering a beloved old car that seems to cooperate—until the last paragraph, when it was all thrown away by a silly twist. I liked the story almost well enough to forgive the ending. Stephen Gallagher's **THE BOY WHO TALKED TO THE ANIMALS** (F&SF Feb) created some engaging characters, but I was never able to feel as much fear of the come-to-life Disneyland mechanical bears as I think the author wanted me to feel.

RELIGION IN AN IRRELIGIOUS FIELD

Since almost all science fiction is written from an agnostic or atheistic point of view, and I suspect most of writers here, in next agnostic or atheistic, it is hardly surprising that very few writers are able to handle religion any better than Heinlein's embarrassing stupid job of it in **REVOLT** in 2100. At least Joel Henry Sherman tried to do better. **ATTEMPTING AT MEMORIALS** (Anlg Apr), by Sherman, is a good one, and I applaud the effort. But his decision to focus on the irreligious father, even though all the important decisions and actions were taken by the daughter with her faith, was heretic. To liberate martyrdom, meant that all the pivotal events remained unexplained and, finally, unbelievable.

Harlan Ellison handles religious feeling much better in **WITH VIRGIL ODUM AT THE EAST POLE** (Omni Jan), because unlike most of writers, he is a religious fanatic. That his intense faith and ascetic rigor follow no known creed is beside the point. Whatever else you may think of Harlan Ellison, he is no hypocrite: he does, or tries to do, what he believes in. So when he writes about this one, which is one, he writes a sort of prophet in the wilderness, we believe in him and in his not-so-voluntary disciple and biographer, and feel a touch of the ecstasy the communicants experience at the shrine.

KNOWING THE FUTURE

But prophets are not always well-received. Last year, I found Bruce Sterling's **TELLIAMEDS** to be pointless and boring, and when it received a raft of Nebula recommendations I figured he was one more of those artsy-fartsy writers who get endlessly praised by others of their ilk for stories that I remain too stupid ever to appreciate.

Now I take it all back. I'll forgive him for a hundred **TELLIAMEDS** as long as now and then he writes a **DINNER IN ADOGSHAW** (Av's May). He writes in a style deliberately reminiscent of the Arabian Nights as he depicts men of the jaded ruling class of this shabby planet. They summon a ragged prophet to amuse them; his vision of their eventual downfall, indeed of the decay of all their world, does not spoil their merriment—because they disbelieve him, but rather because his news does not surprise them. It is a beautiful work of storytelling that moved me greatly.



I also found Andrew Weiner's **KLEIN'S MACHINE** (Av's Apr) to be an effective tale. Klein is a loner who couldn't even get along with the other isolates in a radical Communist group, but in his solitude he has managed time travel, which carried him forward to a vision of the future. It is diagnosed as madness, which is duly cured; it is a painful thing, to realize that we probably would "cure" any real prophet who came to us out of society's wilderness today.

Ray Brown's story **DON'T GET AROUND MUCH ANY MORE** (Anlg Mar) showed great promise, but ultimately fell apart for me when his characters learned the great secret that an alien race had discovered: that there is a life after death, and it is unbearable, universal, eternal suffering and torment. It wasn't the secret that I didn't believe, it was the characters' reaction: To postpone death as long as possible, they lived out their lives in totally protected little cubicles. Such a response, I think, would be rare. Most people I know would prefer to eat, drink, and be merry, because this is the last chance to have any fun.

KNOWING THE PAST

Gillian Stewart Carl's **UPON THIS SHOAL** (TIME (Anz Mar)) is a quiet but lovely story of an archaeologist who is able to put into his own mind the memories still held in an ancient skull. Thus he experiences the past directly, much as a storyteller puts vicarious memories in the audience's minds. In **THE LORDS OF CREATION** (Anlg Mar), Edward Llewellyn uses a familiar motif—the ancient high-tech artifact that tells a surprising truth about the people who discovered it. But do not let familiarity breed contempt: his characters are convincing and their story is strong and hopeful.

EXPLAINING OUR MADNESS

SF writers have a long tradition of inventing explanations for irrational, destructive human behavior, even if the explanation is no more sophisticated than Heinlein's "Silly Season." David B. Schock attributes all those unbearable mass murders in which the father kills his wife and children to **WILKY'S HUNGER** (TZ Apr); but the story assures us that the madness cannot harm those bound together with love and family. Some people may find the reverent treatment of religious life and faith rather silly; I found it moving, and the people real and good. Most people in the world have some kind of faith; I wish more of writers could write about such people as well as Schock does here.

I had more trouble with Lewis Shiner's **THE WAR AT HOME** (Av's May). The writing is excellent, the story interesting, but I could not buy his premise. If indeed America owed some debt of guilt for the Vietnam War, then perhaps I could accept the idea that those who were able to avoid military service are now being driven to inflict the same terrible death and destruction on civilians in the U.S. But I remember that we joined that war in ignorance and innocence, as a nation, and left it in disillusion and shame, and I am one of those who believes that good intentions may pave the road to disaster, but never to hell.

SEEKING OTHER WORLDS

There are worlds that only a gifted few can touch, says Scott Russell Sanders in **THE TIE OF DREAMS** (Av's May); two hospital workers are among those who can see off-duty dreams as they roost in trees during the daytime. As the woods are cut down by the city's developers, the dreams are forced to leave, plunging the city into madness. Even if it had no other virtues, the story would be worth reading for the depiction of the excruciatingly beautiful protagonist.

ON **THE DREAM CHANNEL PANEL** (Anz Mar), by Ian Watson, is a hilarious story of a group of people who accidentally receive another world's commercials in their dreams and finally get to taste the otherworldly products. Michael Swanwick's **ANYONE HOME FROM UTAH?** (Av's May) postulates that geography isn't exactly what we're told it was; alas, though, I must answer that I have lived in Utah. Or at least think I have.

CYPSIES AND OTHER STRANGERS

People who live among us but remain separate have long excited both our fear and our longing. Rory Harper's **PETROGYPSES** (FF 2) not only creates a most engaging creature—a living, organic oil-drilling rig—but also surrounds the beast with a charming group of gypsies that tempt the reader to go off with them forever. **PRELIMINARY NOTES ON**

THE JANG (Av's May), by Lisa Goldstein, introduces an anthropology student to a delinquent group of cyber-like people who cannot bring themselves to tell the truth.

Jor Jennings' **TIGER HUNT** (WuFu) also shows us people who, like the apes, are cut off from the society in which they are forced to live. Their lives center around preserving a secret realm in a southern California desert as it runs out of food; human and animal survival are constantly weighed against each other in an ever-shifting, precarious balance.

HUMANS AND ALIENS

Many a story of human-alien contact has assumed that the alien only want to use us. In **BRIDGIE'S AFTER THE DAYS OF DEAD-DEE** (Av's May) reverses that, with an alien who wants an old woman to eat him. The only thing that hurts the story is that I don't believe Dee's choice to kill the alien. I was unprepared for her to be a murderer; the writer, not the character, had killing on her mind. Likewise disappointing was Lucius Shepard's **HOW THE WIND SPOKE AT MADARET** (Av's Apr). Though it is beautifully written and terrifyingly cinematic in its account of a malevolent whirlwind gorging on human life, I found no real connection between the whirlwind and the characters it was pursuing. In the end it left me thirsting for meaning that was there.

The bitterweet **OUT OF ALL THEM BRIGHT STARS** (F&SF Mar), by Nancy Kress, shows an alien visitor who is hungry just to meet real human beings; and we find that a greasy-spoon waitress may well be the human being we'd like to have as liaison with such a killing alien. The story is small but perfect. Julien Brantingham's **THE HAUNTING OF GOODHOPE** (F&SF May) is even more powerful, as a desperate group of human colonists, who may be the last survivors of the human race, struggle helplessly to survive against an implacably hostile world. They discover that if they stop fighting the plague that is killing them and instead succumb to it under controlled conditions, it transforms them and enables them to live easily. The only flaw in the story is the intrusive "haunting" metaphor, which ultimately means absolutely nothing and distracts from the story that does matter.

Even when it isn't a matter of survival, coping with alien customs isn't fun. Leni Niven is in top form with **TABLE MANNERS** (FF 1), in which a man tries to figure out how to eat dinner with a race that takes its meals raw and on the hoof—without offending their sense of decorum. Greg Williams' **MATTER OF SENSITIVITY** (F&SF Jan) stars a beer-swilling protagonist who annoyed me beyond endurance, but the problem of aliens too fastidious to meet with each other and how the human negotiator is urged to reconcile them saved the story.

Gordon R. Dickson's **HOUSE OF WEAPONS** (FF 2) is a powerful depiction of a human serving as a house slave in the home of the conquering and infinitely superior aliens. He finds that, quite against his better judgment, he is becoming a revolutionary. The story is excellent, except for a tendency to have the protagonist endlessly review what we already know; the frustration is that it's part of a much longer work, and

this particular chunk doesn't really begin or end.

WHAT WILL THEY LEARN FROM US?

Phyllis Eisenstein's **SMALL OUT OF SPACE** (F&SF Apr) is a wonderfully funny story of an alien who has no interest in "the dominant species" of our planet. Being rather small and amiable himself, it's our snails he's interested in; his love affair with a bimbo among snails leads him to a rather sad end. Steven Beresford's **TURKABOUT** (F&SF May) is a chilling story of a man on a prison planet where the half-wit aliens imitate human beings far too well.

In Marta Randall's **SEA CHANGES** (Av's May), the alien becomes more and more human—and the human, without any particular reason, grows more and more alien. I would have liked the story better if Randall had not chosen to write in a maddeningly intrusive first-person present-tense. However, I do give Randall the award for the best fiction of Genitals. In a season when four different writers (two male, two female) referred to the vagina as **HER VAGHRA**, a word that could as easily refer to the armpit, it is nice to have a writer come up with as engaging an image as this one, when the protagonist examines the body she dragged to the beach: "I was right, it's human. . . . I turn the body over to see the soft tumble of genitals, the flat chest. Whoever he is, he shouldn't be here."

Thomas Wyld's third story in this review, **MARQUEED ON PLANET EARTH** (Av's Mar), is sometimes confusing as it charts the tale of a man who wants to masquerade as an alien—only to stumble on a real alien and a real starship, which he then decides to join on his venture. The story is weightless and fun. In Eric G. Iverson's **BLUFF** (Anlg Feb), an alien learns and profits from the human ability to mislead an opponent; Iverson's novel was telling the story from the human point of view. The alien was the character that mattered; the humans never came to life.

FIMOCCHIO

When we create a human-like machine, we dream of bringing it to life, in stories from Pysykalon and Gennepetto and Fimocchio. Karen Joy Fowler, an absolutely stunning new writer, has two stories that explore this motif in very different ways. **RECALLING CIN-DERELLA** (WuFu) features an android that knows it's a slave to its "stepmother" and her obnoxious daughters. In a writing tour-de-force, Fowler gradually changes our allegiance from the android to the steadily more pitiable family. **TRAVIS** (WuFu) starts with a story about a murder, and it certainly works on that level, but I was much more drawn to the milieu, a theatrical presentation of **ROMEO AND JULIET** starring android actors, which, being expendable, really die when the script calls for their death. Look for her work; Fowler will be an important writer.

Robert Silverberg already is an important writer, of course, and **SAILING TO ERYZANTIUM** (Av's Feb) has the beauty of language and power of image that we have come to expect from his writing. People discovering that they are not as human as they thought (who are the actors, and who is the audience?), left me feeling curiously empty and disengaged; since this has often been my response to Silverberg's work, I can only assume

I AM VERY PARTIAL TO VIRGINS,
PARTIAL TO MATRONS, AND
SOMEWHAT PARTIAL TO GRAND-
MOTHERS...

EXCEPT
WHEN THEY
COMPARE ME
TO BENNY
GOODMAN.



that the flaw is in myself, for I certainly can't find it in the story.

FIELD TRIAL (Anlg Mar), by W.R. Thompson, seems to follow the standard rescue plot, but the real point of the story, surprisingly enough in **ANGLER**, is in the characters. One is a woman who has been cyborged into a useful but limited machine; the other is a flesh-and-blood woman who governs and doubts her own human value just as surely as the cyborg does. The cyborg who struggles to prove the value of life, and despite a rather clunky morning-after scene at the very end, found the story quite good. **MINOR SURGERY AND A POKER GAME** (Omni Mar) is burdened with a fairly dumb plot about a jealous cyborg ship that falls in love with a crew member, but M.G. Jacobs's delightful way with language made it possible to overlook the story flaws. Most of them, anyway.

And John Gribbin's idea story, **PROGRAMMED FOR DESTRUCTION** (Anlg Mar), has the interesting postulate that biological life (that's us, folks) will ultimately destroy not only itself, but also the superior mechanical life, which really ought to inherit the universe.

PARENT AND CHILD

There is no more potent human relationship than that of parent and child, which is why we devote so many stories to exploring its pain and power. We've already discussed **SHANIDAR** and **A STEP INTO DARKNESS**, which dealt with the subject most effectively. The sheer horror, the honor, go to Douglas E. Winter's **MASKS** (Mid), in which a boy who detests his stepmother finds out that he didn't know the half of it. It's enough to talk widowers out of remarriage. In marriage. In marriage. **THE FACE IN THE CLOTH** (FS&F Feb) tells of the needlework legacy left to a child whose mother died at her moment of birth. It is a compelling image Jane gives us, of children being free until she unpicks the threads from her mother's image and embroiders them as her own picture on the cloth.

John Morressey's **SOME WORK OF NOBLE NOTE** (FS&F Mar) suffers a bit from its distant fairy-tale tone, but I still say the story of the children and the hero watching their father as a dragon comes again, years after the heroic victories of his youth. I have even fewer complaints about **LULLABY FOR A CHANGE-LING** (Feb), by Nicholas Stuart Gray. Everyone is convinced that the infant brother was stolen by fairies and a nasty little changeling put in its place. Nettie goes to the fairies to demand that the children be restored; and in a solemn decision, the King of the Hills makes it impossible to tell which babe is which. In the end, Nettie wonders whether the infants were ever switched at all. It is a grand expression of the simultaneous desire and unease that parents feel toward their children.

Randolph Cirilo's **IN THE SHADOW OF THE CASTLE** (TZ Apr) is an uncomfortable little story of a lonely girl called into death by the magicking of her dead parents. And Jane Yolen's **THE THIRTEENTH KEY** (Fae) is a neatly twisted retelling of the Sleeping Beauty story, in which a rather clumsy young fairy causes all the problems. Her parents carefully and patiently spend a hundred years undoing her mistake. It is a testament from a writer who is also a loving and patient mother that the story had not ended on a tangent about

democracy that seemed unconnected to what the rest of the tale was about.

WHO IS HAUNTING WHO?

It is pure coincidence that two very good writers should publish stories in the same quarter that decided the same device: a character who does not know she is the ghost that is haunting someone else. Leanne Frahm's **THE VISITOR** (Mid) is a melancholy story of a lonely woman who still lives with her aunt after the traffic accident that crippled the old lady; what the younger woman never recognizes is that the same accident left her dead, and as an unseen ghost she is lonelier than ever. Kim Anteau's protagonist in **HAUNTINGS** (Av's Feb) is more conscious of what is going on; she thinks at first that her house is haunted, but at last realizes that she, though very much alive, is the "spirit" being summoned in a seance. Michael Bracken also creates ghosts who do not fear, but rather grieve for, as he brings a man back to his small town for his high school class's ten-year reunion in **OF MEMORIES DYING** (Mid); most of his class died in the Vietnam War, and fire, including the girlfriend he tried to save, but all of them are coming back tonight.

CHOOSING TO BE THE HERO

When a community needs a savior, it is not easy to choose to accept that role. In the very fine story **THE END OF LIFE AS WE KNOW IT** (Av's Jan), Lucius Shaelan is the life of a man and woman vacationing in Mexico, trying—or not—to save their marriage. The man impulsively casts his lot with a group of Latin-American revolutionaries; the woman assumes a role as a magical guardian of the man's life. In a sense, they choose very much together in the decision to devote themselves to people who truly need them.

Sheri S. Tepper's **PALDICE SHADOWBOX** (Fae) must go out into our mundane world and plant fantasy stories in the mind of a gifted writer or the world of fairies and magic would die away; the story is almost, but not quite, too sweet to stand.

Barry Malzberg's **QUARTERMAIN** (Av's Jan) has a chance to reenact the agonies of Christ in an attempt to earn the right to head his own religious cult. Those who provide the service also try to dissuade him from carrying it to its irreversible end; there is a mad sort of majesty to his persistence in this disturbing but, I believe, perfect tale. The salvation needed in **A CURSE FOR GROUP** (FF 2), by Edward P. Hughes, is not quite so painful. In an infertile post-holocaust world, the most valuable man is the one whose sperm is viable; that man becomes lord of the rather small domain and for the town's own good religiously exercises *droit du seigneur*. Those less civic-minded might do under the job, but our hero is convincingly reluctant.

PAYING THE PRICE

Everything we do, however necessary it seems, has a price that we will pay some time along in the line. In **THE KIBBLING** (WrFu), Leonard Carpenter depicts a southern California desert community that is paying the starkly gruesome price for the death of a mountain lake, which makes possible their well-watered lawns and morning showers. Though the structure of the story is as fragmented

as a Russian novel, Carpenter connects everything in a painful and excellent tale.

Eric L. Devin's **AVENGING ANGEL** (FF 2) is much more distant, since it is written more as history than fiction. It is a testament of a Confederate government official who helped develop a not-so-good idea that blew up the Capitol during Lincoln's Second Inaugural. Far from saving the South, it spurred the North to terrible vengeance; I liked the story well enough to overlook the historic impossibility of getting the very first thing off the rocket exactly on target. Werner von Braun would have eaten his heart out.

THE DEVIL

A NIGHT ON THE INTERCHANGE (Amz May) is the story of a human derelict who, in an effort to get across a California freeway, accidentally ends up in a surrealist hell well ahead of the scheduled arrival. Excellent writing and some well-realized images make James Haralson's first sale a delight to read, despite a feeble last punch at the end. Instead of a devil, the protagonist of **WITNESS THE RISE** (Amz May) gets a rather boring angel as her visitor in this delightful comedy. Author L.E. Carroll manages to be funny with surprisingly few clunkers in her first story.

Greg Bear's **DEAD RUN** (Omni Apr) is one of those stories with a great idea that got written down before the author had found the right way to use it. The main character, who drives a truck that carries dead souls to hell, is wonderful, as are the general breakdown of order at hell's borders and the surprisingly suburban life in hell itself. But the rapid plot about a Billy Graham-Jerry Falwell-type preacher being in charge of hell is both a cheap shot and a story-wrecker. I wish Bear would do it again as a novel that doesn't waste its time taking needless slaps at power-hungry religious leaders.

GETTING EVEN

We love revenge stories. When someone is hurt unfairly, we long to see them get some viciously appropriate justice. So Greg Bear's excellent **THROUGH**

LOOK UP THESE TALENTED NEW WRITERS!

Here are the names of writers whose first or second published story is well worth your notice. (Writers whose work shows exceptional promise or unusual maturity are marked with an asterisk.)

- Joseph Galabro (TZ Apr)
- Leonard Carpenter (WrFu)
- L.E. Carroll (WrFu)
- Randolph Cirilo (TZ Apr)
- * Randall Crump (WrFu)
- * Karen Joy Fowler (Av's Mar; WrFu)
- Michael J. Green (TZ Apr)
- James Haralson (Amz May)
- * Nina Hoffman (WrFu)
- * Alexander Jablokov (Av's Apr)
- Jor Jennings (WrFu)
- Ken McCormack (WrFu)
- Victor L. Rosemund (TZ Apr)
- David B. Schock (TZ Apr)
- Joel Henry Sherman (Amz May)
- * Dean Wesley Smith (WrFu)
- James Turpin (Amz Mar)
- Mary Farnsworth (WrFu)
- * David Zindell (WrFu)

ROAD NO WHITER (FF 1) tastes very sweet and very bitter. In it, the Nazis conquered Europe completely, with all the horror that would entail; but when two officers meet a gypsy woman who can travel the roads through time, they create revenge for all their crimes—by taking over our history, which the Nazis lost and their crimes stood exposed. In her lust for vengeance, however, she did not bother to alter time even further back, so their crimes were never committed at all; she let them kill their victims, so she could have her revenge.

Charles L. Harness's **CAJAMARCA PROJECT (Anlg Feb)** is a tale of Inca revenge, after half a millennium, for the Spanish conquest of their land. They develop a radical nitrogen-fixing bug, so that would quickly kill all the unacclimatized lowlanders; only the people of the mountains could survive. The only flaw is that Harness didn't prepare us for the central character's change of heart—it happened offstage, and that's cheating when the outcome depends on it. **THE THING FROM THE OLD SEAMAN'S MOUTH (WuFu)**, by Victor L. Rosenmund, is a horror story: a punk kills an old sailor, but is destroyed by the relentless creature that is released when the old man died. It might have worked, had we known how the old man got the creature in the first place.

SMACKS THAT RAT THEIR OWN TAILS

When writers write about writers, the result is almost always dull. However, when Norman Spinrad and Richard Matheson write, not about writers, but about writing, the result is two stories of ingenious and subtle paradox. Spinrad's **BRAIN SALAD (FF 1)** is a story within a story, each time told by a different person, until there is no hope of finding where reality is—if there is. Matheson's **PATTERN FOR SURVIVAL (TZ Apr)** is, if anything, even more cleverly convoluted, as a writer finishes his story and mails it off to an editor who instantly recognizes its worth and has it published that very day; the readers, too, are delighted they snatch the copies that same night. The catch is that every person who touches the story, from writer to audience, happens to be Richard A. Matheson, or Al, or Rick, or Ray, or Dick Allen. Even the characters in the story are Ras and the priestess of Shahleg. It takes "writing to please yourself" to a new extreme.

SEKINS STORIES

James Gunn seems to have found paydirt with his series of stories about a time-traveler who goes about altering the future. Unfortunately, the change he makes erases his own past and therefore his own memory—he has to inform himself of his own identity and most recent accomplishments through a tape recording. All the while, he gets stronger than the execution of the individual stories, but **TOUCH OF THE MATCH (Anlg Feb)**, **WOMAN OF THE YEAR (Anlg Apr)**, and **WILL OF THE WISP (Anlg May)** are readable and will no doubt make a solid collection.

NOT THEIR BEST WORK

It's disappointing when writer whose work is usually outstanding publishes a story that simply isn't up to snuff. It's may be unfair to measure all the writing of our most brilliant writers against the standard of their own best work. But, come to think of it, people judge all my work by the

standard those guys set, and in a way it's downright encouraging to know that even the best can sometimes turn out a turkey.

When Connie Willie's **WITH FRIENDS LIKE THESE (F&SF Feb)** is compared with Stephen R. Donaldson's earlier **Berzkerz** story, it yields a depressing lack of both story and character. The things I've ever read by either author. Fortunately, most of their work is so good that it doesn't have to be very bad to be their worst. Still, I suspect that for future reference we can conclude that it's a really dumb idea for a bunch of writers to try to create stories in a universe that another writer has already fully developed. Fred Saberhagen should write all the **Berzkerz** stories, and the other writers who do it, the results are far, far better.

Ray Bradbury's **TRAP DOOR (Omni Apr)** seems at first to be the master at his best. The language is right, the character, the situation. But at the end, nothing came together. We never found out what was up in the attic, what it wanted with the protagonist, or why the hell we even read the thing. Patricia McKillip's **A TROLL AND TWO ROSES (Fae)** is much better, but it suffers from the same disease. It's obvious at the end that McKillip, the finest writer of fantasy alive, expected her readers to be emotionally involved, but I, at least, was still trying to figure out what was going on and why.

Gregory Benford's **IMMORTAL NIGHT (Omni Apr)** starts off detached and never attaches. The tale of a man dying of cancer who wants to be immortal, the rich man who has received an immortality treatment that no one else can afford never makes us like or dislike or even care much at all about anybody. Everybody already knows that. Howard Waldrop's **FLYING SAUCER ROCK AND ROLL (Omni Jan)**, however, is probably my personal quirk. Last year saw a spate of rock-and-roll nostalgia stories. They were getting Nebula recommendations like crazy, but I thought they were all unbelievably sentimental and stupid. Waldrop's, like the others, depends on incantations of the names of groups and songs for its emotional effect. It's my favorite kind of literary technique: creating a weeping child or stage to make people cry, or making a fat person get stuck in a door to get a cheap laugh. What really pisses me off is that I wanted Waldrop to win the Nebula for **THE KUNES** this year, but he'll probably win it next year for this ugly little brat of a story.

IS THIS SF? AND DOES IT MATTER?

I can understand even the editors I often disagree with—I may not like most or what Stan Schmidt publishes in **Analog**, but at least I can understand what he's doing and why. With **Omni**, in recent years I have been completely confused. I could detect no system at all, and the magazine published several stories that were so bad I would have been shocked to see them in Ted White's **Analog**. My bafflement was partially eased a while ago when I read and explained something I hadn't known: that Ellen Datlow has to submit her requests for fiction purchases to some sort of committee. I should have recognized it—I've seen the results of editing by committee before. Ellen, forgive me for doubting you.

Truth is, **Omni** is not a genre magazine anything. It's that two of the best stories in its recent issues are not even remotely science fiction or fantasy, though they are of interest to **Omni's** audience, which likes to be intrigued and cares little about genre distinctions. In William Forde Kinley's **MAN WHO KNEW HIS BIRDS (Omni Feb)**, a bird expert suddenly begins hearing calls of birds that should have been thousands of miles away. Then he discovers that all the birds are coming from an old man who apparently has heard them all—and can mimic them perfectly. Frankly, I really wanted the old man to be able to imitate a few extinct species—the dodo, for instance, for instance—Kotzwinkle never stepped over into fantasy.

Marc Laidlaw's **SEA OF TRANQUILITY (Omni Feb)** is a nostalgia piece about a space-hungry family at the time of the moon landing. A young boy flirts with the conceit that his uncle is not human—but in fact the man is merely a science fiction reader. Both stories are good; they'll disappoint you only if you approach them expecting sf.

LOOSE ENDS

I've already taken more than my share of the space in SF; in mitigation I must plead that while in future columns I'll have but three months' worth of stories to review, this time I have five. Still, I do hope to pick up a few left-out issues—the January **Analog**, for instance, and the February **Dwilight Zone**, which I never saw here at the end of the world. (The book review section that North Carolina actually exists).

I must say that doing this column again was more pleasant than I expected, if only because several editors surprised me. For instance, Shawna McCarthy has turned **Analog** into the most consistent source of good short sf. Even Glen Felder, the editor who cringes whenever I see him quoted anywhere as an expert on writing, has managed to edit an **Analog** that truly amazes: it's better than **Analog**'s usually was when Richers edited it.

Jerry Bournelle and Jim Ben, the astounding new two-edited editor, have created a very exciting magazine with **Far Frontiers**. Once they got over the "here's what we're going to do" stuff in the first volume, they proved that they have the editing and judgment to revitalize the hard field, which has been moribund under **Analog's** tepid leadership.

I was saddened, though, to realize how empty of human beings **Analog's** fiction has become. Even the few stories that I liked well enough to review here generally lacked heart. The kind of intensely emotional non-science stories that I wrote when Ben Bova first published his own voice in **Analog** would never be in the magazine now. If I were starting out today, writing what I wrote back in 1976 and 1977, I suspect it would be **Analog**'s that would publish most of it, if anyone would. No doubt a lot of people with poet protectors are happy that **Analog** what it has become, but I'm not one of them.

The one magazine that I'm glad didn't surprise me was **Fantasy and Science Fiction**. On a relatively limited budget Ed Ferman manages to bring out a fine mix of excellent fiction nearly every month. May he continue forever.

CREATING FRIVOLOUS LITERARY THEORIES

BY DARRELL SCHWEITZER

In the January 1983 issue of F&SF, Algis Budrys descends from Mt. Sinai to smite the golden calf of academic criticism of science fiction. Most of his blows are well aimed: at ignorami who chase the slightest nuance of thematic drift for pages upon pages of turgid academic prose, but fail to do basic research, or even read a copyright page. The most spectacular example cited is the fellow who was teaching a course based on the idea that Orson Welles, who was responsible for the 1938 radio version of *THE WAR OF THE WORLDS*, was actually the son of H.G. Wells, and, further, the author of the radio script which in our space-time continuum at least was written by Howard Koch.

Budrys' subtext implies that the professor had the brain of a cucumber*, but that only applies if you assume that literary criticism has to adhere to some sort of scientific rigor and be right. If you believe that, you believe scholars should read copyright pages, and even call up authors to ask them questions about their work. But if you take literary criticism as art, as many of the people I knew in my years as an English Literature graduate student did, then the whole perspective changes. Such investigative digging would merely spoil the fun.

Taken as a particularly kinky flight of fancy, the Welles/Wells idea rates about a B. It's pretty good. It explains a lot of things which have puzzled scholars over the decades. Further, it now becomes possible to explain the hitherto inexplicable awfulness of the Orson Welles movie of *MACBETH* in terms of the direction, casting, set design, costuming and much of the acting having been done by Martians. It's frightfully convenient and elegant.

What it is, in fact, is a prime specimen of an old, but newly recognized art form, the Frivolous Literary Theory.

* One need not worry about hurt feelings with remarks like this. I keep in mind Sontag Sucharitkul's astute observation that every academic likes to hear academics insulted because he knows in his heart of hearts that he isn't one.

I was well on my way to becoming a practitioner of the Frivolous Literary Theory. (Hereafter F.L.T.)

The theory behind the Theory is simply this: It doesn't have to be true; it merely has to work. In other words, no matter how ridiculous, if it fits the seeming facts, and can't be disproven, your tenure may be assured. But more than that, a really good one, like a good example of any art, should have a grandeur and elegance about it. It should give aesthetic pleasure, and even have the power to change people's lives.

If we overlook such holdovers from antiquity as the old saw that the works of Homer were not written by Homer, but by someone of the same name, one of the earliest examples of the F.L.T. is also one of the most super-colossal: The Shakespeare-Bacon Controversy of the late 19th Century. This is sort of the Arthurian Legend of the F.L.T. It inspired great writers to contribute to its continuing growth. No less than Mark Twain wrote "Is Shakespeare Dead?" (in *WHAT IS MAN?*). George Bernard Shaw got endless mileage out of it. Then there were the two prominent female Baconians who went to the site of the alleged Bard's alleged grave, having concealed shovels, picks, and many a pneumatic drill under their copious Victorian skirts, petticoats, underskirts, underpetticoats, and whatever else women wore in those days. The plan was to hide till after closing time, then dig the old fakes up. Alas, they got scared away before they did, but benefitting from the experience, the two of them earned a handsome living as shoplifters in hardware stores, making off with numerous implements which they sold to laborers on the Capetown-to-Cairo railway at a tidy profit. They came to a patriotic, if Freudian end during World War I, when they tried to spirit away a top secret

Certainly one of the joys of being an English major is that you don't need to work with as many uncomfortable facts as you would if you were a Chemistry major. For the most part, you can just wing it. I used to write B-

plus quality term papers in one sitting, composed at the typewriter like fanzine articles. In fact, some of them were later published in fanzines. My favorite was the one for which I composed two "translations" of non-existent Anglo-Saxon elegies, then wrote a lengthy afterword, explaining how they came to be found ("in the binding of an Arabic sorcery text once owned by the Elizabethan scholar, Dr. John Dee"), why they varied from many A.S. poetic norms, where they fit into A.S. literature, and how they happened to contain wholly remarkable references to King Arthur, Constantine the Great, and other people I put in to make the alliteration work. So effectively was this done that when the thing was published in *ASH WING* a while later, half the readers seemed to believe it genuine, while the rest were merely puzzled at finding something like that in a fanzine. German cannon known as "Big Bertha." The German crew had left the safety off.

Actually, I will confess that in the previous paragraph, I have in fact indulged in a little F.L.T.-spinning (or maybe F. Historical T.-spinning) before your very eyes. And you must admit it works. After all, nobody ever conclusively proved that Shakespeare is in that grave, right?

I believe that the potential for Frivolous Literary Theorizing is in all of us, particularly in fans.

My friend, Lee Weinstein, (a real person, not made up by me; you may know him as the author of a splendid story, "The Box," in *WHISPERS II*, edited by Stuart Schiff) is a natural, a veritable goldmine of nonsense. Sometimes, as when we are driving together, when he is not trying to explain the basis of humor in terms of words which are inherently funny at the syllabic level (A Frivolous Linguistic Theory, and a good one), he might attempt something like this:

"Let's start a discussion on whether or not Edgar Allan Poe was black."

"He wasn't," I say.

"That's not much of a discussion."

This is to the F.L.T. what the haiku is to the epic poem. But we have come up with more elaborate ones.

Lee is a fan of William Hope Hodgson, who was a British horror and SF writer, the author of the very cosmic *THE HOUSE ON THE BORDERLAND*, which is sort of a classic, and *THE NIGHT LAND*, which is a monument to unreadability, and might be described as E.E. "Doc" Smith collaborating with Malory on a plot by Fenimore Cooper. Hodgson also wrote a number of pulp science fiction detective stories, *CARNACKI THE GHOST-FINDER*.

My theory is that August Derleth wrote the last Carnacki story.

(I hasten to add at this point that the modern state of the art prefers that the F.L.T. be on some esoteric subject. Ones about the biggies are a trifle passé.)

The beauty and terror of this theory, which I made up off the cuff, comes from the following facts, which I pointed out to Lee:

In 1917 Kaiser Wilhelm II made his sole contribution to fantastic literature, by having Hodgson blown up by a German artillery shell, possibly in revenge for the fate of Big Bertha. This rendered Hodgson incapable of refuting the rest of this theory.

The last Carnacki story, "The Hog," appeared for the first time in *WEIRD TALES* in 1947, then the same year, in the definitive edition of *CARNACKI THE GHOST-FINDER* appeared under Derleth's mystery imprint, Mycroft & Moran.

That very year *WEIRD TALES* published "The Churchyard Yew," allegedly a newly discovered story by J. Sheridan LeFanu (conveniently died, 1873), which turned out to be a hoax perpetrated by Derleth.

Nobody but Derleth has ever seen the manuscript for "The Hog."

Further, the story seems to contain borderline Cthulhu Mythos elements, which would have to post-date Hodgson's lifetime. In 1917 Lovecraft was little more than an eldritch recluse and scribbler of bad verse.

Considering that Derleth faked one "lost" story by a famous dead author, why not two?

The only objection to this is that "The Hog" is too good to be the work of Derleth, who was a third-rater on his best days, and rarely that when imitating other people. However, as the academics kept telling me in my grad student days, a scholar cannot afford to consider quality. (In the

sense of being bored because the thing you are studying is a load of crap.) TITUS ANDRONICUS is fully as worthy a subject of scholarship as *HAMLET*. So there.

I guess they must have impressed some of their thinking on me, because I'm rather proud of this insidious theory of mine. It's like a sonnet that goes together with flawless ease. It may not say anything profound, but it is unquestionably a technically perfect sonnet. This is, again, the very essence of the F.L.T.

And my theory works frighteningly well. For all its frivolity, Lee became seriously interested or at least disquieted by the fiendish elegance of it. He wrote to a noted American Hodgson expert, who replied that, indeed, there might be some merit in the idea, and referred him to a British expert, who had allegedly seen the manuscript of "The Hog." The British fellow didn't know what the American was talking about, but suggested that if anyone would know, it would be the folks at Arkham House.

So at a World Fantasy Con, Lee and I confronted the editor of Arkham House, James Turner, with the idea. The two of them discussed it seriously for a while. Then Turner asked, "Where did you get this idea, anyway?"

"Oh," I piped up cheerfully. "I made it up."

For a moment there, it seemed he was about to permanently remove the possibility that I would ever become an Arkham House author. I don't think he appreciates a good F.L.T. any more than Algis Budrys does.

And there it hangs, tantalizingly inviting further investigation, nothing disproven. The road to the Ph.D. mill is paved with many less plausible serious literary theories.

If I designed swamps, I suppose I would get as much satisfaction out of a really good patch of quicksand. Gloating is one of the joys of the F.L.T.

However, I don't claim to be the leading modern practitioner of this art. The honor goes to my literary idol, Lord Dunsany. In the course of collecting material for a book I edited, *THE GHOSTS OF THE HEAVISIDE LAYER* (a collection of previously uncollected stories, essays, etc., Owlswick Press, 1980), I found a really classic specimen that His Lordship wrote for *PUNCH*, "The Authorship of BARRACK ROOM BALLADS."

The alleged purpose of this article is to prove that Swinburne didn't write Kipling. First, Dunsany presents the evidence so often touted by Swinburnians. Kipling was too young, under-educated and inexperienced to have written such masterpieces as the *BALLADS* and *PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS*,





while they could have been more plausibly produced by an older, more experienced literary figure. It is true that Swinburne supposedly died in 1909, but he had been a virtual recluse for years before that and could well have continued to do so while writing the material which, in order to maintain his privacy, he ascribed to a young journalist then living in India.

To disprove this, Dunsany presents an overwhelming piece of evidence reminiscent of the Shakespearean cyphers: a sonnet by Swinburne, in which the first letters of each line spell out "I DID NOT WRITE IF."

It follows that if Swinburne denied writing Kipling's most famous work, he must not have written any of it.

However, for all the sonnet reads like Swinburne, and even fits into a sonnet sequence he did it does not appear in any edition of his collected poems. I know because I checked. It is in fact an extremely clever pastiche by Dunsany.

I am left speechless with admiration at the brilliance of this ploy. Dunsany created a compelling F.L.T., then pretended to lay it to rest, utilizing a crucial piece of evidence which a minimal amount of research will prove to be a fake. It doesn't matter that he didn't believe a word of what he wrote. These things have a life of their own, like my Hodgson/Derleth theory. The seed has been planted. Someday, no doubt, some academician will owe his lifetime salary to Lord Dunsany.

I doubt I'll ever be able to do better than that. But then Dunsany was a better writer than I am.

However, I can try. Here's my latest. It is like a vast clockwork, the gears furiously spinning, connected to nothing in particular. But they do spin.

So shut up and admire the design.

At the risk of seeming passé, we return to Edgar Allan Poe, a writer whose high reputation rests on the fact that few people ever read the majority of what he wrote. If you go beyond the few famous stories, you'll find dry, synoptic little stories, appalling attempts at humor, and general ineptitude which will surprise you. You will come away with the impr-

ession that the few good stories are so different, they seem to be the work of another writer.

My theory is that they were written by M.G. Lewis.

Matthew Gregory Lewis (born 1775) was an Englishman, the author of THE MONK, one of the most noted Gothic novels. After a brief burst of literary notoriety he died in 1818 on a ship in the Caribbean. His funeral had a suitably eldritch touch, His coffin did not sink. The wind caught the shroud like a sail, and off he went, out of sight over the horizon.

So much for history. My theory is that in the course of the long and boring voyage, Lewis had a burst of creativity, and penned over a dozen first-rate tales. But, when he knew his end was near he was beset by a fit of niggardliness, and insisted on taking the fruits of his labors with him. His coffin was lined with manuscripts. About twenty years later it was washed up on the shore of Virginia, where it was found by an unhappy, unsuccessful and rather morbid young man -- you guessed it.

It has been noted that most of Poe's best tales have European settings and subject matter and hearken back to the Gothics more than they resemble anything in American literature of the time.

Nevertheless, Poe was able to pass the manuscripts off as his own. He used them sparingly. Slowly his reputation grew as "The Masque of the Red Death," "A Cask of Amontillado," "The Black Cat," and the rest appeared. He became a modest financial success, but kept ruining himself with his drinking. The drinking, of course, was brought on by the haunting realization that he would never, never produce one such masterpiece himself and on the day that his supply ran out, he would be ruined.

So once upon a midnight dreary, as he pondered weak and weary over what he would do next, in from night's Plutonian shore flew a large black bird which had escaped from an Italian organ grinder who couldn't afford a monkey.

"Oh, when will I be able to equal such tales?" Poe moaned rhetorically, in despair. "When will I write something worthy of myself?"

Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

#

Go ahead. Try to disprove it.



OTHER VOICES

BENCHMARKS: GALAXY BOOKSHELF
By Algis Budrys
S. Ill. Univ. Press, 400 pp, \$19.95

REVIEWED BY MARK BERRY

As the title indicates, this is a collection of book reviews which Budrys wrote for *GALAXY* magazine from February 1965 to December 1971. The style is quite similar to the one he uses in his current review column in *THE MAGAZINE OF FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION*.

You might be asking yourself why you should buy a collection of fifteen-year-old book reviews. Well, as it turns out, there are several good reasons.

First, 1965-1971 was a rather good time for speculative fiction with such important books as *DANGEROUS VISIONS*, *DUNE*, *BUG JACK BARON*, *THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS* and *THE MOON IS A HARSH MISTRESS* first seeing the light of day. All of these plus 151 other books are subjected to the unique Budrys style of criticism.

Budrys gives you his reasons for doing the column (and this collection) in the first words of his Foreword:

'A book should be good. A bird should fly.

'Writers of imperfect, tousled books should be made aware that standards of breeding and grooming exist. I strive to fulfill that function.

'Would-be writers peering in should be made aware of the same thing. In addition, they are then reasonably entitled to a practicable amount of technical and theoretical forth-putting, intended to hasten the day of their excellence. I claim to act within that compass as well.'

Budrys is probably the finest critic of speculative fiction today. Damon Knight, Harlan Ellison and Marta Randall say so and I tend to agree with them.

The operative word here is *critic*. Though these pieces are referred to as reviews, they are actually pieces of criticism, linking whichever books are being examined to the field and, at times, the world as a whole.

Budrys is witty, incisive and sometimes nasty. The one thing he

is not is bland. You may agree or disagree with his opinions, but either way his essays are bound to arouse strong emotions.

Now then, who is this book for? Well, if the first or second item which you turn to in *F&SF* each month is Budrys' column, then shell out the twenty bucks and buy this book. For those people, it will be money well spent. Also, if you are interested in the state of the field during that pivotal period you might want to consider buying it. However, the casually interested reader (unless he/she is much richer than I) will want to wait and see if a paperback edition comes out.

If you would like to get a better idea of what the book is like pick up a few copies of *F&SF* and read Budrys' column, "On Books." *BENCHMARKS* is just as interesting as the contemporary columns.

If you want insight into one of the most vital eras of the genre, with a guided tour from the best SF critic around, with occasional pitstops to examine such topics as fandom, the business of publishing and several other subjects, then order this book. It will make a valuable addition to any serious reader's bookshelf.

STEPHEN KING: THE ART OF DARKNESS
By Douglas E. Winter
Nal Books, Nov 1984, 252 pp., \$14.95

REVIEWED BY MICHAEL A. MORRISON

Why is Stephen King so popular? Why have his fantasies of

violence, horror and chaos captivated millions of readers? He writes well. He fills his tales with gritty, easily visualized, here-and-now settings and characters who are so real that they get right up off the page and walk into our minds. And he plots like a born yarn spinner. But these facile observations seem inadequate to explain the mesmerizing power of a Stephen King novel. How does he do it?

In *STEPHEN KING: THE ART OF DARKNESS*, Douglas Winter definitively answers this question. Winter is a young Washington lawyer who in his spare time has made himself the foremost critic of horror fiction -- or "dark fantasy," as it is known by aficionados," as it is known by aficionados," as it was recently described by T.E.D. Klein, editor of *THE TWILIGHT ZONE* magazine and himself the author of such brilliant horror stories as *THE CEREMONIES* (1984), as "the horror genre's most influential observer," its Edmund Wilson and Boswell with a touch of cheerleader thrown in." Winter has written on King's fiction before, in his *READER'S GUIDE TO STEPHEN KING* (Starmont House, 1982) -- of which *THE ART OF DARKNESS* is a major expansion -- and in "The Night Journeys of Stephen King" in the critical anthology *FEAR ITSELF: THE HORROR FICTION OF STEPHEN KING* (Harcourt-Brace, 1982). But *THE ART OF DARKNESS* is his magnum opus: a readable, provocative literary appreciation cum biography cum analysis of the works of one of America's most widely-read authors.

Winter concentrates on King's novels -- from the early, introspective fables of *CARRIE* (1974), *SALEM'S LOT* (1975) and *THE SHINING* (1977), to the rationalized, sociopolitical horror tales of *THE STAND* (1978), *THE DEAD ZONE* (1979), *FIRESTARTER* (1980) and "The Mist," and the more personal terrors of *CUJO* (1981), *DIFFERENT SEASONS*



HERE'S TODAY'S
REVIEW COMES!

(1982), CHRISTINE (1983) and PET SEMATARY (1983), finally arriving at the King-Straub collaboration THE TALISMAN (1984). He also briefly discusses King's lesser-known books -- THE DARK TOWER: THE GUNSLINGER (1982) and THE CYCLE OF THE WEREWOLF (1983) -- and provides tantalizing glimpses of several forthcoming books. As if that was not enough, THE ART OF DARKNESS includes invaluable primary and secondary bibliographies and appendices covering King's short fiction and film adaptations of his work.

Winter eschews the sclerotic jargon and constricting structures of academic literary criticism in favor of an appealing, conversational style. His informal tone is enhanced by extensive quotations from King that Winter liberally sprinkles throughout each chapter. These remarks -- taken from King's non-fiction book DANSE MACABRE (1981), from hard-to-find published interviews and from over 12 hours of taped conversations, in fuse THE ART OF DARKNESS with the presence of Stephen King. The result is rather like sitting down over a few beers with King and his enthusiastic Boswell to ram about his books. Winter documents King's meteoric rise in popularity following the success of Brian de Palma's 1976 film of CARRIE and the paperback publication in the same year of SALEM'S LOT, how these and other novels came to be written and how King feels about them now. Along the way, Winter and King treat us to dozens of choice tidbits of inside information: about King's first bestseller (a novelization of the American International film THE PIT and THE PENDULUM), about his planned sequel to SALEM'S LOT and the return of Randall Flagg in the forthcoming novel THE NAPKINS, about how he and Peter Straub developed and wrote THE TALISMAN, etc. But the heart of THE ART OF DARKNESS is Winter's critical analyses of King's novels and why they are such potent entertainments.

The theme that gives coherence to this eclectic book is "the night journey" -- a complex, multi-faceted motif that Winter sees as central to King's fiction. In its broadest sense, the night journey is an interior exploration through which King's Everyman characters come to confront their (and our) true natures; only after their night journeys can these characters cope with the terrible moral dilemmas they must face. It is also the journey towards death that each must take, accompanied by the ghosts of our childhood selves. And it is the descent into horror that King's readers know and relish.

But there is more than horror and death in the novels of Stephen King. By skillfully placing these novels in a clearly-defined social, political and literary context, Winter demolishes the charge that King is a hack writer of "trash," proving that he is a romantic, naturalistic, social novelist of the first rank and that his contemporary fairy tales mirror, probe and comment on the anxieties, the psychic pressure points, of our time.



Winter writes most perceptively on those novels in which sociopolitical themes are paramount. In the epic fantasy THE STAND (1978), for example, King contrasts the "dual landscapes" of America before and after the coming of Captain Tripps, the plague that wipes out almost all of her people. Winter unveils the purpose behind this metaphor (p. 57): "Superimposing the illusions of our modern world upon the ravished landscape of catastrophe, King explores the strange mixture of myth and reality that comprises our perception of America," and follows this insight with a provocative analysis of the distortions and ironies that define our self-image. Winter's sociological commentary is not gratuitous, however; it supports his critical stance: that King uses dual landscapes and other Gothic devices to highlight the paradoxically necessary but stultifying nature of Western civilization.

His analyses of King's more personal novels are equally acute. In PET SEMATARY, arguably the best of these books, King confronts the ultimate secret, the bedrock of horror and the end of all our night journeys: death. Winter examines King's remarkable trans-

formation of his rather hackneyed plot device -- a breach of the barrier between life and death -- into a haunting vivification of the perils of blind rationalism in the late twentieth century.

In addition to illuminating "the intrinsically subversive art" of these and other novels, Winter offers a thoughtful study of the nature and role of dark fantasy and of the need it alone seems to satisfy. To succeed as "surrogate night journey" from, as King puts it, "the land of the living to the land of the dead," horror fiction must be firmly grounded in the very reality from which it offers uneasy escape. Paradoxically, great tales of terror must focus on precisely the fears from which their readers want to hide. Typically, they resolve this paradox by focusing on the emotions of fear, eliciting these emotions via blatantly un-real constructs like vampires and werewolves. As Winter puts it (p. 100): "...the best horror fiction is a dark analogue of reality, its authors consciously or unconsciously expounding fears that are a reflection or subtle variation of actual fears." And that is why Stephen King has become "America's storyteller."

A reviewer is never satisfied. I wish Winter had written more about King's less familiar, now out-of-print books, especially the enigmatic THE DARK TOWER: THE GUNSLINGER. I wish he had given us more than a couple of pages on THE CYCLE OF THE WEREWOLF, in which King explicitly uses the motif of the werewolf. This motif, symbolic of the beast within man and representative of internal evil, is implicit in many of King's novels and, as Winter suggests, is important to understanding horror fiction. And I wish he had discussed the structure and thematic content of King's major short stories in a chapter-length essay, rather than limit his coverage of these stories to the admittedly valuable synopses in Appendix A.

But these are minor quibbles. THE ART OF DARKNESS is literary commentary at its finest: readable, unpretentious and suffused with intelligence and enthusiasm for King's novels and the genre of dark fantasy. Whether writing on the dark nature of evil in THE DEAD ZONE, the brutal, unrelenting realism of GUNJO, the cinematic qualities of "The Mist," or any of the host of other topics in this book, Winter -- like the best literary critics -- enhances rather than spoils the pleasures and frissons of the original works. THE ART OF DARKNESS is easily the best writing yet on America's master of

horror and is sure to become mandatory reading for King's legion of fans.

BELOVED EXILE

By Parke Godwin
Bantam, July 1984, (from an advance reading copy), 422 pp., \$6.95

REVIEWED BY CHARLES DE LINT

FIRELORD (Doubleday, 1980) was the first panel of Parke Godwin's triptych of Roman Britain and one of the finest novels to be released that year. What raised it head and shoulders above most other Arthurian Matter was the uncanny perfection of its characterization. The story was told from the first person perspective of Arthur himself and brought the legends down to earth without ever losing the magic that has made the tales of King Arthur and his knights perhaps the most popular story-cycle of all time. At the end of FIRELORD, the King received his deathwound at the battle of Badon against his son Modred. In his new novel, BELOVED EXILE, Godwin continues the story from Guenevere's perspective and tells what became of her after Arthur's death.

It begins with Bedivere bringing the Queen the imperial sword and the news of her husband's death, then chronicles her subsequent attempts to hold together the country that she and Arthur had welded into one nation under the Red Dragon banner of the Pendragon. There is a fascinating excursion into the customs and beliefs of the Icings, the English tribes who first brought the notion of parliament into Britain; Arthur's knights, the combrogi, are present again -- older, though not always wiser; Coel, the monk who transcribed Arthur's life in FORELORD, returns; and there is an entirely new rich cast of characters ranging from the Icings thegn Gunnar Emboldson to Raida, known as Rat, who becomes Guenevere's confidant during her exile.

But, as in FIRELORD, what sets BELOVED EXILE apart is the sheer reality of its major protagonist. Such is Godwin's skill with characterization, that it's impossible not to believe that this is who Guenevere was and why she was. Her reactions to the glories and the betrayals, the joys and the losses, are in turn moving, aggravating, resigned, but always real. There are no shining knights in this book, nor glorious quests. There are only the deeds of men and women that time and the bards have shaped into legend. Or as Guenevere herself says at the end of FIRELORD: "We didn't win it all,

but we gave it a fine try. The two of us in a legend: I've always fancied that, but won't we shock them?"

If you've grown tired of the Arthurian Matter -- because it always seems the same, those unchanging characters parading through those situations that we all have come to know so well -- then do give BELOVED EXILE a try. The legends are there, the magic is present, for all the gritty reality of the tale's presentation. As Godwin himself has said: "It should have happened this way, it could have, and perhaps it did." Still to come is the final panel of this triptych, THE LAST RAINBOW. Until then, as Arthur and Guenevere bade each other: "Rest you gentle; sleep you sound."

THIS PLACE IS A DEN
OF FANATICISM AND
IMBECILITY!



THE WILD SHORE

By Kim Stanley Robinson
Ace SF Special, 371 pp., \$2.95

REVIEWED BY ROBERT SABELLA

I approached this novel with high expectations for several reasons. Kim Stanley Robinson is an excellent science fiction writer with such recent credits as "Venice Drowned," "To Leave A Mark" and the award-winning "Black Air." The original Ace Science Fiction Special Series edited by Terry Carr was probably the best long-running series of science fiction novels ever. Finally, there have been many rumors that Carr waited for Robinson's manuscript to begin the series although he already had other novels waiting for publication.

Although high expectations have ruined nearly as many novels as shoddy plotting, Robinson did not disappoint me. In fact, THE WILD SHORE is the best science fiction novel I have read in many years. Typical of Robinson, its premise is simple: a small group

of people struggle to survive in San Onofre, California several decades after the United States was virtually destroyed by nuclear bombing. The author briefly discusses the bombardment itself as well as why the world's powers are preventing the U.S. from rebuilding, but his main concern is examining life in a civilization that is decadent compared to the richness and sophistication of a few generations earlier. He convincingly portrays a state of mind that has a greater effect on the lives of San Onofre's people than their physical hardships.

THE WILD SHORE has many strengths. Robinson's America is much more than a fictional creation, but a living and breathing world. His people are so believable that I was completely caught up in their emotions, laughing with them, fearing for them, nearly shedding tears when one of them died. His plot is both logical and interesting. It mostly concerns San Onofre's dealing with San Diego, a much larger settlement with considerably different views on rebuilding and how these differences affect a group of teenagers dissatisfied with how their primitive lifestyles compare to America's previous greatness.

This is that rare type of science fiction novel that I did not want to end, but wished it would continue for the rest of its characters' lives. I hope that Robinson resists the temptation to write a sequel, since it seems impossible that anything could ever equal this book.

A GUIDE TO THE STAR WARS UNIVERSE
Compiled by Raymond L. Velasco
Del Rey, 215 pp., \$2.95, illus.

REVIEWED BY JOHN DIPRETE

Would you believe that Lucas' trio of STAR WARS films spawned over a thousand new words, names and expressions -- enough to fill a 215-page book? Well, 'tis so. Scour Raymond L. Velasco's A GUIDE TO THE STAR WARS UNIVERSE and learn about creatures, such as the dinko and dianoga; characters, such as Admiral Ackbar and Big Bunji; devices, such as a flexclamp and glimmer stick; droids, such as an agri-robot and astromech; events, such as the Clone Wars and the Third Battle of Vontor; colloquialisms, such as choobies and jizz-wailer; institutions, such as the Sith and the Alpha team; technological abstractions, such as the Force and hypno-imprinting; vessels, such as the B-wing fighter and gravsled; weaponry, such as an activation

stud and lightsaber; and places, such as the Cloud City and Akrit-tar.

A brave new lexicon of ideas (in parts semi-familiar to science fiction readers) comprises this self-contained, illustrated dictionary-universe. Indeed: virtually every dialogue-segment in each film must have featured a flashy gimmick-team; the six hours of snappy voice patter almost had to be digested, as if they were a foreign tongue.

If you wish to know Skywalker's galaxy inside-out, follow this cosmic yellow brick road.



INCARNATE
By Ramsey Campbell
TOR, 1984, 499 pp., \$3.95

REVIEWED BY STUART NAPIER

If you can't stop dreaming do your dreams become reality? and if they do, do you have the power to shape and mold them or are you forever caught in the dreadful undertow of someone else's nightmare?

These questions are explored by Ramsey Campbell in his latest novel, INCARNATE, a complex and ambitious horror tale set in modern London, England. The story picks up eleven years after a group experiment in prophetic dreaming from which none of the original participants emerged unchanged. Campbell's writing style is crisp and clean with a sure sense of dialogue -- sentence by sentence -- yet somehow the novel still seems to take too long coming to grips with the central issues. It's not really padding: Each line builds effectively on the preceding one. Nonetheless, you are better than half way through this 499-page book before what's going on begins to be more than slightly clear -- and further still before the main character, Molly Wolfe, has even the vaguest idea why her life has turned into a shambles lately.

Campbell is a top-flight writer of horror fiction; this time out, however, he gets bogged down in unnecessary details with an interesting plot that if developed more tightly (say under 200 pages) would have had more impact. As it is, the novel tends to drag and its conclusion was more a relief than a revelation.

CREVEL LYE: A CAUSTIC YARN
By Piers Anthony
Del Rey/Ballantine, 309 pp., \$3.50

REVIEWED BY PAUL MCGUIRE

Xanth is a place of enchantment of whatever size is most convenient. Everything in it either is or has magic. Most sentences in this book either is or has a pun, (many of which were sent to Mr. Anthony by readers who are acknowledged by him in an Afterword which functions as sort of a club newsletter). No need to look beyond the title for an example of puns, and inside they really pun amuck. They also figure into the nature of Xanth; a shoe tree is a tree which grows shoes for example, and there are several dozen more examples counting trees alone.

Main characters from other books in the series (this is the eighth) are presented or referred to in the opening chapter when a little girl encounters the ghost of an ancient warrior. Nearly all of the novel is the first-person narrative flashback telling the story of the ghost's life. He was a barbarian who set off to be an adventurer. After capturing a pooka (here it is a half-alive and half-ghost horse covered with chains), they become friends and companions. There are a few little adventures and then he arrives at Castle Roogna and the dying king gives him a mission. Two magicians are contesting to succeed the king, so the barbarian is sent on a quest to bring back an unnamed object which will decide the issue one way if he succeeds, the other if not. The good magician gives him spells which will counteract the spells set against him by the bad magician, but the spells are mixed up so that when he uses one it is with no idea which one he is using, but he uses them anyway.

The object he is to fetch is a half demon woman who does not want to go with him. In fact, she kills him a few times. (The barbarian's magic talent is regeneration.) The latter half of the book deals with his attempts to get her to the castle, her attempts to escape, monsters encountered and fought or fooled, a delightful section where they exchange bodies plus several spells, curses and all the usual -- leading up to the cruel lie which dooms him.

It may take one a while to warm up to this novel. At times the writing can be relentlessly cute, and it takes the plot a long time to get started. On the other hand, there is a fair amount of genuine wit in addition to the endless puns, the bumbling lout who is the

hero does grow on one, a peculiar logic underlies the silliness of Xanth, and Anthony is a storyteller. ("Yam" is precisely the right word for this book.) At a time when much, if not most, heroic fantasy seems to be the same novel being published under different titles and by-lines, Xanth at the very least is something different inside, and a quite pleasant read.

THE GLAMOUR
By Christopher Priest
1984, 303 pp., £8.50
Jonathan Cape Ltd, London

REVIEWED BY MARK COFTA

Christopher Priest's novels sail across the ocean with little fanfare, too often to sit neglected on library shelves, falling between the marketing categories of SF and "mainstream." His works are a treat, though, and the strange world of THE GLAMOUR is one of his best.

"There is a hierarchy of visual interest," Sue tells her lover, Richard. "In any group of people there is someone who is noticed last." Or not at all, in THE GLAMOUR. Richard, Sue and her possessive former boyfriend Niall share the ability to become invisible that they call "the glamour." In this hierarchy, the lowest have become the highest: the glamorous, invisible except (usually) to each other, roam the world, living on what they take.

Richard, a film photographer, narrowly survived a car-bomb explosion. While convalescing months later, Sue comes to him, explaining that she was his lover. He suffers from partial amnesia and remembers nothing of the weeks before the accident. Sue tries to reawaken his love for her and his awareness of his glamour. The story unfolds through several points of view and includes Niall's mysterious, mischievous interference in their affair and Richard and Sue's coming to terms with their powers.

Priest has a gift for making the reader question his perceptions just as his characters question their own. THE GLAMOUR, like THE AFFIRMATION, A DREAM OF WESSEX (in U.S., AN INFINITE SUMMER) and INVERTED WORLD, offers convincing alterations of our world. This novel, layered with different levels of perception, gives us complex, believable characters and an uncertain reality populated by shadowy invisibles. Priest tantalizes the reader by keeping truth elusive and events richly textured.

More explanation would reveal

matters better left to the imagination and a full reading of this engrossing new novel. Priest's answers may not completely satisfy, but in THE GLAMOUR, the fun is in getting to them.

THE MAKING OF DUNE

By Ed Naha
Berkeley, 299 pp., \$5.95, illus.

REVIEWED BY ALMA JO WILLIAMS

Here is another foray into the world of movie making. The photos are excellent black and white -- the only color is on the glossy front and back covers. Unless you are interested in special effects (hundreds of condoms, split longitudes and covered with latex -- gelatin mixtures were used for the worm tendons in the worm-riding scenes) don't waste your money.

DOON

By Ellis Weiner, National Lampoon
style, Pocket Books, 221 pp., \$2.95

REVIEWED BY ALMA JO WILLIAMS

Plots within laughs within puns! Meet Pall Agamemrides, Lady Jazzica, Flip Rotha and Baron Hard-chargin, Emperor Shaddup, the Freed-menmen, etc. etc., on Ioon, the Dessert Planet, where no entrees are to be found, where the wild pretzels roam and make beer. Learn how Pall receives the name, Mauve'-Bib, ew's Princess Serutan's chapter headings, laugh your way through the Glossary of unfamiliar Imperium and Arruckus terms and find out how Pall discovers that he is the long-awaited Kumkwat Haagendasz. Good for a 45-minute giggle.

HORSEMASTER

By Marilyn Singer
Atheneum, Jan 1985, 179 pp., \$13.95

REVIEWED BY CHARLES DE LINT

Through the magic of an antique tapestry, Jessica Walken and her friend, Jack Manning, are transported to another world where Jessica finds herself caught up between warring factions made up of the rightful King Tarkesh and his unfaithful wife Talliya who wishes to have her son Smerdis crowned King in her husband's place. All Jessica wants to do is rescue Jack who has been captured by the Queen's forces and then return to her own world, but she is forced into a far more pivotal role. Because of the ma-lat, or magic, in Jessica, she is the protector of the horse depicted in the tapestry -- Gabdon, the Horse God's son. She must de-

cide between giving the tapestry and its power to the Queen and thereby rescuing Jack and letting Tarkesh's kingdom be taken over by evil, or letting Jack die and saving the kingdom.

Marilyn Singer's first novel is a complex, fast-paced tale, but it has enough underlying resonances to lift it beyond a simple action story. Her otherworld has a welcome Middle Eastern flavor and her characters are, for the most part, well-rounded. There is perhaps a little too much reliance on coincidence in parts of the plot, but the novel on a whole is strong enough not to be damaged by that. Recommended to anyone who enjoys Joyce Kilmer Gregorian's work or Robin McKinley's Damar books.

THE IVANHOE GAMBIT (#1)
THE TIMEKEEPER CONSPIRACY (#2)
THE PIPERINELL PLOT (#3)
By Simon Hawke
Ace SF, 1984, \$2.75

REVIEWED BY STUART NAPIER

If you are ready to put your mind on cruise control and go with the flow of a rousing SF adventure series this may be just what you need.

THE TIME WARS TRILOGY is presently available in three separate paperbacks. Each book stands alone fairly well despite the full flavor of the series not being gained unless you read them consecutively. The possibility of a single book collecting all three (each runs approximately 200 pages) probably depends on reader response to the books now in print but it seems a natural to me.

The premise of the series is that time travel has been perfected and citizens of the far future fight their wars in the past: joining ranks with the existing armies in a selected "present" so as to not disturb the time lines. There are Referees to oversee all this and a Temporal Corps to go back and straighten out things whenever a "time split" appears likely.

The series follows the adventures of Lucas Priest and Finn Delaney, temporal agents, as they struggle to maintain the delicate equilibrium needed to preserve the time lines while constantly fending off the disruptive efforts of the "Mongoose," a maverick temporal agent and master of disguise who has his own plans for the past. As the titles imply, these three books use as their settings the 12th through the 17th centuries and it wouldn't surprise me if Hawke just keeps cranking them

out. There are lots of centuries left!

Hawke's writing style is vivid and colorful with a nice touch for humor that sometimes unintentionally lapses into satire. It's just personally bothersome to me that the residents of the past never get out of a desperate situation -- our heroes drop their swords in favor of their trusty laser weapons. But, men who have just been surgically dissected by a laser sword rarely ask questions; right?

When you are tired of struggling with that Phillip K. Dick book you've been meaning to finish reading for some time or have seen all the BATTLESTAR GALACTICA reruns twice and still crave more ACTION, these are the books to turn to.

ON THE DOWN HILL SIDE

The Harlan Ellison Record Collection

REVIEWED BY ALMA JO WILLIAMS

Harlan Ellison reads ON THE DOWN HILL SIDE. Those who are already members of The Harlan Ellison Record Collection can skip on to the next article. For those of you who are not, you are wasting time NOT joining!! Ellison's readings are excellent -- in fact, I enjoy them more than the recordings of his "one man shows given at various locations throughout the length and breadth of the land." Many of you are too young to remember the Golden Days of Radio and the gifted albeit faceless performers who either acted or read for our education and entertainment. (God, how I miss it!) Harlan is a throwback to those thrilling days of yesteryear, and his vocal nuances can evoke whatever experiences and scenes of your psyche to create your own private world for story illustration far better than anything MTV could ever film.

The cover by Don Ivan Punchatz is striking black background framing the rainbow unicorn head and neck in skeletal and anatomical perfection; the Dust Jacket program notes are by Gil Lamont; the music is gentle, gothic, wistful; it was composed by Elise Morris who sings the song "Lizette" at the end.

What! You never heard of it? Well, send \$5.00 to the Harlan Ellison Record Collection, 8530 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 309, Beverly Hills, CA 90211, and get a real treat!!





Illustration by Peter 1995

OUT OF THE CRADLE: EXPLORING THE FRONTIERS BEYOND EARTH
By William K. Hartmann, Ron Miller, & Pamela Lee
Workman, 1984, 190 pp., \$11.95

REVIEWED BY ANDREW M. ANDREWS

This slick, colorful photo book upholds the excitement and promise of space exploration like no other, keeping alive the dream that the US people and others have for colonizing space -- if we can make it there without frying our planet in thermocuclear hell.

OUT OF THE CRADLE brings to me, as a reader, the same childhood glee I had anxiously thumbing the pages of a book I remember published in 1958 by Doubleday called EXPLORING THE PLANETS, except where EXPLORING laid on the color and strange alienness of our solar system, OUT OF THE CRADLE presents it with special effects -- the authors and illustrators have shown they do believe in what they do.

CRADLE remains only so far away from being a textbook, but doesn't get ridiculously like a comic book either -- we're treated to the history of space exploration coupled with the most spectacular, unanimated, we're looking at real space shots taken above our planet, on the moon, an array that would and does dazzle your mind and heart. There is art, there is a special kind of beauty in the whimsy of the photo of an astronaut high above the earth in a manned maneuvering unit, to the illustrative construction of space colonies, to the artistry depicting the playfulness of the first child born in space, to the exploration of Jupiter and its moons, Saturn and its moons, Uranus -- and beyond. There is a haunting beauty to the photospread on pages 88-89, a captivating rendition of visitors to the Tranquility Monument, while the hold-foil clad bottom stage of the Apollo craft sits in repose, reflected in their facelates. Flowers growing profusely in the lunar colony, strange beauty even unto the death of the explorer on Mars, pictured on page 126. It makes you wonder:

What is taking us so long to get there?

If you want your child to know about space -- or if you're looking for the one strong testament to space exploration -- read this book and rejoice. We're getting there.

NIGHT VISIONS I

Edited by Alan Ryan
Dark Harvest, Oct 1984, 296 pp.
Trade Ed. \$18. ISBN 0-913165-05-0
Lim. Ed. \$45. ISBN 0-913165-04-0

REVIEWED BY CHARLES DE LINT

I like the idea behind Dark Harvest's new series NIGHT VISIONS and if the first book is any indication as to how the series is going to go, they've got a winner on their hands. The concept is simple. Each year they plan to release a volume of horror fiction to coincide with the World Fantasy Convention. Three writers will provide 30,000 words each and the book will be available as a signed/limited/boxed edition, as well as in a regular trade edition. NIGHT VISIONS I was edited by Alan Ryan and the writers this time out are Charles L. Grant, Steve Resnic Tem and Tanith Lee.

Charles Grant was an excellent choice to lead off this sort of collection. He's a master of the short story and the seven pieces that appear here rank among his best work. His stories have a quiet sense of horror that sneaks up on you, before they grab you by the throat. Mood and his very well-drawn characters are what give his work such strength.

Steve Resnic Tem's seven stories weren't always as effective for me. He appears to be one of those writers who "when he's good, he's very, very good, but when he's bad he's awful." I found a couple of real clunkers here, but these were more than offset by the sheer eerie beauty of something like "Dark Rider."

Tanith Lee can be an acquired taste for some. Of the four long stories presented here, only "Simon's Wife" is what one might expect to find in a traditional horror collection. But Ryan has done an admirable job in choosing Lee's other three contributions. They surprise and stretch boundaries. The long "The Hunting of Death: The Unicorn" is a tour de force of mystery and allusion.

The book, trade as well as limited edition, is a sturdily and beautifully made volume. Dustjacket and interior illustrations are by Gregory Manchess who turned in a very striking cover and calligraphy for the various titles used in the book. Unfortunately, his interior illustrations aren't always as effective, although one or two of them are real gems.

This is a series definitely worth our support. Volume II will be edited by Charles Grant, with stories by Karl Wagner, David Morrell and Joseph Payne Brennan.

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Here's hoping it'll be around for a long time.

THE VULCAN ACADEMY MURDERS

By Jean Lorrach
Pocket, 1984, 280 pp., \$3.50

REVIEWED BY STUART NAPIER

Another Star Trek novel, #20, to sate the appetites of Trekkies everywhere! Jean Lorrach, a first-time Trek novelist, joins the ranks of Vonda McIntyre, Greg Bear and others who have regularly breathed new life into this long-dead TV series. In this well-crafted mystery, Kirk and McCoy have accompanied Spock to the Vulcan Academy Hospital to seek experimental treatment for a wounded Enterprise crew member. When mysterious deaths threaten the life of Spock's mother Amanda, also a patient there, Kirk is forced to think the unthinkable. Murder on Vulcan.

Lorrach's fast-paced prose blends well with previous Trek novels and should be a popular addition to the series.

A MORTAL GLAMOUR

By Chelsea Quinn Yarbro
Bantam, 308 pp., \$3.50

REVIEWED BY PAUL MCGUIRE

A recent best seller from Italy, THE NAME OF THE ROSE, presented murder in a monastery. A MORTAL GLAMOUR has corruption in a convent. The tale is set in 1387, when the Catholic Church was violently divided between two popes, law was hardly a concept, and three plagues had killed over a third of Europe's population. It is the milieu of Moorcock's THE WAR HOUND AND THE WORLD'S PAIN, James Clavell's THE LAST VALLEY and MacAvoy's DAMIANO trilogy -- apocalypse everywhere.

Ms. Yarbro's world view is as stark as the gray landscape of Bergman's SEVENTH SEAL, but where his knight and players seemed weary of fear, pain and death, emotions still rage hot within Ms. Yarbro's earthy characters. The ongoing war between good and evil is perceived by them not metaphorically, but as real combat, actually present, always -- and it appears as if Satan is kicking God's brains out. With cause, it seems that the whole earth has been given up to rabid and voracious death. The philosophical question why does an omnipotent and omniscient God of good allow such evil to flourish is immediate, personal, and has horrifying implications.

Priests uttering memorized phrases sternly to the nuns, and their Mother Superior punishing

their flesh offers no appeasement to innocent women filled with confusion, melancholy and fear. Fanaticism was expected and total obedience demanded of those women, many of whom were forced to endure the back-breaking work and bleak confinement against their wills. Ritual and penance proved inadequate, and the priest knew it but was afraid to deal with the nuns' doubts directly due to his own repressed dread that there might be no answers. It was a time when people existed to serve faith, and not only did faith fail to give any comfort to people, but it was often zealous enough to be utterly inhuman.

Violence too is closer to the surface in Ms. Yarbro's work. The flagellists here are not deluded and pitiable, but insane and are themselves yet another destructive scourge ravaging the world, particularly the persons and property of the church. The nuns must forget their terror and despair long enough to fight a battle against human monsters.

Yet their great conflict is with a beautiful, sensual demon who comes to them in the night to possess their bodies with a brutal lust to steal their souls. A MOR-TAL GLAMOUR is a well-researched novel of manners with powerful characterizations of men and women sinking through hopeless depression into madness, and of those who seek to fight against the possession although they feel impotent against any more evil unleashed in their world which already seems to be damned. This is a fascinating and realistic work of a superb author of mature horror fiction.

THE INHERITOR
 by Marion Zimmer Bradley
 TOR, 1984, 414 pp., \$3.50

REVIEWED BY STEVE MILLER

lest there be a misunderstanding you should know that THE INHERITOR isn't really SF and it isn't really Fantasy and it isn't really a gothic horror and it isn't really a novel of the occult. What it is depends on the reader in part; generally, it is extremely well written and riveting.

The science in the famous SF story "Flowers For Algernon" was a soft science, even though it dealt with biology and medicine. The science in THE INHERITOR is even softer -- it deals with psychology and parapsychology -- yet it is still there: What would happen to a trained psychologist faced with sudden personal poltergeist and psychic phenomena?

Bradley brings us the story of one Leslie Barnes, a psychologist afflicted with the ability to locate missing people. The ability frightens and confuses her; the fact that the National Enquirer has run stories on her ability makes professional life difficult for her. Having run to San Francisco to escape the notoriety of a murder case her ability helped solve, Barnes becomes involved in ever-deepening layers of psychic phenomena, poltergeists, and practitioners of various forms of magic.

Along with Barnes is her sister, a would-be concert pianist. The conflict between the sisters and the house they move into forms part of the story; more of the story deals with Barnes attempting to create a rational life while the irrational goes on around her.

The house the sisters inhabit is that of a famous psychologist interested in both music and the occult; the teacher selected for Leslie's sister is the former protégé of the woman who had died in the house. All of this leads up to a thrilling (yes, thrilling) climax. The teacher seeks to regain the use of his ruined hand and eye through magical means while the spirit of the house's former owner seems bent on preventing such a magical re-building.

Yet this is not a run-of-the-mill horror-type story, nor an occult book dependent on monsters and demons, as much as it is a story of willpower and love. The occult/magical background is extremely convincing; I wouldn't be surprised if the bookstore and it's inhabitants around which some of the action revolves isn't based on a place Ms. Bradley frequents and people she knows and enjoys.

THE INHERITOR is certainly not a book for the born-again Christian; the use of magic is too positive and too convincing for that. It is not simply a book for the occult/horror fan, for surely the fan of horror can find something a bit more gruesome and horrible elsewhere. Instead, THE INHERITOR should be read by people willing to suspend disbelief for magic in any form, and people willing to invest a bit of energy in their reading. The energy will come back; you'll be rewarded by rich characters and a pleasing, if somewhat understated ending.



THE MIST

By Stephen King
 A radio drama adapted by M. Fulton, directed by Bill Raymond. ZBS Productions, RR 1 Box 1201, Fort Edward, NY 12828. Oct. 1984, 80 minutes. Audiophile Collector's Series #1.

REVIEWED BY CHARLES DE LINT

While Stephen King's short novel (which first appeared in Kirby McCauley's DARK FORCES, Viking, 1980) is one of his few novels that hasn't yet/or isn't about to become a movie, it has been made into a radio drama which is now available from ZBS Productions. The story is simple and owes a great deal to the old B-Horror films: A mysterious mist appears on the heels of a storm one morning and there are things in it. We follow the proceedings (both in the book and this radio play) from the viewpoint of a number of people caught in a supermarket, trapped by the mist.

But simplistic though that brief summary makes the story seem to be, the strength of King's work has always been his characterizations and director Bill Raymond has done a commendable job at retaining much of it for this dramatization. Bill Sadler is especially effective in his role of the main protagonist, David Drayton, while the other actresses and actors turn in fine jobs as well.

The only drawback I really find in this sort of a production is the necessity of having characters explain what's going on from time to time. (Along the lines of: "Look at the size of it! It must be at least four feet long, with a wingspread of..." etc.) But I suppose a narrator would have detracted from the immediacy of the production.

The adaptation is very faithful to the original book, the sound effects are extraordinarily good and Tim Clark's electronic score is appropriate, if a touch overpowering occasionally. Mention should be made here of the funkypop bit natural sound -- a method of digital sound utilizing the Neumann KU 81 dummy-head. The end product comes up with a quality of audio that is superb and three-dimensional with headphones. Definitely worth a listen.

LIGHT YEARS AND DARK
Ed. by Michael Bishop
Berkeley, 1984, 498 pp., \$8.95

THE YEAR'S BEST SCIENCE FICTION,
FIRST ANNUAL COLLECTION
Ed. by Gardner Dozois
Bluejay Bks, 1984, 575 pp., \$9.95

REVIEWED BY STUART NAPIER

Despite the commercial success of several science fiction novels lately (Frank Herbert's apparently endless DUNE series; Isaac Asimov's FOUNDATION'S EDGE, the capstone of a famous tetralogy), the short form remains the mainstay of the genre.

Many feel science fiction's "golden era" was during the 1930s and 1940s, the heyday for "pulp" magazines featuring short stories filled with a "sense of wonder." Not to fear, the short SF story is still a vibrant and influential form. And it's not an easy length. Characters and plot must be deftly blended into a lean prose that carries the reader along to its conclusion with few, if any, lulls or pauses allowed. Anthologies, originals or previously published are an excellent way to sample what's going on in the field.

The emphasis in LIGHT YEARS AND DARK, edited by Michael Bishop, is science fiction from the "baby-boom" generation, or as Bishop says, "writers who came to prominence in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s ... who were born no earlier than 1940." He only breaks this rule twice and both times it was worth it.

These are writers who grew up with the threat of nuclear holocaust ever present and started writing during the turbulent 1960s; the pessimistic, often bleak point of view found in those times is reflected in many of the stories. Bishop has done a fine job of assembling some of the more exciting work from writers of this generation, including over 40 stories altogether. The stories range from the prophetic "Doing Lennon" by Gregory Benford which involves a complex attempt to cheat at suspended animation to the absurdist "Terrific Park" by George Alec Effinger about two star explorers who find what they assume is "hell" at the edge of the universe and it is an exact duplicate of Rubbermaid, New Jersey.

My personal favorite was the truly frightening alternate history "Dinner Party" by Gardner Dozois. This story focuses on the period immediately following the Kent State incident and was previously refused publication, perhaps due to the powerful statement it makes about the "insanity" of those times in particular and violence in general. Finally, James Tiptree, Jr.'s "Painwise in Yucatan" is a

warm and witty piece of non-fiction from one of science fiction's best prose stylist. Tiptree -- one of the non-baby-boom authors -- recounts the difficulties of an unscheduled heart attack in a developing nation.

THE YEAR'S BEST SCIENCE FICTION FIRST ANNUAL COLLECTION, contains 25 stories and covers a whopping 575 pages containing a good sampling of recent works from established writers and up-and-comers.

James Tiptree, Jr. is represented with fiction this time: "The Dead Reef" is a chilling tale about the possibilities of environmental "revenge" after years of human abuse. "Cryptic" by newcomer Jack McDevitt is a suspenseful "Hard SF" story about the suppression of certain information discovered by the SETI experiments (Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence) where giant radio-telescopes were trained on the heavens trying to sift through the endless radio waves that bombard Earth for signs of an intelligent message. The problem, as the main character finds out, is that once discovered, the message may not be what we want to hear.

Perhaps the most disturbing and impressive was Leigh Kennedy's "Her Furry Face," an evocative tale of the blurred lines of distinction between man and higher level animal intelligence, and the poignant consequences of misinterpreting the similarities.



STORMWARDEN

By Janny Wurts
Ace, Dec 1984, 325 pp., \$2.95

REVIEWED BY CHARLES DE LINT

In times past, two wizards -- Anskiere the Stormwarden and the Firelord Ivain -- joined forces to bind the Mharg-demons but before they completed their task, Ivain betrayed Anskiere and the latter had to complete the binding alone. He laid a geas on Ivain then that not until Ivain completed a task of Anskiere's choosing would the debt between them be considered paid. And if Ivain should die, then this geas would fall to his descendants until it was completed.

This is the background for Janny Wurts' second novel STORMWARDEN. Although Anskiere makes a

brief appearance, the novel is more concerned with the coming of age of three other individuals: Taen, a child taught enchantment by the fairy-like Vaere at Anskiere's request; her brother Emien, who turns from his sister and family to embrace the evil power offered to him by the sorceress Thagres; and Jaric, the frail descendant of Ivain who must complete Anskiere's geas, although he wants nothing to do with wizards of sorcery.

While told in a multi-viewpoint style, STORMWARDEN's complex subplots never confuse. Instead they weave together into a fast-paced wonderfully-textured story, with gritty down-to-earth details from rigging a ship to running a trap line to the preparations for battle and sorcery. The characters come across as real people, the world of Keithland has been painstakingly thought out and there's even a touch of SF in the middle of this high fantasy that enhances rather than intrudes. To top it all off, Wurts has rendered the cover, frontispiece and mapwork herself and the cover alone is almost worth the price of admission. Recommended to those who like a solid adventure, but are tired of linear plots and cardboard characters.

ONCE THERE WAS A GIANT
By Keith Laumer
TOR, 1984, \$2.50

REVIEWED BY STUART NAPIER

Actually two short novels, with the "bonus" NO SHIP BOOTS IN FAIRYLAND, the longer at 107 pages (FAIRYLAND, originally published in 1968, is a mere 83) plus an essay on Laumer's writing by Sandra Miesel. Despite no Retief stories here, Laumer uses his considerable style and wit to tell a couple of good tales. The novels -- though written sixteen years apart -- read nicely as companion pieces concerned with moral values in an often immoral and chaotic universe.

Miesel's essay "The Long and the Short of It" places these two stories in the perspective of a corpus spanning twenty-five years and offers some interesting insight into how the author's repetition of terminology and names in dissimilar stories "imposes a tenuous unity on his whole body of work." Most fascinating of all are Miesel's comparisons of themes between Laumer and Philip K. Dick: "pop culture correlatives, metaphysical speculations, a flair for farce and a pervasive distrust of appearances."

SMALL PRESS NOTES

WE'RE FROM THE...FANZINE
REVIEW BOARD, BUDDY!



THE SPY WHO DRANK BLOOD
By Gordon Linzer
Space and Time \$5.95
138 W. 70th Street, #4-B,
New York, NY 10023

An intriguing use of a vampire: keep him in a deep freeze until he is needed for a top-secret government spy or dirty-tricks covert operation.

His name is now Blood, and he uses all of his vampiric powers (shape-changing, enormous physical strength, hypnosis) to eliminate a monster in the Florida everglades.

The monster is a man whose experiments in limb regeneration got out of control and who now is huge, insane, and unkillable by any kind of gunfire--he regenerates organs and tissue as fast as they are damaged.

The usual formula is followed, but Blood is unique and interesting as a character and as an agent.

This small press softcover, perfect-bound, offset, slick cover, is worth the money. The cover art by Tony Patrick is stark and effective.

This could have been picked up by a name paperback house, and with an appropriate cover and blurbs would have made money. The writing is certainly at a professional level.

SIXTY SELECTED POEMS
By Joseph Payne Brennan
The New Establishment Press
447 Roycroft Blvd.
Amherst, NY 14226

[Paperback \$5., Hardcover \$15. plus \$1. postage and handling.]

Brennan is a good poet, but this collection will be a downer

for most; it concentrates on death, dying, winter, cold, graves... Perhaps because he is now 66 and has had heart problems.

Fine dust jacket illustrations by Stephen Fabian.

SOUTH OF THE MOON #20
Martin M. Horvat, Editor
American Private Press Association
112 East Burnett Street
Sayton, OR 97383

This is the publication I asked about last issue: a listing and detailing of the major amateur press associations in America.

And the wonder of it all is this: it is theoretically possible, by joining seven or eight apas, to send your amateur publications to over 2000 people! No messing with mailing permits, no huge ever-changing mailing lists, no subscription bookkeeping--and you'd reach maybe 6000 people (assuming three people on the average might read each copy. And you'd get whole reams of feedback and commentary... if what you wrote had comment-worthy hooks in it.

Here is an opportunity to make a mark, have an impact... Yes, yes, I'm thinking about it. Very tempting.

By the way, Martin Horvat is a major collector/bibliographer of sf fanzines and is interested in major collections. Write if you have an interest in his work. You might send two dollars to him for a copy of **SOUTH OF THE MOON**. [That's my estimate of the worth of the magazine.]

NEW LIBERTARIAN April, 1985
Edited by Samuel Edward Konkin III
1515 West MacArthur Blvd., #19,
Costa Mesa, CA 92626. \$2.50

An especially meaty issue this time, as Jeff Rigenbach and George H. Smith rock Libertarianism to its core, Maude, in a discussion of the so-called "Natural Rights" which are, if not God-given, are supposed to be instinctual Recognitions (in the DNA chain?) of "fairness". The state uses this philosophy to justify giving and taking money and power from and to people, while the libertarians use the concept of Natural Rights to justify and legitimize struggle against the state to keep individual rights and power.

But--what if Natural Rights were crock of shit? What if the concept is wishful thinking? In that case there is no natural instinctive law of the species to keep the state from doing anything it likes to its subjects, and no natural law to keep anyone from doing anything he or she can get away with.

Horror! Really? But isn't that what we see every day of the week in the newspapers and on TV? In our private lives? A constant



RICHARD E. GEIS

struggle for power and money between the state and the people: some people resort to tax evasion, the underground economy, crime. The state uses laws and the police and the courts.

We see mass killing, serial killers, rape, bankruptcy, congames, wars...

And it all comes back to that old saying, "There ain't no justice!" Because some people get away with rape, murder, theft, blackmail, graft, lying, etc. all their lives and die at age 85 in bed, rich, loved, content. While others die young, honest, pure, and innocent.

Life is a joke, right? And unless you really believe in an after-death retribution/reward system of heaven and hell, then you're a fool to pretend there is any kind of inherent fairness and justice in this living world.

So this issue of THE LIBERTARIAN will make you think hard and perhaps force some radical changes.

CLAUSTROPHOBIA \$1.50
5047 SW 26th Dr.,
Portland, OR 97201

This magazine is reliable, interesting, monthly, reasonably priced. Subtitled Life Expansion News, it follows new developments in space technology and in medical research; the aim, the hope, is for a breakthrough into space in a real, mass migratory sense, and to finding a useable route to much longer life, if not actual immortality.

Lots of luck.

LATE KNIGHT EDITION \$13.00

By Damon Knight
NSFA Press
Box G, MIT Branch Post Office,
Cambridge, MA 02139-0910

This small 1985 hardcover, a commemorative book published to honor the annual Boskone (822) Guest of Honor, contains six Knight short stories and two essays. "The Cage" is a story previously unpublished.

Enhancing the book is a very good dj painting by Carl Lundgren, and an excellent photo of Damon on the back of the dust jacket.

This book is a collectors item.

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THE INTERNATIONAL WIZARD OF OZ CLUB A REPORT FROM OVER THE RAINBOW BY NEAL WILGUS

About the time this report sees print the Oz fantasy will be big news again, with Ballantine/Del Rey reprinting the first six of the Ruth Plumly Thompson Oz books and Disney releasing the new film tentatively titled RETURN TO OZ at approximately the same time. Less well known will be the fact that Oz has had its own dedicated and organized fandom for almost thirty years -- the International Wizard of Oz Club which was founded in 1957 and now boasts over 1800 members. With the boost the new film is likely to give, membership may soon top 2000.

I was raised on the Oz books myself and have been reading the original L. Frank Baum's series to my young son for the past several years, but I only recently joined the Oz club. So this is only a preliminary report on what the club entails. Additional reports may follow.

For your \$10 membership in the Oz club you receive a membership card (big deal), a subscription to the quarterly OZ TRADING POST in which members can list their Oz titles/paraphernalia for sale or trade, or their wanted items. In addition to this basic stuff, the Oz club also publishes and offers for sale the annual OZIANA (\$1) which is devoted to new stories in the Oz canon, and a number of Special Publications (their caps) such as the OZ GAME BOOK (\$2.50), AN OZ PICTURE GALLERY (\$5), UNEXPLORED TERRITORY IN OZ (\$1.50), a couple of volumes of the BEST OF THE BAUM BUGLE and a number of others.

There is also an Oz calendar (\$2) and a set of beautiful Oz maps (\$3), both of which I got for my son (and me) and can recommend highly.

At this writing (January, 1985) I've seen only one issue of THE BAUM BUGLE (Autumn, 1984) but it is excellent -- a professional job with full color covers front and back and 24 pages of first rate articles, news, reviews and black-n-white interior illos. The major articles are "Dorothy Gage and Dorothy Gale" by Sally Roesch Wagner which delves into Baum's family life, and "Librarians, Editors, Critics, Children and Oz" by Ruth Plumly Thompson in which Baum's late successor recounts her running battle with the Children's Book Establishment which disapproved of Oz. Other items of interest include a newspaper story by Baum written in 1890, early reviews of some of the Baum titles, new reviews of more



contemporary Oz books, a feature called "Oz in the News" and even a Ripley's "Believe It or Not" item noting that THE WIZARD OF OZ has been seen by more people than any other film (over a billion).

OZIANA 1984 looks more like a fanzine, but a very well done one running also to 24 pages, with three short stories, some poetry and more black-n-white illos. The fiction is not exactly professional, but is much better than most SF fanfiction and will amuse most children and even many adults. The single OZ TRADING POST at hand runs to three spaced-out typewritten pages of pleas for things like Judy Garland's book of poems and Kentucky Fried Chicken Oz movie glasses, and offering for sale/trade many books, film stills, record albums, original Oz art (by Dick Martin, a modern master) and Oz character dolls.

Like any true fandom, the Oz club also holds conventions each year where the faithful gather to see formal presentations and have social get-togethers. Some brief notes about the 1984 cons indicate that there were costume contests, films, lectures, game tournaments and the awarding of the L. Frank Baum Memorial Award to Baum's grandchildren. Cons to be held in 1985 include: Gillikin on May 4 in Escanaba, MI; Ozmpolitan June 14-16 in Zion, IL; Winkie July 19-21 in Asilomar, CA; Qualling July 27 in Houston, TX; and Munchkin August 3 in Wilmington, DE.

Finally -- how do you get in touch with all this Ozivity? Well, there are separate addresses for the BUGLE, OZIANA, the various conventions and even some of the Special Publications. To save space and avoid confusion, however, I'll list only the essential one -- that of the Executive Secretary who handles memberships and has introductory information available:

Fred M. Meyer
INTERNATIONAL WIZARD OF OZ CLUB
220 North 11th Street
Escanaba, MI 49829

Drop him a line. If you like the books and movies, you might just love the club.

INTERVIEW: ROBERT E. VARDEMAN

SFR: I know you've written quite a few books on your own, but I'd like to start with some questions about the WAR OF POWERS "series" which you co-authored with Victor Milan. I enjoyed it immensely but I have to challenge calling it a series. It's really one novel running to six volumes, don't you agree?

VARDEMAN: The original plan for the book was for only one book, with the possibility of sequels if a publisher was interested. As to whether it is a series or not, I'll have to hedge a little and say yes and no. The concept of a series does not have to be unconnected stories using the same characters -- or at least I don't think so. In the WAR OF POWERS each book stands alone pretty well but the thread running through all six books provides a bigger story. You might say you're actually getting seven stories for the price of six -- each individual title plus the overall story.

I like this idea on several levels. It gives a chance for more complex characters than usually seen in heroic fantasy (there can actually be growth of the characters as they face adversity and conquer -- or not -- and go on to the next volume) and allows interesting subplots to be dropped into the larger scheme. It also plays "fairer" with the reader since the idea is to wrap up the story in a set number of books -- the reader won't make a career out of following the hero and/or heroine through increasingly futile volumes. E.C. Tubb is a good writer. I've read most all of his Dunsenar books, but I've finally reached the point where I don't give a damn whether he finds Earth or not. A good idea has been driven into the ground. Better to have a progression of novels in mind and end it logically and before readers get fed up with pointless books which never solve the problem.

I am so taken by this way of putting together a series of books, I've used it in THE CENOTAPH ROAD and another set of four books sold to Avon titled THE JADE DEMONS.

SFR: When the first volume, THE SUNDERED REALM (1980) hit the newsstands it looked like WAR OF POWERS

was going to run only three volumes. But the final six-volume work, with a whole year elapsing before the second three volumes appeared, is a unified whole. At what point did you know WAR was going to be as long? Was a lot of rewriting necessary to expand it to the final form?

VARDEMAN: In the beginning ... there was only THE CITY IN THE GLACIER. It was a single book with a somewhat ambiguous ending leaving the way open for future books. I was in New York to see Sharon Jarvis, then editor at Playboy Paperbacks. After only a few minutes of talk it became obvious Sharon wanted to buy the book. She spent the rest of lunch telling me things she wanted added. I told her this was going to be one very long book. Her reply: "I know. We're talking two books."

By the time I left her office later that afternoon, it had become three books. Back to Albuquerque, a complete rewriting of the synopsis (now synopses) from beginning to end, lengthening, adding ideas which suggested themselves so that there'd be three 70,000-word novels. A complete overhaul from stem to stern.

The contract came calling for three 110,000-word books. Paddling what we'd come up with by 40,000 words wasn't possible. Another rewrite of the three synopses and actual writing of the newly titled volume 1, THE SUNDERED REALM started. A 110,000-word book was turned in.

Another wrinkle occurred. Some faceless accounting gnome decided that a high enough price tag couldn't be put on the book to sell it and yet it'd require it to get back printing costs, etc. The edict came down from on high to Sharon to simply cut the book in half and make two volumes from it. She apologized over this (she knows things like this don't just happen with a snap of the scissors, even if the gnomes in their neatly-columned world don't).

Two 55,000-word books, even if the cut had come at a nice, ev-

en spot, wouldn't do either. That is pretty thin. A bit more rewriting, aided by my trusty word processor (this was the first book I did on the word processor -- and it convinced me totally on the wonder and utility of computers), and the 55,000 SUNDERED REALM turned into 70,000. And the second half, now carrying the original title of CITY IN THE GLACIER was likewise redone to about 70,000 words. With this in mind, I don't believe it is too difficult to see where the seams are on reading the books.

The obvious question was asked at this point. Sharon replied that book 3, THE DESTINY STONE, need only be 70,000 words. This got us halfway through the original proposal to about book 1.5. Playboy waited a while to see how sales were (quite good -- SUNDERED REALM is in a third printing and the other two are both in second printings) and then contracted for the last half of the "trilogy." Since the first three were published in consecutive months, Sharon wanted to do likewise with the last three. The time delay between the first and last three had less to do with changing content as it did in delays with getting the contract issued and the books written.

SFR: I'm always curious as to how two authors collaborate. Can you give us an idea of how the mechanics of your collaboration with Vic Milan actually worked?

VARDEMAN: Some of this has been touched on in the previous question. We did the synopsis together and since I had the word processor, my coauthor did the first draft on a typewriter. I did second draft on the computer and "fine tuning" and final manuscript. Corrections, additions and editorial changes I made easily enough on the computer. We both more or less did the galleys.

SFR: It was reported in an Albuquerque fanzine, ALPHA CENTURA COMMUNICATOR, that you were dissatisfied with the process of collaboration. What kind of problems did you and Vic run into?

VARDEMAN: I am not dissatisfied with collaboration in general, just in specific.

CONDUCTED BY NEAL WILGUS

Rather than look back, I'd prefer to look ahead. Geo. W. Proctor and I have sold a new heroic fantasy series to Ace titled *THE SWORDS OF RAEMLYN*, the first title, *TO DEMONS BOUND*, to be published next summer. This collaboration has a couple of possibly unique aspects to it. It's my understanding that when Pournelle and Niven collaborate they trade floppies. Since they both live in LA that's easy enough. George lives in Dallas. If we depended on personally handing over floppy disks, the books could take forever. And forever might be quick if we depended on the US mail to deliver -- it currently takes me about 5 days to get a first class letter from Dallas, and this is if I'm lucky.

Rather than take such chances when deadlines are tight, we are using modems to send the manuscript back and forth over the phone lines. The first book was transferred in less than an hour for less than it

would have cost for a single-time use of Express Mail. The manuscript is received quickly, we know it, time delay is cut to a minimum and we get to use some technology both of us find exciting in both implication and application.

Another difficult portion of any multi-book collaboration is keeping characters, traits, appearances, locations, etc. straight. With two people working virtually simultaneously on different parts of the series, things can get out of kilter unless the author doing the final draft has a phenomenal memory. George keeps all this information on a data base on the computer. As new items are introduced into the books, they're put into the data base. This keeps both of us up to date, shows possible conflicts in what's been done and sometimes even suggests new ideas. With the tight deadlines we have on these books, both use of modem and data base have already proven worthwhile.

SFR; Turning now to your Cenotaph Road series, which is also a multi-volume novel -- I'm enjoying it, but it often has an uneven, jerky pacing which makes me wonder if there was some careless editorial slashing at work. Were there some passages cut out to fit the space requirements here and there?

VARLEYMAN; Actually, the opposite is true. *CENOTAPH ROAD* was originally written in 1977 and sat around until 1980 when Sharon Jarvis bought it for Playboy Books (GR came out with the Ace imprint because of Berkley Publishing taking over Playboy before the book was published). The original writing was not all that good, frankly. It was only the second or third book I'd ever completely written and both writing and idea came early in my career. Sharon asked for some logical changes and a general tightening of the book. I was happy to do it, but the same thyroid problems were developing here that happened with *WAR OF THE POWERS*.

Sharon asked that the single book be changed into an open-ended series. By this I mean a series like the Dumarest books or most others with every volume ending with no overall resolution of the basic plot. This was fine with me, but certain new characters had to be added. Another rewrite.

Another idea change. Make it a closed set of books similar to *WAR OF POWERS*. I proposed seven books with the first stage setting and the real story beginning in book 2 and carrying beyond. Sharon didn't like the general idea I presented but did like specific parts, such as the skull of the sorcerer Claybore. The book was rewritten again to put in this more generalized antagonist but the idea had come back to an open-ended series. The first three books were sold to Playboy. By the time Ace had purchased Playboy Paperbacks, I was coming around once more to the idea of a closed series, i.e. a series with a definite number of books which would complete the overall story.

Beth Meacham, my new editor at Ace, agreed to this. Books 4, 5 and 6 were purchased with the last book definitively finishing the series. While I don't much care for volume 1 because of the many misuses, changes and rewrites, book 2, *THE SORCERER'S SKULL*, is pretty much what I intended. Book 3, *WORLD OF MAZES*, I had fun doing but still carried the idea of this being an open-ended series. Book 4, *IRON TONGUE*, due out in February 1984, sets up the characters in such a fashion where they are

**MIGHT MAY NOT MAKE RIGHT,
BUT IT DOES MAKE CORPSES**





growing, changing, learning and becoming much more rounded to books they were in the first three books. I've just finished book 5, FIRE AND FOG, and more is revealed about the antagonist and the hero is undergoing severe personality changes. In book 6, PILLAR OF NIGHT, good triumphs over evil and settles the problems introduced in earlier books, both in terms of plot and characters.

SFR: I suppose all that explains the strange inconsistency between the ending of CENOTAPH ROAD and the beginning of THE SORCERER'S SKULL. At the end of ROAD, Martak, Inyx and Krek are still on relatively good terms with Claybore and together they attack the grasshopper-things attacking a caravan. At the start of SKULL there is a falling out with Claybore first, Inyx is lost in the white mist and then Martak and Krek attack the attacking grasshoppers. But could not that discrepancy have been worked out so the two dovetailed a little better?

VARDEMAN: I'm sure it could have, but there always seems to be the tradeoff between time and turning out a perfect work. Actually, this jump might signify more of a disliking for the way CENOTAPH ROAD turned out and an eagerness to change direction for the remainder of the books. There's no excuse for not making a smoother transition though.

SFR: I almost nominated the second Cenotaph Road book, THE SORCERER'S SKULL, for the Libertarian Futurist Society's Prometheus Award for best libertarian novel -- and I still may. But I get the impression that while you get fed up with government bureaucracy and like to take pokes at it, as we all do, you seem to think we're stuck with it and that's that. Don't you think we might kick these bureaucratic habit one of these centuries (or dimensions)?

VARDEMAN: I'm somewhat surprised my own libertarian views come

through so you'd notice. This is quite flattering since the National Libertarian Party gets a fair amount of my money to support presidential candidates.

I can only view the growth of our governmental bureaucracy as currently pernicious and eventually terminal. Likening it to a dinosaur is doing the dinosaur a disservice -- many of them had two brains, one to control the upper body and another for the hindquarters. I count that as two brains more than the bureaucracy has. But like any other living organism, it fights tenaciously to protect itself. For this reason, among others, I don't see any realistic way of getting to a more libertarian society.

Another problem facing us in arriving at a freer society is abrogation of personal responsibility. Since World War II, the government hasn't done more and more for us -- thereby taking away personal liberty -- because it forced it down our throats. The majority of us want the cradle to grave security promised. It's just now becoming obvious there are extreme prices to pay for such swaddling.

One of these is education. It's not the government's fault Dick and Jane can't read -- it's the children's parents. Simply turning over children to a school and saying, "Educate them" and never again checking to see what's being done -- if anything at all is -- amounts to dereliction of parental duty. The flight to private schools is a good sign; it shows parents are beginning to realize the lowest common denominator, impersonal tax-financed approach is not working. If a parent doesn't like what a private school teaches, there are options open. Take the child out or vote their dollars and get a change in teachers or administration or the entire curriculum, for instance. Realistically, in schools supported by tax dollars, these options are closed

to parents. That's part of the penalty for letting the government "do what's best."

Every law passed takes away that much more freedom from each of us. As a society we have to decide where to draw the line, what role government is to play, what responsibility we are to have over our own lives. Going back to the analogy of the bureaucracy as an organism, another function of any organism, other than surviving, is to grow. I don't see enough people upset enough about governmental intrusion into their lives to stop this growth -- not yet. In the future, I hope so.

As a science fictional exercise, two friends and I sat around at Babylon several years ago thinking up alternatives to bureaucracy. We actually came up with one that might work. Whether it'd be better than what we have now is open to question (I sincerely doubt it) but the ability of the individual to make decisions on the lowest and highest levels would be enhanced. We never got to preventing illicit use of the system since we ran out of tequila before addressing this.

One of these days I'm going to tackle a novel with this system as background. But I have so many other ideas cooking this is only a "backburner" priority project right now.

SFR: How about "brain liberation"? Are you at all interested in schemes for liberating people through various methods of increasing intelligence?

VARDEMAN: My problem with increasing intelligence schemes and so forth is the original definition of intelligence. I've met people who were incredible at solving problems and screwed up their lives so badly as to be a national disgrace. There's some sort of gestalt that must go into intelligence and simply lifting part of it doesn't necessarily improve everything. Improve synaptic speed but be unable to come up with anything from it does nothing. To have bigger mental data bases to draw on does little good if it takes you a month to come to a simple conclusion. And so on. A nice definition of genius I came across, and don't ask me where, said genius was the knack for being able to do what you wanted. Implied is that you were happy doing it, too.

SFR: I know you have a background in science -- didn't you work for Sandia National Laboratories at one time? Why did you decide to write a sword-n-sorcery fantasy instead of hard-science science fiction?

VARDEMAN: I have a BS in physics and MS in materials engineering (via the nuclear engineering dept) and did work at Sandia for four years. As to getting into SFS rather than hard science writing, it just happened that way. I'd always read both fantasy and SF, mixing the Asimov with the Robert Howard and loving both. As I got into writing professionally, the markets for fantasy were more open. Being rewarded for writing fantasy (i.e., it sold!) tended to do more, and along the way editors began asking for me to do fantasy. I enjoy it and seem to have the quirky way of thinking that puts together plots and characters readers can enjoy too.

As to writing hard SF, one of these days I'll get around to it. Doing this well is very difficult though, and requires more than just knowledge of things scientific. Massive expository lumps explaining what's happening in the gears and grommets department does not enthrall me a whole lot. The same criteria for good writing ought to be applied to hard SF -- not only is there a nifty hard SF theme, there must be characters and a plot and every other item that makes SF different from mainstream. Fusing all this together is not easily done. While the ideas in *RENDEZVOUS WITH RAMA* were exciting, the characters were shallow to nonexistent and the plot nothing more than a travelogue. On the other hand, the best book in the past 10 years (or maybe even longer) which I'd classify as hard SF is Greg Benford's *TIMESCAPE*. That is not only hard SF, it's a book about how science is done, complete with heartache and triumph and characters and one of my favorite themes in SF, global catastrophe.

I believe I could do a book equal to *RAMA* (it wouldn't sell as well, but then don't have Clarke's track record with such classics as *CITY AND THE STARS* and *GILGAMESH'S END*) but something as magnificent as *TIMESCAPE* feels beyond my reach as an author. Maybe one day, but not now. I'll keep thinking on it, trying to improve, and perhaps it will come out. I hope.

SFR: There's ominous talk going around that the flood of fantasy on the market today is polluting science fiction's precious body fluids. As a fantasy writer, you probably don't buy that, right?

VARDEMAN: You're right, I don't buy that -- but as a writer, as opposed to a fantasy writer. Tastes run in cycles, like everything else seems to in the universe. I am getting old enough to sit around

the fire warming my cold feet, sucking at my gums and clucking my tongue at the younguns rediscovering the wheel and the old timers decrying it. The popularity of fantasy will decline eventually and SF make a strong return. I've thought for a couple years now this would happen next year. I'm going to be right if I keep saying that.

We're still struggling out of a depression (check out Kondratieff cycles -- this depression just wasn't as bad as the Great Depression, but a recession doesn't last 4-6 years) and when we do, SF will make a resurgence. When times are tough, people out of work and the future bleak, who wants to say, "I'm responsible, I did it?" Better to go supernatural, with fantasy, the occult and blame the woes on "the gods." On the other hand, when you're making a fortune at a good job, the future is bright and no one has a care except how to take that extra week of vacation, it hardly fits human nature to say "the gods did it." Better to believe you personally had a hand in your own prosperity and control destiny.

Fantasy has been popular because times were/are hard. SF will make a comeback fairly soon.

Actually critics need something to squawk about, whether it is the least bit reasonable or not. No one listens to you if you're agreeable (to mind comes the single voice decrying *STAR WARS* -- nobody wanted to listen to the throngs praising the movie, but one lone voice saying it was antisense got listened to. This is a version of the squeaking wheel getting the publicity). A few years back it was the hoohaw over *Old Wave-New Wave*. And how series books were driving everything else off the racks. And so on, ad infinitum. If technology moves quickly enough, the next furor will be over accessing books on computer data bases rather than trooping out to a store and buying a book made from a dead tree. This will somehow be seen as the work of the devil, polluting the written word's precious body fluids, all the same arguments.

I count it as a victory these days if people read anything at all, whether it be fantasy or SF or mysteries or romances.

SFR: There's a healthy amount of non-pornographic sex in *WAR OF POWERS* and the *CENOTAPH ROAD* books but I'm curious (not necessarily yellow) about the instances of sex with aliens -- with the Vicar of Istu and the Zr'gsz in *POWERS* and



with the monster in the maze in *WORLD OF MONSTERS*, for instance. Why is it always women who mate with these creatures?

VARDEMAN: So far in my work, it has been a matter of exploring ideas of interest to me. Coming up from *Tor Books* in 1985 will be a set of three novels titled *THE KEYS TO PARADISE* in which the heroine is half feline (once fully feline, she has magically been altered to become half human). The reason I chose half feline is that this interests me more than, say, half armadillo.

Another more mercenary concern has been the readership of most fantasy books. It is predominantly male. *THE KEYS TO PARADISE* books, *KEY OF FLAME*, *THE SKELETON LORD'S KEY* and *KEY OF ICE AND STEEL* will try to bridge the gap between this predominantly male readership and the women who might enjoy something a bit different from standard fare.

SFR: Another "recurring theme" I've been curious about in your work is the "underground city." It was prominent in your early novel *THE SANDCATS OF RHIT*, for instance, and was also a feature in your first *Star Trek* novel *THE KLINGON GAMBIT* and again in *THE CITY IN THE GLACIER*. What is it that fascinated you about the "lost city" image?

VARDEMAN: The idea of discovering the remnants of a civilization lost for centuries has always excited me. I still enjoy reading about Heinrich Schliemann digging up the layers of Troy and Catherwood and Stephens hacking through the jungles to find Copan and Edward Thompson discovering Chichen Itza and Henri Mouhot blundering across Angkor Wat. Maybe I just don't like the idea of anything of grandeur being lost. Maybe it's the excitement of finding what no one else has. It might even be something more mystical; these cities are not dead, they are merely waiting.

While I enjoy reading -- and writing -- about such things, I have no desire to be an archaeologist.

ist, to experience mildew and jungle rot and typhoid and wet shoes and bugs and all the discomforts going along with it. I love the image more than the reality. THE LOST CONTINENT and KING, OF THE KHYBER RIFLES and TARZAN and THE JEWELS OF OPAR and SHE are great fun to read because they tell me there are still things in the world to be discovered which are wonderful and sad, thrilling and dangerous.

SFR: You've done two Star Trek novels so far -- how did you get into that line of work?

VARDEMAN: Several years back I heard that Bantam Books had lost the license to buy ST books and that Pocket Books had been granted it. I'd enjoyed the TV Star Trek (well, the first two years) and still think it is the best SF to ever reach television. The stories were good, they were populated with human characters and interesting aliens and the chemistry between Kirk, Spock and McCoy welded everything together. CITY ON THE EDGE OF FOREVER, THE CORBOMITE MANUEVER and SPACE SEED are among my favorites. All have interesting SF ideas, good characters and byplay between the trio works well.

The books I've seen (about 5 of them) lacked the qualities that made the TV version so good. When the chance came along to do one of the novels, I took it. What I tried to do in both the ST novels was present the conflict of Kirk the soldier versus Kirk the diplomat, toss in a good space opera story and still keep the byplay between the three characters.

SFR: At the end of MUTINY ON THE ENTERPRISE Kirk tells Lorelei, the persuasive pacifist, "We'll meet again ... I'm sure of it." Will she be back in another ST novel?

VARDEMAN: While I have no plans for another ST novel right now, I can't rule it out. The Lorelei character interests me and if a plot comes up where she'd fit in, if other elements click, if the editor is willing, certainly I'd do another ST book. The ideas of pacifism are not ones I hold in very high regard, yet I'm not a saber rattler either. In the interplay between Kirk and Lorelei lies what I'd hold as a truer picture of my own views -- but putting them down on paper helps get both sides presented in what I hope is an entertaining fashion and which allows me to play with the ideas. Lorelei is a good vehicle for such "what ifting."

SFR: It's customary in these in-

terviews to ask what an author's literary influence (or at least favorite authors) are. What are yours?

VARDEMAN: The "literary influence" part sounds much too academic for my liking. I'll tackle the "favorite authors" part.

Like just about everyone else in SF, Robert Heinlein has to be on my list -- in my case, at the head of it. I grew up reading his juveniles and still go back and reread them from time to time. An author contributes about 75% to a book, the reader the remaining 25%. Heinlein did his 75% so well, every time I come back with my changing 25%, I find new insights in his books (the ones prior to 1960). After 1960, the only two I care for are MOON IS A HARSH MISTRESS and GLORY ROAD. The man is a storyteller unlike anyone else in the field.

Arthur Clarke is another of my favorite writers for works such as CHILDHOOD'S END and FOUNTAINS OF PARADISE. At his best, he gives human characters in exotic settings with superb backgrounds. At his worst, he does shallow characters locked in little more than a travelogue. For his best, Clarke will be remembered for a long, long time.

I may be the only person in the known universe who didn't like the movie 2001. It had a trite plot, substituted flashing lights for substance and carried out the Hollywood special effects = good movie to an extreme. The novelization came out slightly better because of the parallel Clarke drew between Moonwatcher and Starchild.

Of current writers, I'll pick up anything I see by Greg Benford or Charles Harness. Harness writes with subtle strokes -- a flair for symmetry in plotting and truly different characters.

I ought to mention Frederick Faust in passing, since I consider him a writer to emulate. And I'll even confess that I enjoy Lester Dent's Doc Savage books. These are my form of written junk food.

And when I grow up, I want to be Robert Silverberg. He started with the thud and blunder space opera plots and matured into one of the best writers around, not just one of the best SF writers. His books entertain, they explore human values, they expand what can be done literarily. If I ever write a book a tenth as good as DYING INSIDE I'll count myself as having arrived as an author.

SFR: Thank you, Mr. Vardeman.

FIRE AND FOG
PILLAR OF NIGHT
By Robert E. Vardeman
Ace, \$2.75 ea., FIRE 215 pp.
PILLAR, 200 pages.

REVIEWED BY NEAL WILGUS

These are the concluding titles of Bob Vardeman's six-volume Cenotaph Road series -- the earlier volumes being CENOTAPH ROAD, THE SORCERER'S SKULL, WORLD OF MAZES and IRON TONGUE. Each volume is semi-independent, but it does help to have read the whole thing from the beginning -- if only to see how Vardeman has improved with experience. The earlier titles were plagued with an unevenness and inconsistency which is mostly overcome in these two volumes.

In FIRE AND FOG Lan Martak again battles the evil Claybore to a draw, this time managing to destroy Claybore's legs during a confrontation in an underground world of nasty gnomes. During the struggle Martak is magically bound to his arch enemy Kiska. Claybore's pawn, and manager to drive away his almost-faithful companions, Krek the giant spider and Inyx, Martak's lush and lusty lover. Vardeman has learned well how to keep several cliff-hangers going at once, never mind that our heroes rarely ever stop to eat or sleep, though they do make love quite regularly.

In PILLAR OF NIGHT you would expect the final showdown between Martak and Claybore, and of course, it's there, but surprisingly most of the book (and the series) is the buildup and the final solution takes only a few pages. Most of PILLAR is devoted to showing Martak overcoming temptation, Claybore gradually disintegrating and Krek and Inyx going their own way, only to be reconciled with Martak for the climax. In the process Martak becomes an immortal god, attacks the Pillar of Night and (more or less) frees the Resident of the Pit.

All of the Cenotaph Road books are predictable and traffic heavily in stereotypical sword-n-sorcery stuff, but what saves it all is that Vardeman's heroes are so likable that you forgive the transgressions and happily suspend your disbelief. So what, that you know from volume one that Claybore is incarnate evil who only wants to regain his scattered body-parts so that he can regain total control of the infinite worlds on the Cenotaph Road? So what, that you know even earlier that Martak is going to win against impossibly impossible odds -- because with heroes like Martak, Krek and Inyx you'll be too busy munching popcorn to notice.

NOT NECESSARILY REVIEWS

I READ BOOKS AND THEN DON'T REVIEW THEM, SOMETIMES, UNTIL MONTHS LATER. A SAD, SORRY STATE OF AFFAIRS.

SO THIS COLUMN IS THE RESIDUE AND DETRITUS OF MY THOUGHTS ON THE BOOKS IN QUESTION. NOT NECESSARILY REVIEWS.

THE UNION CLUB MYSTERIES

By Isaac Asimov

Pawcett Crest, Feb. '85, \$2.95.

These are clever, intriguing puzzles--mysteries--very short stories, written to a kind of formula: a few old men talking in their upper-class club [where no woman has gone before or after] until old, keen-minded Griswold awakens from his nap (was he really asleep?) and challenges his cronies with a brief mystery which you, the reader, are invited to solve--if you can.

As for me, these are fun, not to be read too often because the shame and frustration in always failing to spot the relevant clue and make the appropriate deduction is so humiliating....

DAYWORLD

By Philip Jose Farmer
Putnam's, 1985, \$16.95

Phil has here created a world so overpopulated that in order to keep up the standard of living and provide food and shelter for all the billions (at least in the United States) the benign dictatorship which rules has used the "stoning" technology to stagger the living periods allowed.

Stoning is a way of perfect and instantaneous suspended animation--the body becomes stone hard and can be kept that way in a cheap electromagnetic field which has slowed the body's molecules to almost a full stop.

And so for six days out of seven a person in this society is stoned--standing like a rock in a capsule, not eating, not breathing, not living. But on the seventh day he is de-stoned automatically and emerges to live his life normally as if he had been asleep for only a night.

But he shares the apartment with dozens of others (now stoned). He

can have a wife, children, pets--but at the end of their day they MUST step into their cylinders and be stoned for six days.

Each "day" is almost completely separated from the other days and develops its own cultural, fashions, styles, slang... And only a very few federal security officers are ever allowed to live every day in sequence in order to pursue a few exceptional criminals who are called Daybreakers.

Okay. Jeff Caird is a Daybreaker, is a member of an underground organization devoted to overthrow of the dictatorial government and the return of many freedoms.

But Jeff has cunningly (or stupidly?) constructed within his mind a different personality or persona to take over his body in each of the days, to help prevent slips and detection by the "organics" (cops).

Things go wrong for Jeff, an organic himself in Tuesday World: a daybreaking psychotic is out to kill him and/or his wife, and may know or discover Jeff is really seven different people.

There are other complications as a woman organic on a special case gets too close to his identity shifts, and the revolutionary group asks him to perform special tasks...

He becomes a rebel in two different ways, his separate identities have minds of their own...

This is an exciting, intriguing adventure, a science fiction adventure, and Phil manages to keep every thing clear and coherent.

I felt a bit cheated at the end, since Jeff's escape from a government psychiatric hospital and from certain permanent stoning, was sluffed off in a single page, as if Phil was tired or had bumped up against a stringent word limit.

THE FACES OF SCIENCE FICTION

Photographs by Patti Perret

Introduction by Gene Wolfe

Bluejay Books, Oct. 1984, \$11.95

Photographic portraits of 82 of the best-known science fiction writers today. [Harlan Ellison and Robert Heinlein probably declined to be included, for different reasons.]

Each author has a short statement about him/herself on a facing page.

These portraits are in black and white, all are revealing of character and some are eye-opening revelations.

TIK-TOK

By John Sladek

Victor Gollancz, \$14.95

Distributed by David & Charles Co.
North Pomfret, VT 05053

Tik-Tok is a sentient robot whose "basimov circuits" have gone haywire, allowing him to behave like a psychopathic human--he kills people out of malicious hatred of humans. He calls us 'meat'.

This novel is mockery of mankind's delusions about ourselves, about our society, about our machines. Tik-Tok, for all his homicidal proclivities, is more moral than most of the humans he interacts with--and/or kills.

The ending will not surprise you. It may depress you.

This is a delicious satirical novel which will bring wry smiles and rueful nods.

Oh...Tik-Tok is a 'sex'-equipped humanoid robot, which more than one lady in the novel is aware of and whom she uses. More jaundiced notes on humanity.

FOOTBALL

By Larry Niven & Jerry Pournelle
Del Rey, \$17.95, June, 1985

This carefully crafted long novel of an alien attack and invasion of Earth is best-seller material. It has the multiple-viewpoint structure, the slow-building dramatic lure, the detailed, realistic places and things and people (and aliens!) all move toward the excruciatingly gripping space battle and human-alien confrontation in the last few chapters. These are really great dramatic moments and events, and Larry and Jerry are to be complimented for some extraordinarily powerful writing. It is gut tensing, emotional bedrock stuff. Impossible to put down.

RICHARD E. GEIS



But there were aspects of the writing I didn't like--but under the surface was some Tuckerizing (using fan/author names for characters) and it seemed to me two of the sf writers who form a key advisory group to the President of the United States are Larry Niven and Jerry Pournell is self-indulgent disguise. And the assemblage of hard sf authors itself which virtually saves mankind by its insights into alien psychology and social structure, and its knowledge of catastrophe science and effects seems...unlikely and again, self-indulgent.

But wotthehell. The average reader won't have this special knowledge of who is who and likely won't boggle at the sight of sf writers on intimate terms with the president, outranking admirals, generals, advisors...

And it seemed to me there were too many extraneous characters: I couldn't keep track of them all. The "survivalist" plotline could have been eliminated...

And the footfall---the impact of the large asteroid in the Indian ocean---and its consequences seemed to be coped with too easily.

But these are small reservations compared to my overall enjoyment of this near-future disaster/war with aliens novel.

It is probably the finest novel of alien invasion ever written.

ORBITVILLE DEPARTURE

By Bob Shaw

DAW #622, \$2.95, April 1985

If you've read many of Bob's novels you'll soon come to know he writes a sweet mixture of intense human emotion/relationships and science. And often the future science takes off in the latter chapters in unexpected, surprising directions.

So you read of lusts, hates, dissatisfactions, fractured (and demolished) marriages, rivalries... And you read of...

In this novel--the second in his Orbitville series--the key element is a dying man's intense belief that mind does not die with the body. And underlying and overlaying that is a macro-cosmic effort by incomprehensibly advanced aliens to save the universe from fatal entropy.

On the human scale a kind of law-enforcement official transfers to an almost deserted Earth and by a series of unlucky chance his wife and child are mind-wiped by a vice-Mayor neck deep in corruption. Garry Dallen is devastated and finally stumbles on the identity of his family's "killer."

All this melds together with the disturbing green bands of radiance

rippling across Orbitville's incredibly vast exterior, [Orbitville, a shell around a sun whose inner surface is earth and water and air and vegetation--perfect for mankind--equal in area to (is it five billion Earths?) where virtually all of mankind has migrated.] and with the utterly convincing technological detail Bob has created, and with the often depressingly accurate characterization of everyone involved. This man has a great ear for dialog and personality.

Altogether, despite this somewhat confused review, a very good sf novel, and one I recommend.

I wish an editor and publisher would ask or allow Bob to write a long, rich, powerful novel--about 150,000 words would be enough room ---which would allow him to dwell where he obviously would like to take more time, and in which he could build his favorite themes to a full, intricate climax.

This is a fine read, but is (I think) only a short stop in the Orbitville saga. Though it is certainly a startling one! (Maybe too much of a quantum leap in scope ---the reader is somewhat overwhelmed at the vastness of what is revealed in such a short space.)

BEAST MARKS

By A.A. Attanasio

Published by Mark V. Ziesing

P.O. Box 806,

Willimantic, CT 06226

Signed Edition: \$25.00

Trade Edition: \$13.95

Cover painting: Rick DeMarco

Interior art: Rich Schindler

There is no denying that A. A. Attanasio is a superb stylist, a master of the exact word and phrase, a man who can wring more imagery and impact from the language than a thousand writers.

He thinks in colorful, vivid, metaphysical realms which he paints

on the canvas of your mind with his marvelous words. If anyone can describe abstruse concepts and impossible mental interactions, it is he.

And these seven stories are all different in style and approach, all sparkle with various techniques; this book is a clinic on writing in many ways. This man has all the tools and uses them with incredible skill.

But. With the possible exception of the last and longest story, "The Answerer of Dreams," these are not satisfying, not...very human and involving. A.A. is into higher mental states...into cautionary tales...into intriguing bits of fiction that don't pay off.

This is a kind of Intellectual fiction, the kind you appreciate with your mind, not your guts.

CONVERTS

By Ian Watson

St. Martin's Press, \$11.95, March, 1985.

This, too, is a novel by an Intellectual writer, a man playing with ideas, and the characters, by undergoing an evolutionary/revolutionary DNA experimental treatment, are changed into creatures which embody, physically, what they've always in their heart of hearts wanted to be.

The result is a "man" who is a special kind of ambulatory tree, a "man" who seen in all spectra from every part of his body, a "woman" who has become an amazon, a "man" who is a kind of winged... I forgot exactly what he is.

And there are others, equally weird and strange who inhabit the isolated estate where these experiments are conducted.

But then an IQ-enhanced super chimp escapes and the outside world threatens to become aware of what's going on.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 52



RAISING HACKLES

BY ELTON T. ELLIOTT

MUSINGS:

An obnoxious trend is developing in SF publishing. It is the practice of splitting a novel into two parts without telling the consumer that they are buying the first half of a book. Two recent examples are: *THE FINAL ENCYCLOPEDIA* by Gordon R. Dickson and *CHANUR'S VENTURE* by C. J. Cherryh. In the Dickson novel the jacket does call it the penultimate novel of the Child Cycle, but the reader still has the right to expect a narrative which comes to some conclusion. The Dickson book leaves the readers hanging, just after events had begun to get interesting, and this after six hundred pages of fascinating situations that all pointed to a resolution that was never delivered. All that I've said about the Dickson novel can be multiplied for *CHANUR'S VENTURE*. The narrative ends just before what promised to be a most exciting climax. It leaves the reader with a most irritating feeling. Not unlike being teased. Blue eyes instead of blue balls. And nowhere in the blurbs on the back or inside did it indicate that this was part one of a two-part novel. A bookseller friend of mine mentioned that the information that *CHANUR'S VENTURE* was only the first part of a long novel that will be concluded in *CHANUR'S REVENGE*, was printed in *LOCUS*.

Well, I'm sorry, but I believe this is a most deceptive and irritating practice. Large notices should be placed on the books that this is part one of a two-part series. Ads in *LOCUS* do not count, since the majority of potential readers do not buy *LOCUS*. Publishers who consistently do this to their readers are going to eventually find that they no longer are going to sell as many copies of a given book as they used to. Readers are going to wait until both parts are available in a used-book

store. If the readers lose faith in a publisher and feel ripped off -- watch out. I will review both C.V. and T.F.E. only when the second parts are available.

I notice that the Screen Writers' Guild recently struck the movie and TV industries for a short period of time. There are those who want the SFWA to become a writers' union. I say no. NEVER.

Have you wondered why the movies and TV are such uniformly dull art forms and why it is so hard to break into both fields? I believe it is because of the existence of a closed-shop union. The goal of such an organization is to insulate those incompetents who have seniority from competition with bright, fresh young outsiders. Also in most places that are unionized, the number of those employed decreases -- since there is only a certain amount of money that any company can spend on labor, only a certain amount of employees can be hired in any case.

Any union in SF would kill an already moribund field. Its only positive benefits would go to union cronies and those borderline hacks with seniority that are currently struggling and who cannot survive in the free market and who need a coercive organization and a bunch of union strong-arm goons to help them. Besides all of the other arguments, a union would also violate many whose religious beliefs (beliefs recognized by the Supreme Court) do not permit union membership.

In all practicality a writers' union would probably fail, in part because many writers are opposed to it and because the publishers could probably break any nascent union.

OBSERVATION (Unknown Source):
Authors are treated like mushrooms by the publishing industry: they are fed a lot of shit and kept in the dark.

Computers and word processors have been hailed as labor saving devices that would reshape the marketplace, saving on labor and increasing productivity. Now comes word that such devices might harm the eyes and cause muscular strain. Some vision care centers are even advertising glasses and special eye exercises that help cope with the problems caused by looking at video screens for protracted periods of time. What I find bemusing in all of this is the fact that the "old high-tech" pros that are constantly reminding us that there's no such thing as a free lunch, forgot to apply that dictum to anything other than government. Every technological invention has side effects, a few bad, most good. But, while I've seen entire letter columns of SFWA publications filled with the praises of word processors, only one writer expressed displeasure.

I guess what all of this proves -- again -- is that Science Fiction (and SF writers) is not useful as a predictive medium. After all, as the old saying goes, it's one thing to predict the automobile, another altogether to predict traffic jams.

I intend to buy a word processor as soon as possible. So do not take my comments as an indictment of word processors. Just a gentle caveat.

No reviews this issue -- REG tells me there's not enough room. More next issue.



THE DIVISOR

BY DARRELL SCHWEITZER

Small Press Magazines

Bob Price's CRYPT OF CTHULHU and attendant publications continue to be one of the most amazing fan publications ever. CRYPT itself appears eight times a year, as a neat, well designed digest, and there are a variety of companion magazines, all neo-pulps: RISQUE STORIES, SHUDDER STORIES, TWO-FISTED DETECTIVE, etc. CRYPT is theoretically a non-fiction magazine devoted to Lovecraft and his circle. As such, it is one of the major critical/scholarly journals in the field, but unlike say, LOVECRAFT STUDIES, this one can also be extremely funny. The covers are often wonderful sight gags. The "forbidden books" issue shows an ancient Egyptian wallpainting depicting a stylized Cthulhu. One of the early fiction issues, entitled TALES FROM THE CRYPT OF CTHULHU (#16) has a clever EC-style cover by Steve Fabian. An earlier issue featured a TV script, THE CTHULHUSERS, which was what might have happened to THE HONEYMOONERS if Jackie Gleason and his friend had belonged to a Cthulhu cult rather than the Racoon Lodge. The cover was remarkably apt. One of the best humorous features recently was an account of the editor's own grave robbing activities in Boston, at the site of "Pickman's Model." (He found those tunnels!)

But it is the fiction which concerns us here. Since CRYPT is a specialist magazine, very little of the fiction passes the "John Doe" test. Who it is written by is what matters. But as long as there is interest in these writers, such material should be published for specialists, in a magazine like CRYPT OF CTHULHU.

The most outstanding recent publication is UNTOLD TALES by Clark Ashton Smith, which counts as CRYPT #27 (\$2.00) and presents 43 pages of previously unpublished Smith fragments, synopses and two complete stories. One of these, "The Dart of Rasafsa," is Smith's very last tale, written weeks before his death. It isn't very good, alas. Supposedly, all Smith's bitterness at the end of his life went into this (supposedly) satir-

ical story, but the story doesn't come off as anything more than a crude, neo-Gernsbackian planetary adventure of the sort Smith was writing better in 1930. It isn't even a parody. There are touches of his earlier talent, a few strong images, but it is clear that at the very end, his powers were failing. And this is why the story deserves publication in a specialized journal: it adds to our understanding of the writer, even if it has little merit otherwise.

Other particularly noteworthy Cryptic Publications include CRYPT OF CTHULHU #21 (\$2.50), also known as SATURNALIA AND OTHER POEMS by H.P. Lovecraft (previously uncollected poetry, with scholarly apparatus); CRYPT #25 (\$2.50), which contains previously unpublished stories by Carl Jacobi, Smith and a sequel to "The Hounds of Tindalos" by Frank Belknap Long (with a Fabian cover pastiching the Arkham House/Hannes Bok dustjacket for the HOUNDS collection); and the previously mentioned companion magazines. RISQUE STORIES #1 and 2 (\$3.00 each) are neo-pulps in the manner of SPICY ADVENTURES, et al, with previously unpublished fiction and verse by Robert E. Howard, Clark Ashton Smith, etc. plus more recently written stories by pulp veterans Hugh Cave, Carl Jacobi and so on. Much of this is, strictly speaking, garbage, even as the original "Spicy" pulps were, but it is an authentic pastiche and for the nostalgic or perversely curious, golden garbage. Number 2 even contains an erotic Howard poem, "The Whoopansat of Humorous Kookooyam." Who can resist a title like that? (Don't all answer at once.) Also, some good non-fiction about these pulps by Will Murray and a typical Bob Price touch: a comic strip about "Julie de Grandin," a sexy female descendant of the original psychic sleuth -- who destroys a vampire with a Cross-Your-Heart bra! TWO-FISTED DETECTIVE STORIES (\$4.50) is an entire issue of previously unpublished Robert E. Howard fiction about iron-fisted, wooden-headed dicks battling the Yellow Peril on

sleazy waterfronts. SHUDDER STORIES #1 (\$3.00) is a "weird menace" magazine featuring stories by Howard, Jacobi and Cave, plus a Murray article, "Pandering to Perversion in the Pulps."

And most recently, as I write, CRYPT OF CTHULHU #29 (\$2.50) has appeared, another all-fiction issue. Nice Fabian cover. Lin Carter's "The Vault Beneath the Mosque," yet another of his alleged excerpts from the NECRONOMICON, isn't a bad little story, although it once again shows Lovecraft's wisdom in not attempting to write out the whole NECRONOMICON. Needless to say, there is nothing in this to drive Arabs mad or even the usual jello-brained Cthulhu Mythos protagonist. The one story that really doesn't work is "The Gods of Drinen" by Gary Myers. Myers' credential for being here is an Arkham House book, THE HOUSE OF THE WORM, which consisted of bad pastiches of Lovecraft's imitations of Lord Dunsany. I frankly don't need more of the same. "The Waiting Dark" by Eddy C. Bertin almost comes off, but as often happens in stories of this type, the plot builds up to just presenting the premise. Then it stops. There are so many horror stories I've seen for which I would give the authors this piece of advice: write a sequel; assume everything in the original is taken for granted; throw out the original.

I USED TO BE A
SARTREAN MARXIST
BUT REAL FANTASY
TAYS SO MUCH BETTER!



G. Arthur Rahman and Richard Tierney present another adventure of the world's only Gnostic sword and sorcery hero, Simon of Gitta (the Simon Magus of the Bible), who battles Romans, druids and Nameless Things; awash in ichor and prose like: "... dozens of black feline figures gushed out of the tunnel, as nimble as bats." We are definitely in pulpdom, folks. Actually, the idea behind the series deserves better treatment. Also this issue, Duane Rimmel (a Lovecraft Circle member) has a minor ghost story and most interestingly, we get a complete, finished draft of a Clark Ashton Smith story, "I Am Your Shadow," in which Smith caricatures his own alcoholism, circa 1940.

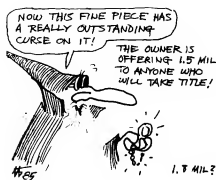
And all this is about half a year's worth of Cryptic publications. Price must have incredible stamina. He is the most creative and energetic small press publisher today. I just hope he hangs in there long enough to win a World Fantasy Award which he richly deserves.

Another publication which deserves a World Fantasy Award is Paul Ramsey's WEIRDOBOOK, which keeps plugging away with remarkable regularity and is now in its (awesome) seventeenth year of publication. All this while WB has been presenting professional quality, often superior weird fiction. The 20th issue (\$5.00) is no disappointment. There's the usual (very effective) Fabian cover, and a host of stories by big and medium names. I was particularly taken with Peter Tremayne's "Aisling," which makes effective use of its setting (a very remote corner of 19th Century Ireland) and has a pretty good prophetic-vision plot. There's also a short Ramsey Campbell piece I must confess I found confusing, another of Brian Lumley's prehistoric Tarra Khash adventures (which used to appear in FANTASTIC and now can be found in a Lumley collection Weirdbook Press has published, THE HOUSE OF CITHULHU, \$7.50), one of my "Goddess" fantasies of the far future, further sword and sorcery by James William Hjort (whose style, alas, I find rough going), and two quite capable modern-scene supernatural stories, one by the familiar John Alfred Taylor, and another by a newcomer, John Rizkalla. Poetry by Alan Ryan, Joseph Payne Brennan and others. When ordering, don't pass up the chance to also get issue #19, which contains an original Stephen King story.

KADATH #6/7, the special heroic fantasy issue, is over a year late, but is worth waiting for. It is easily the best issue of this extremely handsome magazine yet to appear. The production values are well above those of most American magazines: heavy slick paper, color cover. The fiction includes another one of Peter Tremayne's Irish folklore fantasies, effectively told in clean prose and another of Brian Lumley's Tarra Khash barbarian epics, which lapses into clean prose in an interesting way. The odd thing is that, even though the stories are in the third person, the narrative voice does, be, aye, as they say of yore, purest pseudo-archaic hokum, at least when the action centers on Tarra Khash. But in this story, Tarra meets a magician who tells of his adventures, and suddenly the writing gets a lot better. Lumley reveals a considerable talent for the romantic/decadent Clark Ashton Smith-type fantasy. Also in this issue Ardath Mayhar and Geoffrey Goddin tell competent tales of wizardry (Goddin's is better; Mayhar tends toward Deep Purple), and a new writer, Paul McGuire, manages a heroic fantasy set in New York's Central Park, verily a haunt of eldritch horrors if there ever was one. As a curiosity, Karl Edward Wagner presents the very first Kane story ever, which he wrote in high school and which he swears will never appear anywhere else. (For pretty obvious reasons.) I have two stories this issue. One of them, "Silkie Son," is my famous (or rumored) Flying Dutchman Manuscript. I wrote it in 1973 when I was at Clarion, and sold it every year or eighteen months thereafter for eleven years (eight or nine times in all), and every book or magazine that bought it managed to fold before the story could be published. And now, here it is in print, in this admittedly obscure magazine, limited to 750 copies. But the Curse goes on, I'm afraid.

Seriously, there is a problem with KADATH. Simply, editor Francesco Cova does not answer mail. He has not paid me for the story. He does not reply to inquiries. And I have learned from corresponding with some of the other contributors, he has not sent out contributors' copies, for all the magazine apparently appeared in the Fall of 1984. The main American distributor tells me he has not been able to get copies or make contact with Cova. This being the case, I'm afraid I must pronounce this lovely magazine brain-dead.

I am not sure I would trust someone like that to fill orders, so until further notice, the only



known source of this issue is a single British dealer, Fantasy Centre, 157 Holloway Road, London N7 8LX, England. He sold copies for five pounds a few months ago. He may still have some left.

GHOSTS AND SCHOLARS is an M.R. James fanzine. It features a lot of non-fiction, and also previously unpublished or at least uncollected fiction and non-fiction by James himself. The other issue is of exceptional interest for a reprinting (from an Elton school paper) of "The Malice of Inanimate Objects," now the third known story not in THE COLLECTED GHOST STORIES OF M.R. JAMES. Like much of the fiction in CRYPT OF CITHULHU, it has more scholarly interest than real merit, but there are some nice touches. There are also two stories in the James tradition: "The Scarecrow" by Roger Johnson is (surprisingly, since this magazine pays in copies) of fully professional quality, a classical British ghost story, fairly predictable but making good use of local color. "The Gathering of Dr. Oates" by Peter Davidson is more of an amateur pastiche, lacking in such basics of fictional technique as controlled viewpoint. There's also a long, scholarly article on James's use and understanding of black magic.

Argh. These magazines have been piling up, much faster than I can even read them. And if I reviewed them all, I'd take over half the magazine, which I do not think Geis would allow. Therefore, I shall list some recent, interesting items:

WHISPERS 21-22 is another cheap, gorgeous production, with a wrap-around color cover and stories by Alan Ryan (two of them), Tanith Lee, Dennis Etchison, Richard Christian Matheson, Hugh B. Cave, Fritz

Leiber, David Morrell, etc. All of professional quality, of course, many quite excellent and destined for various Year's Best anthologies (Stuart Schiff, 70 Highland Avenue, Binghamton, NY, 13905. This "double issue" \$6.00. Two double issues \$10.95. In fact, Schiff has been publishing nothing but "double" issues for a couple years now.)

FANTASY BOOK, March 1985, is really a professional magazine in all but (just barely) circulation. You can even find it in some book stores. High production values, color covers and a cover design (this time at least) that looks remarkably like THE DRAGON. Stories by Stephen Golden, Glen Rahman and Richard Tierney, Scott Edelman, Esther Friesner, and others. This is a basic, workaday magazine of the fantasy field. It publishes more fantasy than anybody else, and most of the new writers appear there eventually. (P.O.B. #60126, Pasadena, CA, 91106, \$3.95 per copy, \$12.00/4 issues.)

WEIRD TALES, Fall 1984. Yes, that WEIRD TALES has made a fleeting and phantom appearance. After the strange "controversy" over who was editor, it seems Gil Lamont is fiction editor, Ted Newsom senior editor. Standard sized, on slick paper, but clumsily laid out, much of the magazine crudely blown up from pulp size. (There are even reprinted headings from the old WT. In this format they don't fit.) There's an excellent novel by Harlan Ellison, a rather bad interplanetary (obvious trunk story) short by Stephen King, a short story by R.A. Lafferty, a couple more new items, and several reprints. This is basically a state-of-existence issue, rather than a firm re-establishment of the magazine. The main problem for WEIRD TALES now is reaching its audience. I counted myself very fortunate that I was able to get a single copy in a comic book store in February of 1985. Most professionals I know are unaware that this actually appeared. One of the advertisers in the issue was under the impression it had been cancelled. The smart money seems to be that no more issues will make it out, although I am willing to wait and see. I'd say it's too uncertain to be worth subscribing to but you should definitely write to the publisher and try to buy the first issue. Rumor has it about 10,000 were printed, but only 3000 were distributed. Somebody must

have the rest of those copies. (The Bellepheron Network, Inc., 8555 Sunset Blvd, Suite D, Los Angeles, CA, 90069, \$2.50 per issue.)

FANTASY TALES, Winter 1984 (#13) has handsome color covers, the first color work to appear on this magazine in years. Fabian did the front cover. Production values are definitely up, and the author line-up is impressive: stories by Robert Bloch, William F. Nolan, Charles Grant, Steve Rasnic Tem. The Bloch is a reprint; the rest are originals. (Stephen Jones, 130 Park View, Wembley, Middlesex, HA9 6JU, England. 90p or \$3.00 + \$1.00 postage. Three issues, £3.00 or \$11.00. Buy this from Fantasy Centre. With the pound down to about \$1.06, it's two-thirds cheaper if you pay the British price.)



BORDERLAND (7305 Woodbine Avenue, Suite 517, Markham, Ontario, L3R 3V7, Canada) is a new, all-pro quality magazine which features stories by mostly little-known writers (Galahad Elfandson being the biggest name of the lot) plus an uncollected J. Sheridan Le Fanu tale. This will be a major publication (it pays 3¢ a word) if it truly gets underway. An alleged quarterly, there has been no second issue following the first, which appeared last October. \$3.00 Canadian, \$2.50 U.S.

INTERZONE looks more like NEW WORLDS every day. Fortunately, it reads better. This is Britain's premier SF publication. The tenth issue features Gene Wolfe, Rachel Pollack, Scott Bradford (an enormously promising INTERZONE discovery). Literary SF, extreme by American standards, but the stories remain coherent. (U.S. agent: 145 East 18th Street, #5, Costa Mesa, CA, 92627. \$13.00 for 4 issues.)

LAST WAVE, Autumn 1984 (#4) still tries valiantly to be an American INTERZONE, but doesn't quite fit the bill. The stories are pro-quality, but not all that different, more like ones that did not quite make it into AMAZING or ASIMOV'S. The main item this issue is "The 19th Century Spaceship," a novella-length exercise in the folksy-fantastic by Richard Wilson, quite reminiscent of Avram Davidson or G.C. Edmondson. It's pleasant, but a bit too diffuse. There's also one of David Bunch's oddments and stories by Ian Watson and Ronald Anthony Cross. (POB #3206, Grand Central Station, NY, NY, 10163; \$2.50, 4 issues/\$10.00.)

SOMETHING ELSE, Spring 1984 (#3) just arrived from a British dealer (Fantasy, Medway Ltd.). I had not seen this magazine before, although I had been trying to get the first two issues, which apparently featured material by Moorcock, Aldiss, M. John Harrison, etc. A slick, NEW WORLDS-type avant-garde magazine. Short stories by Brian Aldiss and several unknowns. An excerpt from Michael Moorcock's still unpublished (because of the Timespace fiasco) THE CITY IN THE AUTUMN STARS. Charles Platt interviews Captain Beefheart. The magazine has a handsome cover, some good interior art, and some very clumsy layout. If they'd quit skipping spaces between paragraphs and just indent, it would not only be easier to read, but there'd be room for more text. (The Print Centre, 11-15 Fennel St., Manchester, M4 3DU, England. £1.50 or \$2.50. No subscriptions.)

CRYPT OF CTHULHU, Robert M. Price, 35 Elmbrook Place, Bloomfield NJ, 07003; 8 issues/\$16.00. Prices of back issues vary. WEIRDBOOK, W. Paul Ganley, Box 149, Amherst Branch, Buffalo, NY, 14226. Single copies \$5.75 postpaid, subscriptions 7 issues/\$22.50. KADATH, Francesco Cova, Via Byron 14/7, 16145 Genova, Italy; \$9.00 or 5 pounds for the special double issue. Again, a good reason to buy British; order from the publisher with caution (see review). GHOSTS AND SCHOLARS, Rosemary Parde, 118 cote Le Square, Southgate, Rumcom, Cheshire WA7 2SA, England. U.S. price: \$3.00; subscriptions (3 issues apparently) \$8.00.

NOISE LEVEL

A COLUMN BY JOHN BRUNNER

ON BEING THE ONLY PERSON IN STEP,
AS IT WERE

I suppose it started with toothpaste, really ...

You see, when I was a kid I had to put up with the brand my parents thought was Good For Me, even though I distrusted it on principle. It was Phillips' Milk of Magnesia toothpaste, and the name alone was enough to put me off, because I was brought up in the days when aperients were issued automatically to children once a week if not more often. I didn't mind California Syrup of Figs, but on noticing that actually I quite liked it, those who had charge of me started dosing me with Milk of Magnesia instead, possibly on the grounds that medicine doesn't do you any good unless it tastes repulsive. (That too was a widespread attitude at the time, and for all I know may yet survive in benighted pockets of the contemporary world.)

And, believe me, it tasted revolting. For those who have never run across it, I should perhaps explain that it is, or I profoundly

hope was, a suspension of whitish powder -- magnesium, I presume -- in liquid paraffin. Those who forced it down my throat insisted it was "tasteless." Well, that was what it said on the label...

So as soon as I was able to buy toothpaste for myself I changed to Gibbs' SR, which probably wasn't any better in spite of the resounding name of its exclusive ingredient "sodium ricinoleate" but at least didn't remind me of those countless nauseating spoonfuls of laxative mixture. Only much later did I figure out that the "ricinoleate" bit must have some connection with castor oil.

Years afterwards -- I think about the time I started to smoke cigarettes (a bad habit acquired in the RAF at a time when it was still customary for the NCOs to tell recruits, "Fall out for a smoke!") -- I started having occasional attacks of gingivitis, and sometimes found blood on my toothbrush. It occurred to me to do a bit of comparison shopping, so I started sampling other makes of toothpaste at random. Eventually I discovered one called TCP. Not only did it taste delicious -- a bit like butter scotch, though less sweet -- it cleared up my gingivitis in short order and left my teeth exceptionally clean and white. I decided to stick with this one.

Five months later they withdrew it from the market.

(Speaking of TCP: It's the brand-name of an antiseptic, a solution of halogens in water. I've seen a review in a consumer magazine that claimed it cannot possibly have any beneficial effects. Well, that's as may be. But it fixes insect bites and stings, sunburn, and sore throats in next to no time, and I wouldn't be without it.)

I mentioned cigarettes. I gave them up ten or more years ago in favor of cigars, because I can't inhale those. But in the days when I did use the things, I found a splendid brand called Sorbonne, a

British imitation of the French Gitanes or Disque Bleu but in a king-size format. They came in a soft pack, so I bought a leather flip-top case with brass trimmings to carry them in.

They were thereupon withdrawn from sale.

Do you ever get the feeling that you're the only person in step? Around that time I started to!

I found precisely the shampoo I'd been unwittingly searching after for years: Wella Herbal. I happen to have extremely fine hair that refuses to lie down for at least 24 hours after I wash it. Moreover it gets terribly tangled and dragging a comb through it is agonizing. The one hair-cream I tried -- Silvikrin, when I was in my teens -- brought on a severe case of dandruff, so I prefer not to use dressings on it. This shampoo not only got my scalp beautifully clean; it contained something that lubricated the hair so that I could brush it as soon as it was dry.

Terrific. But guess what?

That's right. I can't find it any more.

As I already mentioned, I went over to cigars after I gave up cigarettes. I signed up with a firm specializing in what the wine trade would call "bin ends" -- Cigar Club -- as a cheap way of trying out a wide range of cigars until I found one I particularly liked. I did: a Dutch brand named Agio Wilde. Among the reasons I liked them was because one end was left untrimmed, and they could be lighted just by holding them over the flame: no need to draw on them. Connoisseurs claim that even the fumes from a wooden match or a butane lighter can spoil the flavor of the tobacoco, so this struck me as an excellent idea.

A few months went by, and one day I put in my usual order ... You guessed it. The British distributors had given up importing them.



A firm called Hago Products used to make the neatest and simplest toilet roll holder you could possibly imagine. It consisted of a metal bar painted white. One end was bent at 90° and attached to a triangular plate that you screwed to the wall. On the other end, which was angled slightly upward, was a round ball of wood or plastic in some bright color, so proportioned that the cardboard tube inside the roll was a push-fit over it and once in position hung loose on the bar. No springs to weaken or break -- no nothing to go wrong at all. We had one at a previous home but I left it behind when we moved.

When I ordered another ... yes, indeed: discontinued.

There seems to be no end to this kind of problem. Take wine, for example. The finest sweet white wine in the world, which I will back any day against all your Chateau d'Yquem, is Hungarian Tokay. I found a firm specializing in Eastern European wines and for a couple of years we were able to offer the stuff at an affordable price to our dinner guests as an accompaniment to the dessert. Then the Hungarians decided to sell the monopoly for Britain to a firm in Norwich -- the other side of the country from here -- which specializes in (wait for it!) mustard... It took me a year and a half to find it again, and then I could only get the 3-puttonyos grade, when I wanted the 4.

(On the other hand, I have at last found another source of La Clairette de Die, which some French friends of ours introduced us to one sunny day in Provence under a plum tree in full bloom. They regard it as the only methode champenoise wine which is better than Champagne, and -- short of a truly fine Paul Krug, which is far beyond our means -- I'd be inclined to agree.)

But the problem goes all the way up the scale to cars, and probably beyond.

Marjorie and I happen to like drophead cars. We only ever owned one hardtop, and that was a Jensen, so it was rather special. But when we decided to move to Somerset in late 1973 we were running a Citroen convertible, a model of which only thirty or forty were ever imported to Britain. The prospect of living (as we thought of it then) in the middle of nowhere with a virtually unique type of foreign car daunted us; it was getting old anyway, and spares were hard enough to find in London. So since they were no longer making my favorite Daimler SP250 (fiberglass body, hence no rust, and a giant capacity for luggage), I sold the Cit and bought a nearly new Triumph Stag.

According to a copy of CLASSIC AND SPORTS CAR which I just bought because it had a picture of a Stag on the cover, some people had a lot of trouble with the "Snag," although on balance the reporter who wrote it up for the magazine concluded that the faults were mainly due to neglect of proper maintenance. I believe it. We still have ours; it's twelve years old and has 112,000 miles on the clock with the original engine. It's taken us to France, Germany, Belgium, Sweden, Switzerland, Italy, Austria, Yugoslavia, Greece, Czechoslovakia, Poland ... and it still burns less than a litre of oil between services.

Oh, we've had problems with it, naturally. But of all the cars we've ever owned, it's proved to be the most reliable and the greatest fun to drive. If they still built Stags, I'd long ago have bought a new one. But they don't, you see. The people at British Leyland must have heard how much the Brunners liked them, so ...

I wish I wasn't the only one in step! It's getting me down!



N.N.R. CONTINUED FROM P. 46

Well...I didn't finish the book. I didn't care what happened to these odd-shaped and oddly specialized former humans.

The scientific DNA magic didn't seem even remotely credible to me in the first place, and the ideas Watson was exploring or getting to didn't lure me.

There is little narrative tension in the novel, little conflict. The only thing going is mild curiosity. Not enough.

MY MOTHER PUTS A HERB IN EVERY SENTENCE.

ADD BUTTER, EGGS AND MILK AND YOU HAVE ONE HELL OF A LETTER.



ELFQUEST, BOOK 4

By Wendy & Richard Pini
Donning, \$12.95, October, 1984.

This is the final volume of this full-color illustrated fantasy which has followed the adventures of the Wolfriders, a band of tough little elves searching for other tribes and enclaves of elves in a vicious world of savage, pre-civilized humans and especially by ruthless trolls.

The questions are answered in this volume, and there are many surprises, many revelations.

The main interest and wonder is in the elves as caring, loving, striving, wholly "human" people. Here is a completely realized social structure, morality, culture, history, past, and probable future.

Even the goddamned trolls are true to their disgusting nature, and honest in their ruthless dishonesty.

The drawing is superb, the storyline multi-leveled and many-stranded. The elves are incredibly all distinct personalities.

Simply fucking marvelous. And there are apparently plans for further adventures for the Wolfriders.

The Pinis have a life work here, and probably a fortune. Long may they continue, and may they be rich!

YOU MEAN-



LETTER FROM ROBERT S. FRIEDMAN
Publisher, THE DONNING COMPANY
5659 Virginia Beach Blvd
Norfolk, VA 23502
Feb. 13, 1985

"I would dearly love to have someone at the magazines check the information in letters before they are printed, especially when they state things that relate directly to on-going business and/or image in the market. I refer specifically to Janrae Frank's letter printed in the Spring, 1985 issue. There is not a single statement that is true, with the possible exception of her characterization of me as "a well-meaning person." I often wonder how people who do not have any access to the company balance sheet can make categorical statements about lines making or losing money, about the reasons why editors are shifted, about phasing out lines and departments, and about our publishing plans.

"Janrae Frank has not had such access, and knows next to nothing about Donning or Starblaze. I do not choose to air my laundry in public about such matters, except to correct the most grievous errors. First: the line of meta-physical books, called Unilaw, had fourteen out of twenty-three published titles sell out printings and reprintings, a better average than industry standard. The line is not cancelled, and will release three or four more titles in 1985. Second: we never had a publicity department (we're far too small a house for such luxuries), so how could we phase it out? Third: our printer didn't put us "on a budget," a ridiculous concept in any case. Fourth: we have cut down our title production, to be sure, but we are still active in the field, as anyone reading the best-seller lists can see. Fifth: we didn't need to "save the book divisions," as books are our only

product. And sixth: Starblaze has done better than ever in the last couple years, albeit with less title production.

"I hope that in future someone does a bit of research before printing groundless and irresponsible statements from people who obviously have a personal ax to grind. Thanks for listening."

LETTER FROM KAY REYNOLDS
THE DONNING COMPANY, PUBLISHERS
5659 Virginia Beach Blvd
Norfolk, VA 23502
March 14, 1985

"I read Janrae Frank's letter about The Donning Company/Publishers in SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #54. July '85 will make two years since Janrae and family left Donning/Starblaze. The Stines have been living in California ever since then. There hasn't been a whole lot of contact between them and the Donning office. It does strike me as curious that Janrae continues to "know" as much as she does about Donning's business, and that she continues to broadcast it with such evangelistic fervor.

"I don't want to dissect her letter line by line. Suffice it to say that the facts she presents aren't. I'm pretty sure that she believes them to be true, but it's simply not the case.

"Donning has some of the strangest publicity going. In the last two years, we've never done better with the Starblaze line. Yes, we have printed fewer titles, but the sales on these titles have represented some of the best distribution we've ever known. Returns are low. Cash flow is good. But the gossip grinders continue to circulate the rumor that Donning is close to bankruptcy and will be going out of business. When it comes to printing one thing or the other about us in the fan press, guess what story sees print?

"Not every author that works with a publishing company is going to be happy with it. The science fiction community presents a healthy public forum for those people to present and circulate their point of view. It isn't always likely or possible that a repre-

LETTERS

sentative from that publishing company is going to be available to defend itself either. Same situation goes for what occurs when unhappy ex-employees begin talking about the place they had to leave.

"I guess the one thing Janrae was right about in her letter is that I am a fan of the SF/F genre. Prior to my employment with Donning, I was active in fandom. The one thing that I have always deplored, found actually embarrassing, is the lack of journalistic responsibility in the fan press.

"April '85 will make 5 years that I've worked with Donning Publishing. Every year, usually around March and/or September, we will get a rash of phone calls from fans and pros telling us that they've heard Donning/Starblaze is going out of business. We reassure them and we keep on publishing. During the time since the Stine's departure, the rumors have been heavier and nastier and always in contradiction to information released from this office.

"However, belief in the gossip has prevailed recently culminating in the March '85 LOCUS "Publishing Notes" when they ran an article that said "The Donning company has remembered what it has published except for the 'Elquest' material and the Robert Asprin 'Myth' books. Poor distribution and sales were given as the reasons. They should no longer be considered a market."

"I've addressed the statements made in this article in the news release mailed out this week and so, I won't repeat myself here. The point I'd like to make is this -- the article appeared without backup from the Donning office. Charlie Brown received this piece of information and he printed it without confirmation. If he had bothered to pick up the phone and call the Donning office -- at no charge, he has our warts line -- he could have found out what titles had been reminded and why, what titles had been cancelled and why, what plans Donning had for future publications -- the whole nine yards. But he didn't feel that was necessary. Why? So many rumors had been circulated, he felt that what he had heard was valid. He accepted it as fact. Worse. Fans and professionals accepted it

do. They had also been privy to gossip which was lots more interesting than the real stuff.

'So what happened next? Chaos, pure and simple. Donning had not yet received their issue of the March LOCUS when the phone calls began. Authors called wanting to know when their books had been re-mailed. Book stores wanted to return product and cancel future orders because they were afraid that the delicate structure of continuing sales against returns had become unbalanced. Contracts that were in negotiating stages had to be reassured. Fans called wanting to know if books they had ordered would be published. All because the rumor mill got out of hand. Donning is not the only company (and what's a company -- a publishing company -- other than a composite of working individuals made up of authors, artists, editors and business men?) who have been hurt by this kind of thing. It's happened in the past and, unfortunately, it will probably happen in the future. Rumors are one thing when it's just talk and something completely different in print. Interestingly enough, when we talked with the people who called, assuring them that all was well and so forth, their first and continuing response was that we should haul out our lawyers and sue, Sue, SUE! The tables were turned but the individuals were still just as blood-thirsty. That kind of attitude only perpetuates grief for the ill. We feel that Brown acted without malice and will get the story right once he gets his facts straight.

'I would like to take the time to clear one distortion regarding Frank's letter regarding our former marketing director, Richard F.X. O'Connor. Richard has a long history in publishing as author and business man. He worked for Donning as sales manager and marketing director for quite some time. During that time, Donning published his book, I-DENT-A-KID, a title that should be familiar to many. (It's in a mass market trade edition now.) In the fall of '84, Richard left Donning to establish his own consulting and small press publishing company. George Beahm, who published KIRK'S WORKS, is the editor for O'Connor House. This was something Richard had wanted to do, planned to do for a long time. He was not "released" from his job like some errant employee.

'As far as the "phasing out" of the publicity department, Janrae should know better than that. Ever since I came to work at Donning the policy has been that each editor was responsible for the publicity, advertisement and marketing plan of his or her own material.

There is no department to be phased out.

'I think it's time the SF community, fans and pros, started to get better perspectives on what they hear and read. The journals have an obligation to their public that shouldn't be taken so lightly. I think it's time SF grew up.

'Thank you for your time.'

((Apologies. I should have sent a copy of Janrae's letter to you for comment and printed your responses along with her letter. In the future that will be my policy.

((SFR's basic policy has always been that this magazine is an open forum with full opportunity to Reply at least once. A basic problem faced by the fan press in exchanges like this is that it is impossible to determine the full truth in any matter, since money is limited, access to figures impossible, and perceptions of reality different.

((It may well be that letters and stories regarding the internal workings of a publisher are best left unpublished because of the problems we see here and because the potential for damage to businesses and individuals is so great. It's a no-win situation.))



LETTER FROM ELTON T ELLIOTT
1899 Weissner Drive, NE
Salem, OR 97503
Feb 9, 1985

'I read with amazement Alan Dean Foster's comment about Robert Dole and Elizabeth Dole being the Republican Party ticket for President in 1988.

'Dick, if there's somebody else out in SF who is more politically active at the grassroots and party level in politics than I am I'd be surprised. So believe me when I say the Dole-Dole ticket hasn't a liberals chance in Utah of being the '88 ticket. The Re-

publican Party is not that suicidal or liberal (same thing).

'The part of the Republican Party that is future-growth and hope-oriented is not the Bob Dole (the remnants of the old Nelson Rockefeller-Thomas Dewey clique) wing. They've lost control of the Party at the grassroots level which is where Presidential nominations are won -- at least in the Republican Party. (In 1980 the Republican Party establishment wanted Bush, the business interests wanted Connelly, the grassroots activists wanted Reagan -- guess who won.) The comers in the Party are not Dole, Baker or Bush, but Jack Kemp and Newt Gingrich -- you read it here first.

'A final observation about the politics of SF fans (at least those that go to conventions). I attended a convention last fall held the weekend after the '84 General Election, and was surprised to see how many fans were depressed over Reagan's victory. Reagan and other Republicans, especially Newt Gingrich, support spaceflight. Walter Mondale wanted to "keep the heavens free" of humanity, which is why he voted against funding the space shuttle while a Senator in 1974. I think the depression over Reagan's victory has to do with fears that the Religious "Ban the Books" crazies have taken over Reagan and the Republican Party. I don't think so. While the crazies bother me, they don't represent the rank and file thinking of the grassroots activists I know. And after many close encounters with the 1985 Oregon Legislature I can tell you that the social planners in the Liberal wing of the Democratic Party represent a far greater danger to our freedom than most of the crazies ever have.

'I tell you, Dick, there's nothing like testifying in front of a bunch of puffed up, half wit legislators to scare one to death. Every time you turn around they're legislating another one of our freedoms away. We elect legislators in America, not babysitters, but they don't seem to understand that.'

((And the voters don't seem to remember from one election to another who has screwed them and who has not. I'm getting increasingly sour on the electorate...and the politicians who apparently rule this country. The more you observe, the longer you live, the more cynical you get. Reality is the enemy of idealism; after forty years of observing the world, the coating of natural idealism on the youthful psyche gets worn away till the cynic is exposed.))

LETTER FROM ERIC LINDSAY
POB #42, Lyneham, ACT 2602
Australia
March 1, 1985

'Your digression on angst following the comments about Harlan Ellison's depression seemed spot on. Youthful optimism is all very well, while you can still consider yourself youthful, and still have faith in the Protestant Work Ethic and all that groovy stuff.

'I wonder why Elton Elliott restricted himself to US SF magazines in his comments. He totally missed VISIONS OF TOMORROW which was financed by collector Ron Graham, and lasted slightly over a year, with a dozen issues published. That was full-size, slick paper and some full color interior art. It had distribution problems in the UK and here that eventually killed it, with a loss of \$50,000. Every now and then I look over my collection of them and wonder why such an attractive magazine had to disappear.'

LETTER FROM ORSON SCOTT CARD
546 Lindley Rd
Greensboro, NC 27410
Feb. 13, 1985

'Why do you want to quit doing SFR? Is it because you didn't get a Hugo last year? Well, heck, I'll form a consortium to buy 5000 World-con memberships and we'll get you as many Hugos as you want. Which ones do you want to have? Fan Writer? Semi-prozine? Novel? The Campbell Award?

'Or is it that you're sick of doing labels? Send me your mailing list, I'll get it on computer, keep it updated for you, and send you a set of labels with every issue. Printed, of course, in ZIP code order.

'Or are you tired of retyping letters and articles? Publish the column specs and we'll send our stuff preformatted and ready to reproduce.

'Or is it that you want respect? We can get you an honorary doctorate somewhere. Doctor of Laws, Doctor of Secular Humanity, Doctor of Systematic Paranoia, your star on the Hollywood walk of fame, anything you want.

'Or is it that you want to make more money? Raise the subscription rate. Stop overpaying writers. I'll give gift subscriptions.

'Or is it that you're tired and want to rest? Well, I hate to break it to you, Dick, but we put a curse on SFR a long time ago.

You can change the name, you can change the cover, you can change the price, you can change the format, you can change anything you want -- but the day you stop editing SFR, you die. And not a pleasant death. You will suffer indescribable pains in places that have never hurt before; you will itch in places that no one can ever scratch; the normal motions of your vital organs will be agony to you; your face will be covered with warts and boils; and you will have a constant erection except when you want one. That will last for six months, or until you pray for death, whichever comes later.

'How can I make it more clear? It's not that we don't want you to be happy. It's just that -- look, your magazine may not be Slick, it may not have Dignity, but it is without question the class act of the only volunteer, unsubsidized critical community in the world. Where would I publish my ideas, Dick? More to the point, where in hell would Barrel Schweitzer publish his? Have some compassion.'

((Well, when you put it that way... Perhaps, after a vacation at the end of 1986 I will decide to continue SFR in one format or another. Considering the alternative....))

LETTER FROM ORSON SCOTT CARD
546 Lindley Road
Greensboro, NC 27410
Feb. 22, 1985

'Dear Dick,

'A plea to your readers: I will pay at least \$10 for a good copy of SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #50. Please contact me FIRST to make sure someone else hasn't already sent one. The \$10 is meant to include the price of an envelope and postage, but the price is negotiable: Orson Scott Card
546 Lindley Road
Greensboro, NC 27410
(919) 852-8716'

LETTER FROM A FRIEND

'I mentioned ONE IMMORTAL MAN to an editor who turned out to have rejected it at some point in the past. (S)he said that the race of the protagonist was irrelevant. The deciding factors were that the novel's sex content might have caused some trouble with sales/distribution people; the action-

adventure was okay but not substantial enough; and generally, the writing was competent but didn't sing. Yes, I know there are many books out that aren't even competent. But yours was a "difficult" book in that it didn't automatically drop into a category. This means it has to be judged by more severe standards, I think. My editor friend (sorry, I can't tell you who) also said that some editors might have been just a little wary of your name and reputation, but wouldn't be specific. I guess that's what I might find if I was submitting a novel myself to many different publishers.

'Just thought you might like to know. You may remember I enjoyed ONE IMMORTAL MAN quite a lot myself. Trouble is, some of your porno writing habits subtly carried over to the SF genre, and I think editors are very wary of that. They need their self-respect; and if one thing is considered even less appetizing than SF, it is pornography!'

((I appreciate the inside info; non-attribution is about the only way an author can get a true reading of editorial thinking.

((I've heard from several former editors who had a look at ONE IMMORTAL MAN several years ago; they all remember it clearly! But couldn't buy it then for various reasons. The novel has impact, obviously, and probably would sell well. But I really think there are other, secret reasons for its failure to find a publisher or editor-with-guts. At that time Wimlib and Blacks were sacred untouchables and a novel of a white man disguised as a black going around for a thousand years being king and secret ruler and outwitting and killing dozens of blacks, having sex with young black girls... ah, no, it just couldn't be accepted. I understand that now. It was a novel even worse than Gor, philosophically.

((Yeah, everyone who has read the novelet version in England liked the story, the hero, the action, the SF content. But ANDROMEDA 2, in which it appeared, never found an American publisher, primarily, I think, because it contained "One Immortal Man." The kiss of death.

((And I truly sympathize with editors who are leery of me: What would their peer-group think? And of course they would never think of suggesting changes or editing-out of 'offending' passages.

((Alas, in the small family of SF editors, I am a leper, tainted forever by my pornographic past and my un-liberal philosophy? No, no, I can't believe that.

((I'll just make my fortune out-

side of the hardcore SF ghetto, where editors haven't heard of me or, don't care.

((As it happens, I just received a phone call from my agent telling me that Fawcett Gold Medal has accepted Elton Elliott's and my partial novel, THE MASTER FILE. This is our third for that publisher. The novel is near-future computer-technology-misused to the point of mastery of the world by a very ruthless elite. The nature of the computers involved is what makes this novel a bit different.))

LETTER FROM L. NEIL SMITH
111 East Drake, Suite 7032
Ft. Collins, CO 80525
March 11, 1985

'I enjoyed seeing my conversations with Neal Wilgus printed in SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #54. I hope they generate lots of interest. What I want to comment on now is Hannah Shapero's thought-provoking piece on blue hair and blond eyes (or is it the other way around) -- you can never tell in this business) in SF.

'I'm a W.A.S.P. (White Anglo-Saxon Polack). In the 'North American Confederacy,' populated with talking coyotes, porpoises, gorillas, killer whales, chimpanzees -- and assorted alien -- the ethnicity of human characters seldom seems significant. However, Shapero made me think back, and I realized, if she's right about SF in general, my own works are untypical, featuring, as they do, an American Indian, a little old Mexican lady and a Jewish time-machine pilot -- dark eyes, dark hair, dark complexions all around.

'While my Confederacy books have sold well (with the exception of THEIR MAJESTIES' BUCKETEERS, featuring its entirely lamvian cast: blue eyes, brown hair, nine legs), three of my novels have been a disappointment, leading me to wonder, if Shapero's correct, who's responsible -- authors, editors, publishers, retailers, or the public -- for whatever biases exist in SF. I'm speaking (actually, I'm word-processing) of the Calrissian series I did for Del Rey and LucasFilm, which despite their tie-in to three blockbuster movies, have yet to pay out.

'It may be a matter of other things getting in the way. Lando had about four lines in the third STAR WARS movie (though he did pilot the Falcon into the heart of the Death Star). Del Rey never indicated anywhere that there were three books, each with its own sto-

ry, but also part of a sequential fourth story-line. It may have helped, as I suggested during production, to put numbers on the covers. Or a box around all three. In my area, stores never stocked all three novels at the same time.

'Quibbles. If I'd a nickel for every time I've heard that SF does not offer any black protagonists, I wouldn't worry about royalties. Yet those to whom I complain about the performance of these books, invariably hold that it's the fact that the protagonist of all three is a black man. Books about black men don't sell. Even tied to blockbuster movies. I'd like to believe otherwise, but it wouldn't be the first time I've been accused of naivete.

'Point is, LucasFilm commissioned 'em, I wrote 'em, Del Rey printed 'em, bookstores stocked 'em. Where did the process break down? The solution's left for the intelligent -- if somewhat hypocritical -- reader.'

((Yeah. Even a book about a white man disguised as a black can't get published, much less sell.

((So the prejudice is in the readers--mostly young whites--who subconsciously don't like the idea of identifying with a black. A dirty little bit of reality hardly anyone talks about.))



LETTER FROM NEAL WILGUS
Box 25771
Albuquerque, NM 87125
March, 1985

'Here's an addendum to the "Final Interviewer's Note" at the end of the L. Neil Smith interview in SFR #54. Anyone who might be interested in becoming an advisory (voting) member of the Libertarian

Futurist Society but is scared off by that \$50 membership should take into account the fact that advisory members receive free copies of many of the Prometheus Award nominees, sent by publishers who apparently find the award worthwhile. Since the freebies include some expensive hardcovers as well as trade and pocket-size paperbacks it doesn't take long to get more back in books than you've paid to be an advisor. Is this bribery or unfair influence for publishers who give freebies? Not likely, since none of the Prometheus winners so far have been among the free samples. If this changes anyone's mind about becoming an advisory member they can write to: LFS, c/o Victoria Varga, 121 McKinley Street, Rochester, NY, 14609.

'Hannah Shapero's "Red-Haired Heroes, Brown-Haired Losers" is too true and seems to hint at some very deep archetypes or prejudices. Shapero might carry the idea a bit further by comparing color-patterns with those associated with figures in the Tarot deck. My knowledge of the Tarot is too meager to do more than suggest Eden Gray's A COMPLETE GUIDE TO THE TAROT, which uses the popular Pamela Coleman Smith designs, as a place to start. Gray puts a positive interpretation on almost every card, but it would be interesting to see if Shapero's pattern matches the Tarot in any significant way.

'SFR coming to a forked road in November, 1986? I'll believe it when we get there. Every format change I've seen you make so far was as good as or better than the one before. Good to see RICHARD E. GEIS back -- will that give more room for contributors' stuff in SFR?'

((Yes, a little bit: my "Alien Thoughts" column is shrinking, but I hope, starting next issue, to expand my reading/reviewing pages. And expect to let myself go a bit more in these editorial responses to letters.))

LETTER FROM ALAN DEAN FOSTER
THRANX, INC., 4001 Pleasant
Valley Dr., Prescott, AZ 86301
Feb. 6, 1985

'As a fellow Furrry Freak Bros. fan, you might find the following anecdote interesting. When I was doing the novelization of the remake of THE THING, I had occasion to chat with a higher-up at Universal Studios. She inquired what I'd like to make, film-wise. One project I mentioned was live-action version of The Freaks.

'Turns out none other than Universal has owned the rights to the strips for years. Know what they are doing with them? Not a damn thing. This is a standard Hollywood practice, akin to working the Commodities market. Companies buy and sell properties without any intention of making them into films. What they hope to do is resell them to another production company at some future date for a profit. So when you read that so-and-so has bought a favorite book, don't expect it will be made into a film. It's merely a valuable property. Hollywood is buying and selling properties. Making films is a secondary business, a hobby.'

((A company bought an option to one of my early sex novels, BONGO BUM, and (I thought) did not pick up the option or purchase the movie rights. But a couple years later I heard from a few people that they had seen the credit line "from a novel by Richard E. Geis" in the credits of a movie they'd seen. But they couldn't remember the title! And of course I never saw any money from that movie rights sale, if it occurred. Maybe one day I'll know if that sale was made, if a movie was made, what the title was... Life is sometimes full of mysteries.))

CARD FROM ROBERT BLOCH
2111 Sunset Crest Dr.
Los Angeles, CA 90046
Feb. 12, 1985

'Do not despair!

'Two forms of prostitution have already been legalized -- radio and television commercials.'

((I suppose anyone who does anything for money is a "prostitute." Could it be that "professional" is really a synonym for "prostitute"?))

LETTER FROM KARL EDD
Box 9007, Denver CO 80209
Feb. 2, 1985

'IN ANSWER TO JOEL ROSENBERG'S LETTER IN ISSUE #54:

'Dear Joel:

'I want to thank you for enlightening me as to a new method of book reviewing. Since you nearly though cleverly not quite pass judgment on a review of mine, without having yourself read the book, perhaps the next time I review a controversial book I should review it without having read it so my re-

viewing will be on a par with your knee-jerk reaction. I give you credit for being honest enough to say straight out that you didn't read the book. I recommend it if you are able to face squarely ideas that may give rise to doubts as to whether or not the human race will likely continue. Some persons are, of course, constitutionally unable.

'Next, if you will bear with me -- consult Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, c. 1980, Merriam Co., ISBN 0-87779-399-9, page 917. The word is "proposed." Meaning 1a: to set before the mind (as for discussion, imitation or action). (Note the alternate choices that are allowed when you propose. To propose does not mean you advocate. All right. 2a: an expression in language or signs of something that can be believed, doubted or denied or is either true or false.

'I will grant you that the primary meaning, given as #1 in Webster's is: something offered for consideration or acceptance. Therefore, though my semantics may leave something to be desired, and your view is perfectly understandable except for a "non-reading anti-review" being a bit hard for me to understand coming from a reasonable and reasoning person like yourself, one could split hairs all day about what I meant versus what someone else perceived. Take back the offending word. Substitute, perhaps, "mentioned, either seriously or in jest" (as I doubt that any of us involved in this verbal infighting are yet at the stage of "psi" where we know beyond all doubt the precise intent in Kahut's mind).

'Given the functions of id, ego and superego how can even the originator of a statement clearly dissect every atom of his own intention that lies behind a statement? It is, however, and always has been legitimate for a reviewer to speculate to the best of his or her ability. In my case I didn't even try to speculate, however, I merely tried to pass along the impression given to me by what seemed and yet seems to be a very responsible non-fiction writer who was trying to

say terribly important things to the world of John Brunner's "Sheep Who Look Up", the same people who said World Wars I and II and all the others wouldn't come. Peace-niks have always been wrong, so far.'

((Based on the likely wrong assumption that about a generation must pass before the people can be conned into another major war, I expect that along about 1995 or so this country will be into another 'police action', and likely it will be in this hemisphere.

((All-out nuclear war with the USSR is unlikely provided enough internal checks on absolute power exist in each country. And there is, in my opinion, an instinctual check on the extinction of mankind, a fail-safe NO in the bedrock DNA which will stop any ruling elite from an all-out nuke war.

((But that may be my residual idealism speaking. In any case I only require about 25 years more of peace (or 'peace'). After that I'll be living on borrowed time and it would please me to die at 82 or so, with my life fully lived, in the Ultimate Event. Heh-heh and cackle-cackle.))

LETTER FROM KIM O SMITH
8881 Seaspray Drive
Huntington Beach, CA 92646
Feb., 1985

'Just a couple of quibbles/questions on a couple of things said by two of your correspondents in SFR #54. Jess E. Stewart claims that Gen. Billy Mitchell "went to see FDR in the late thirties." Billy Mitchell died in 1935! FDR had only been in office for a little over two years when Mitchell died.

'My other bone to pick is with Joel Rosenberg, who maligns the word processing system that Algis Budrys wrote about (and recommended) in SFR #53. Rosenberg wrote "I'm not sure what Budrys' system cost, but I've seen decent word processing packages based on Kaypro computers for less than \$2,000.00, INCLUDING software; and the Kaypro is a good system, not a toy." Well, the system that Budrys uses is the same that I use, and you can purchase that system today for \$660.00! That includes a computer with 64K for \$150.00, a double-density disk drive for \$150.00, the software for \$60.00 and a daisy-wheel letter-quality printer with printer interface for \$300.00. With this system you can do anything that the Kaypro system can do, for about



1/3 of the cost! And the Atari computers, far from being toys, are powerful machines that are fully as capable as any other 8-bit machine, and certainly superior to the best computer of 1977, the Apple II series.

'Let's face it, virtually any computer that you could buy today will be obsolete in a year, if it isn't already. The point isn't how up-to-date it is in its hardware but rather how dollar-efficient it is for your needs. For a writer the Atari offers true word processing for less money than a good electronic typewriter, and you've got a decent computer system to boot! Trashing Atari computers is a sure sign that the person doing so knows little of the system, or of the history of personal computers. When the new Atari hit the streets, able to outperform the Apple Macintosh for 1/3 the money, then they'll be eating their words!'

((To the non-user and the Computer Ignorant, the ever-changing, here-today, obsolete tomorrow array of computers, printers, drives, thises and thatses and the jungle of software and 'languages' and etceteras is beyond understanding, comprehension and rationality. It's all presided over by a priesthood, and computer religion is a total bafflement. I'll wait...wait...until I don't need one anymore! That's my solution.))

LETTER FROM CHARLES PLATT
9 Patchin Place, NY, NY 10011
Feb. 1, 1985

'Thanks for SFR. I have a comment about the Knight piece in SFR #54.

'I'm troubled by the assumptions behind Damon Knight's "Letters I Never Answered." The title suggests that these letters weren't worth a reply, that Damon's time was too valuable to waste on such junk. This is the same kind of attitude that leads editors to send rejection slips, when writing an explanatory note would take very little extra time. It is a cavalier, elitist attitude, and I do not like it.

'Nor do I like his assumption that he has the right to print the letters (assuming, of course, that they are genuine). Presumably, he feels he didn't need permission to do so; a strange attitude from the man who framed the SFNA model contract.

'I also question his motive. Superficially, it seems he just

wants to share a joke -- the joke being, in this case, other people's short-sightedness and provinciality. But why bother? Why take the trouble to select these letters and send them to SFR for publication? I don't believe altruism -- the uncomplicated desire to give other people a good laugh -- is the whole story. Like any writer, I am sure Damon likes seeing his name in print; but more than that, the naivety of these letters can only make him look sophisticated by comparison. The same is true of Damon's lit-crit, especially IN SEARCH OF WONDER: he makes himself seem sophisticated by condemning others for writing naively, as if this in itself is sufficient reason for ridicule.

'I have seen many letters like these. All editors receive them. I think they are sad, painful efforts to communicate, from lonely people who want intellectual companionship and recognition. These people see things in simple terms, and probably they lack a college education -- which is why Damon finds them amusing. They are completely sincere, however, and they mean no harm. In this sense, I see much more to admire in them than in Damon's cavalier use of their letters as targets for his scorn. He has done this before (in the BEST OF ORBIT anthology) and I think he should stop.

'I wish you well with your personalzine, Dick. Enclosed some cash for a few issues. I wonder if dealing with the postoffice explains why so many fanzine editors advocate libertarianism; I remember my own frustrations with bulk mail. Definitely more trouble than it was worth.'

((I suppose Damon's "Letters I Never Answered" could be considered a cheap-shot effort. I've done that sort of thing myself occasionally, in the past. I may do it again. The temptation is always there and it is a pleasant way to ego-boost. Such is life. It's a small sin and in a way of positive effect: publishing foolish letters sometimes inhibits and instructs others to be more aware of oneself when writing such. And we all want to encourage self-awareness, self-analysis and reduction of postal idiosyncrasy, don't we?))

((As for the various arcane manifestations of bulk mailing and me: I'm a rebel at heart and sometimes would rather spend more effort and time doing things simply and with less anxiety than following bureaucratic rules which actually save time and money. But it's my psyche in charge, and its character and per-

sonality dictate some actions which are non-rational and counter-productive. Another instance where emotions are more important...and where peace of mind and serenity are actually worth the difference in time/work/money. I'm a great believer in happiness, and in my case that means not fighting my inner nature. "Be yourself" is the great magical dictum. But first you have to see yourself as you really are, and then have the courage to do the things required to really be yourself. I am gradually moving in that direction. There is, however, a lot of cowardice in me, yet.))

AM, AT LAST-
A GOURMET
LETTER...



LETTER FROM JOHN SHIRLEY
267 Grove St, #2R
Jersey City, NJ 07302
Feb. 18, 1985

'I see the controversy as to the primacy of hard core SF still sputters on in your letter column. Well, shit. This has been going on in various guises since the 60s. Time to put an end to it. Time to turn to The Final Authority...me. The Wizard of Odd. You've come to me for the answers. Well, you should have. Anyway, the answer is: You people have been pursuing a red herring. Making it all too complicated. The truth is that THERE IS ONLY ONE SCIENCE FICTION AND THAT IS HARD SCIENCE HARD CORE STUFF. The other stuff, like Damon's and LeGuin's and oh, Kim Stanley Robinson's, is fine stuff, is probably better prose and characterization and is very stimulating but it is not science fiction at all. The only reason it falls in that category is for reasons of marketing expediency. It's kinda weird, and hardcore SF is also kinda weird, so they lump 'em together. SF and this other stuff both use Other Planets (but for different reasons usually) and that's another reason -- but it's

all a confusion caused by marketing methods and P.R. devices and the writers have played along with it because they needed to get their stuff into print and calling it Science Fiction was a way to do it. I don't know what the other stuff is, but it's not science fiction. The readers of this mag like science fiction and they like the other stuff too. There is a relationship between the two, but they are not the same -- a man and wife have a relationship, and are together in that they're "a couple," but they are not the same. One is female and one male. Straining the analogy, maybe hard SF is male. All that rigid machinery. Shove your rigid machinery and your uptight political polemics into my soft, squishy, liberal SF imagery, you hunk.

'I tell you something, though, I think there's a New Movement afoot in the Other Stuff (the stuff we write that we call SF that's not) that is changing its shape and that will affect the outline of mainstream literature. This New Movement is represented by writers like Jack Dann (whose THE MAN WHO MELTED is superbly really kinks ass) and New Gibson and Lew Shiner; Cyberpunks someone called them (because of a New Wave flavor). Writers with a global perspective, heavy emphasis on political and social conflicts, counterculture underpinnings. Their influences are mostly non-SF writers -- at least stylistically -- and they have a greater emphasis on characterization and quality of prose. There is another aspect to them I'm finding hard to pin down but it has to do with attunement to hyper-contemporary cultural input. The imagery is mean, tough, artfully lurid.

'Listen, Geis, the reason there's so much about NAZIS on TV is not because (paraphrasing you) the Zionists are helping to keep the story of the persecution of the Jews alive. It's because Americans are sick fuckers and fascinated with Nazism. It's "good copy." The public digs it so the TV honchos program it. Fact. Your implication that there's a kind of Jewish conspiracy putting it on I find chilling. I mean, you say you didn't mean that, but racism is often unmeant, an outburst, unconscious. But sometimes it's overt and lemme tell you, I'm convinced that we are about to experience a surge in racism and neo-Nazism. When Bernie Goetz shot the four black guys here, normally liberal people would grin maliciously and say, "His only mistake was not shooting to kill." Reagan is pulling the teeth of the country's antiracism legislation. But

the real core of the new racism will be anti-immigrant feeling. In Europe it's getting frenzied. When I was last in Paris visiting my boys (they're fine, already talking, French with a Parisian accent) I stepped out onto a street and unwittingly into a demonstration, the backers of the French Front Nationale filled an enormous avenue with their flag-waving and banners and chanting, every kind of person, sometimes chanting Immigrants Out, Immigrants Out, and believe me the Front Nationale is seriously racist.

'I don't have space to go into it, but I really believe the anti-immigrant fever is growing there and in the USA and all the signs are visible. That's partly what my new novel's about. And I'm not a hysterical liberal -- when it comes to fighting crime, I think the Saudis have the right idea. Cut off their hands if they do it too often. The guy has more than two convictions of violent crime or demonstrates a chronically sociopathic personality, I say execute him. Suspend constitutional rights after their second time ... I don't think that's fascist, except as kneejerk leftists use the word. But REAL Fascism is on its way, and if it comes down to it I'll be in the street fighting beside my black friends, and if that sounds corny, tough. Real life terror makes a mockery of the cynicism that would call me corny for that. Mark my words, pal. Sincerely, and no kidding.'

((Sure, I admit I'm racist on one level, an emotional level, which I learned on my father's and uncle's knees when I was Very Young in the '30s. But I know better intellectually, and I don't fool myself much when the chips are down, on those matters. And I still think in terms of conspiracies in re TV programming, some mega-financial affairs, etc. "Conspiracies" is a loaded "bad" word. Say rather "Community of interests" and semantics makes it all nice.

((The anti-immigrant feeling is based in economics...competition for jobs, scapegoating...like that. We'll see a lot of it in America, too, in coming years as the unemployment rate creeps up later this year and in 1986 to over ten percent. Frustration and rage have to find targets.))



LETTER FROM RONALD R. LAMBERT
2350 Virginia
Troy, MI 48063
Feb 10, 1985

'If your "super, intelligent cockroach" can deliver us from evil, then God by any other name is still God. Evil is a part of the reality we inhabit. What we all really want is for the nature of reality to be changed. The Entity most likely to be capable of such a feat is the Creator of reality. The thought that such a Being does exist, and that he is good, and intends to establish a universe wherein love rules once His case against evil has been proven to the satisfaction of everyone, is attractive to many people. Because this thought originates with the Bible, and because the Bible possesses an authority which people can sense the same way they can sense that good and evil exist, it is possible for people to have faith in this God. You may question the perception by which people see the Bible as having authority. You may presume it is mere wishful thinking, or self-deception. I cannot prove you otherwise. But neither can you prove that their perception is mistaken. Picking out imperfections of utterance in the Bible does not prove that the writers of the Bible did not truly encounter God and were not genuinely called by God to communicate His word to mankind as best they could.

'I am merely trying to describe how there is room for Biblical faith. You may judge such faith as foolish, or you may see wisdom in it that defies conventional wisdom. Personally, I see wisdom in it. I recognize a spirit of authority in the Bible despite its imperfections, and I have an awareness that good and evil exist as aspects of reality that are more important and vastly more consequential than matter and energy.

'Some people would say such faith makes me a mystic. I can only shrug my shoulders at that. In this sense, all Christians are mystics. But in the strictest logical sense, any consideration of the nature of reality is an exercise in mysticism. Scientists with their test tubes and bubble chambers, formulas and rigorous methodology, are another kind of mystic. Science works. But so do good and evil, just as reliably, just as inevitably.

'Turning now from the cosmic to the worldly (that is an interesting phrase, linguistically -- did you know that "cosmos" was the Greek word for "world"?), I see that Forrest J. Ackerman, the "nev-

er-Say-Die, Sci-Fi Guy," is offering one hundred dollars to the person who can come up with the word to denote bad "Sci-fi." Okay, here is my entry in the contest. How about: "stifi?" This is derived from "scientification," which I believe was Hugo Gernsback's term for the genre. Stifi sounds like something you might find while wading in pig slop. I don't know if anyone has suggested this term before, but it seems appropriate. As a member of SFNA I know I'm supposed to uphold "SF" as the one and true abbreviation for the genre, but to be perfectly honest, I always thought "SF" stood for "San Francisco." (And I live in Michigan!)

I am amused at all this talk about word processors costing so much. My Atari 800XL cost \$119 at K-Mart. I feel sorry for people who buy IBM PC Jr.s and the like. They've been suckered into paying eight times as much money for a product that is in actual fact inferior. An Atari computer is not only more versatile than anything else available for under \$1,000, it is more reliable -- with the lowest breakdown rate in the industry. Owners of high-priced personal computers compulsively try to disparage the Atari as a toy, meant for playing games. But the keyboard is professional and game-playing capability means versatility. You've got all that graphics and sound capability that can be used for serious applications. Plus Atari BASIC is just as good if not better than Apple BASIC, especially in the way it handles strings. In computer magazines that list programs for the Apple and for the Atari, you will find that almost always, the version for the Atari is substantially shorter, while still able to perform all the same functions.

It is true that you can add on a lot of extras to the high-priced PCs. But most of the same add-ons are available for the Atari, and don't cost as much. You can even get a 128K module for the Atari that just plugs in and functions like a disk drive, only ten times faster. Add a \$100 Votrax voice synthesizer, and your Atari can talk to you!

The Atari, since it is designed to be used with ordinary, low-resolution television receivers, only displays 40 characters X 24 lines. But Bit-3 sells an add-on module that enables the Atari to display 80 X 24, if you want that. Personally, I don't see the need. The final published format of my manuscripts will not be determined by what fits on an 8 1/2 X 11" sheet of paper, typed double-spaced; it will appear in narrow maga-

zine columns or book format. Furthermore, with a 40 X 24 display the characters are larger and easier to read. Of course, the Atari will print out onto paper any format you want. The electric typewriter quality Atari 1027 printer only costs about \$270. (Why on Earth spend \$2,000 on a Diablo -- unless you own a printshop and need to do a lot of high-speed typesetting?)

I have only had my Atari since Christmas, but already I am writing my own programs -- such as to assist me in composing music. I figured out a way (using BASIC commands) to modify the Atari sound generator's pure tone output to play with a pleasing vibrato effect that sounds like an electric organ, and wrote a program that uses it to play four-part harmony. All my life I have been hindered in my desire to compose music because I don't play the piano and could seldom find anyone to play my songs for me so that I could hear the harmonies. Now the computer does it for me. How can I describe the joy I felt when my Music Partwriter program ran for the first time in my Atari, playing my song perfectly? I don't care if anyone else ever hears my music. I feel fulfilled. My music has come alive, and I have heard it.

Of course, Atari offers a plug-in ROM-based "Music Composer" program, but it costs \$50, and I didn't have the money right after Christmas, and didn't want to wait. So I wrote my own version.

Atari also offers a ROM cartridge-based word processor program "Atariwriter," which leaves the computer's RAM free for you to use. It is on as soon as you plug it in and turn on the computer. Reviewers in computer magazines rate "Atariwriter" the highest among all the inexpensive word processing programs. It costs about \$50, depending on where you buy it. Probably the cheapest source is mail order -- check the ads in computer magazines. If you buy things mail order from out of state, then you don't have to pay sales taxes. Usually, even with shipping charges included, you wind up paying less.

Anyway, if you want to consider using word processor, there are far cheaper ways to go (and for my money better ways) than the megabuck route. Dr. Pourmelle may not give much attention to the cheaper ways to word processing, but then he doesn't have to live on my K-Mart budget, either.



((Sure, the existence of religion says volumes about the structure and needs of the human mind/psyche. We as a species have whole troops of instinctive needs which result in all the different aspects of culture and society. Some of us are aware of the internal forces and can partially understand them, even evade or override them. We can even use these internal needs and pressures to our advantage. Knowing Thyself involves, inevitably, knowing every-one.

((I have a lot of trouble with the concrete existence of Good and Evil; I come to questions like, "Is it Good to kill six men or women or children if you know it will save a lot of mankind from death? A hundred people to save a thousand? Where is the line drawn? Where does Evil start?" Is a puzzle. "Is it Good to censor three magazines (or ideas) to save the psychological well-being of millions of people? Who decides? Can you censor and control minds to save minds? How many? Under what conditions?" The world is full of such questions, and where are they answered? In the Bible? Pure Good and Pure Evil are cop-outs, I think. "The Devil made me do it" is rivaled by "God told me to do it." And both excuses or motives spring from instinctual or personal psyche needs or defenses.))

LETTER FROM PARKE GOODWIN
201 West 16th St, #3D
New York, NY 10011

Here indulging in a loc, something I rarely do. You may print this but I advise you simply to read and heed. I read in the latest SFR that you plan to start an intimate journal "full of naked fear, lusts, hopes, worries, etc." and charge a buck for it to those interested. By all means keep the journal if it has therapeutic value, but I seriously urge you not to offer it for sale.

Per se, that is. I've kept such a journal for almost 15 years, a cross between soul-baring and commonplace book. It is the story of the last years in show business, the trauma of divorce, the running up and down the country to escape my own feelings, new love affairs, breakups, drinks, the disillusionment with acting as a career, low tide in the soul, the orgasmic rush of a first novel and the astonishment that, out of the dregs of one career, another emerged like Venus on the goddam classless. More love affairs, the growing confidence in my ability to write, my fears that it wouldn't ever be good

enough ... on and on. You get the idea. It's been an eventful, even dramatic fifteen years.

'The point is, while I have mined this journal for dramatic truth, I would never repeat never think of publishing it in a raw state. Because the blunt truth is, Dick, nobody cares a dollar's worth how I feel until I've taken the raw material and transmuted it into the universality of readable fiction. Thus on the one hand you will be pounding sand down a rat hole and on the other vitiating material that should cook longer in your subconscious as grist for fiction -- which you do write.

'The personal reasons for this journal of yours are all quite valid. The professional or fannish motives are foolish, wasteful. Keep it, cook it, use it. The classic definition of a bore is the guy who, when you ask him how he feels, he tells you and tells you and tells you. Well, we all do that in one way or another. But professionals process it, transmute to universality and bloody well get paid for it. Is so, yes? That is why, at social gatherings I spend more time listening than talking, raising my antennae to catch good ideas and conversation that can be worked into good lines.

'No one gives a damn how you feel or I feel until we work it into something they recognize as their own feelings. Save it, use it. This is not in any way meant to put you down; hell, I read every issue of SFR, the gold and dross alike. You are needed: a labor-of-love editor. Oh, let it not be said they love did go amiss... '

THE REASON THE DIPLOMATIC
CORPS ONLY HIRES VIRGINS
IS THAT WE EXPECT THEM
TO LIE ABOUT OTHER THINGS
AS WELL.



((The reasons I publish REG or THE NAKED ID are deep and powerful; I'm not sure I understand them all or have identified them all, and I'm not sure I want to look too closely

for fear of destroying my fun. I enjoy observing myself and the world and commenting on both. I'm not ashamed of myself (very much) and feel at some level my self-analysis and reporting and opinion-passing is helpful. Certainly it appears to be interesting and entertaining to a few hundred people. So my needs feed their needs. If I bore some, they will no longer read me. It's inevitable that some Geis-readers will get tired of me. Okay.

((As for saving my thoughts and experiences for use in fiction; where is it written that the same experience can't be used twice? God knows I've listened to friends tell the same stories about what happened to them dozens of times. Some people have a slot-machine mind: say a word--CARS--and they will react predictably by trotting out the same stories about CARS every time! I'm always amazed that they don't stop themselves out of sheer embarrassment and shame because they must remember they have told me this same incident many times. But, no, the words roll out like a recording... It appalls me and bores me, but I rarely say anything. It's all they've got.))

LETTER FROM IRWIN M PROHLO
Route #3, Box 260B
Menomonie, WI 54551
January 16, 1985

'About the state of SF mags (all four? of them), my contention is that the very people who would support SF mags are the same age group that supported the mags during the '30s, '40s and '50s: the ten-, eleven-, twelve- or thirteen-year-olds sold on STAR WARS, STAR TREK, computer/video game freaks who in the '20s, etc. would've read Gernsback's SCIENCE & INVENTION (that was hi-tech) and the other popular science mags before and during the AMAZING/WONDER years.

'The current SF mags plod on utilizing the old, tired formats they have followed (to their demise) for ten-thirty years, vying for "respectability," venerated veracity and another Hugo or Nebula award. The trouble is that there are too many old farts financing/editing these dinosaurs, saying things like "Heinleinster or Joe Fanh wrote that back in nineteen-ought-forty, so we can't use it." Great, but have the millions of potential readers read it? Is it still in print or accessible?

'If so and so wrote some twist or other on a tale 10-20-50 years ago, does that negate all derivative fiction from then on? If that were the case, a hell of a lot

of books and mags would've never been printed over this half century, because 90% of all fiction is derivative, and the other 10% is what Sturgeon dotes upon.

'What we need is a new, splashy, sometimes trashy pulp image now and again, and someone either young enough or in tune with the obvious tastes (i.e.: 'what sells').

((Up. I agree. Only a few of the young readers continue on and on through the years of adulthood to read vast amounts of sf and/or fantasy.

((I sometimes wonder if the intellectual requirements for modern sf and fantasy aren't becoming too demanding. I remember the pulp magazines of the '40s and late '30s, and wonder if I were 12-15 now, would I be interested in the complicated, multi-leveled sf of today? Wouldn't I, now, stick with the surface simplicity of the STAR WARS and Indiana Jones movies? ((There isn't a good, trashy sf magazine being published, now. What a shame.))

LETTER FROM DARRELL SCHWEITZER
113 Deepdale Rd.
Stafford, PA 19087
Jan 30, 1985

'Proofreading has never been one of SFR's strong points. There seem to be a lot of commas missing in my column this time ("including even especially, a crankly (sic) old Saxon grandmother"), but I hope readers will take it on faith that I know how to punctuate, as I have been seen doing it at long stretches in times past.

'There is one missing word error of consequence: page 50, column 1, paragraph 2, the second sentence should read: "Now fantasy is a strong category, and the market for serious historical fiction is vanishingly small." Yes, the market for "serious fiction" is also small, but this would be a non-sequitur in context, since I am discussing the relative marketability of historical fiction and fantasy. Indeed, the market for serious historical fiction, as opposed to the "women's hystericals" (less kindly known as "bodice-rippers" or "rape-and-make-up books"), is not very large; a few authors who have established themselves as brand names, like Gore Vidal or Cecelia Holland, can still publish historical novels which are genuinely about something, and novels which are even set in unfamiliar periods, but there isn't a lot of that going on anymore. So many historicals must be disguised as fantasy in order to make them

sell. The imaginary-setting, non-supernatural novel is now clearly in the fantasy category, where it used to be on the borderland, able to survive by pretending to be a "fable" or a historical novel as the need arose.

'Now, the situation is so bad that historical novels only get re-printed if they can be associated with fantasy, as THE DRAGON OF THE ISHITAR GATE was when Donning did it.

'And I'd like to write a straight historical novel about Stilicho someday. Maybe if it can be disguised as fantasy ... or I rip some early 5th century bodices ...

'I can quite sympathize with both Forry Ackerman and Buzz Dixon in their complaints of how fandom has changed and how current fans have no sense of the past.

'I think the crux of it is that there are very few "fans" left in fandom anymore. Certainly they are an extreme minority at a large con. Most people discover science fiction through paperback books. They are casual readers, certainly not collectors, and they only know what is current in the paperback field now. If they discover conventions, or even local SF clubs, they still remain casual readers, with no sense of community or of science fiction's past.

Most of them don't know what a fanzine is. They might, perhaps, have seen LOCUS, but probably not, and the older type, participation fanzine (which SFR really is, for all it is a lot classier than the mimeoed ones) is completely alien to them. Should they be exposed to such a thing, they usually shrug it off with disinterest. At the Philadelphia Science Fiction Society, I happened to discover (by buying old fanzines at a Midwest-con) that the club had once published a fanzine, VARIANT, which had several issues, about 1948. None of the active members had any awareness of this. So, when I showed copies around, it was decided to revive the thing as NEW VARIANT. Two issues have been published, containing some interesting material (such as a Marvin Kaye speech), but club participation has been nil. We have no fan writers, no fan artists, no fan letterhacks. Despite lengthy badgering, the editor (John Betancourt) has not been able to get a single letter of comment from club members. It's completely useless. He and I are the only ones who know what a fanzine is, or care.

'As for prozines, well, most convention fans I've talked to have, after a while, discovered

that things like ANALOG and AMAZING exist, but they don't read them. At PSFS we have a terrible time every year gathering up copies of issues of the prozines so the five panelists who are to discuss the Hugo nominees can actually read them. This is a large, prospering club and it's hard-pressed to turn up a single copy of a given issue of ANALOG.

'All of this has vast ramifications, in everything from fan sociology to the demographics of book publishing. It means that the "fan guest of honor" at a convention is not necessarily a famous fanzine writer, but someone known only to the committee. And for old dinosaurs like you and me (and Buzz and Forry) it means an endless series of shocks. The other day I mentioned to a friend of mine, a very bright lady who is also a talented artist and a frequent participant in convention art shows, that I had acquired an Emswiler original. And she said, "Who?" Now, to me Emswiler is one of the great names in science fiction art, but since he doesn't do covers for DAW or Del Rey this year, most contemporary fans probably don't know the name.

'No reputation is permanent anymore. Only recently there was much befuddlement when the Willis issue of WARHOON was nominated for a Hugo. That may have been the last, dying exertion of old-time fandom. Most people didn't know who this Willis was or what WARHOON was. The same goes for professional writers. Even names of the 1960s seem only known to a few collectors. How many current fans, under the age of 40, have ever heard of, say, Mark Clifton or Daniel Galouye, let alone A. Hyatt Verrill or David H. Keller? I've encountered people who did not regard themselves as novices in the field, who had never heard of John Brunner or Brian Aldiss. Probably they'd just never picked up any books by them and, having no sense of SFnal history, did not know them by reputation.

'We've been overrun by the barbarians. Civilization has fallen, and the long task of re-education has barely begun.

'Those \$20 ASTOUNDINGS Buzz Dixon reports are part of the same phenomenon. Now, I've done a bit of bookselling myself, and my experience is that most contemporary fans aren't interested in the old stuff at all. They'll snicker at the likes of THRILLING WONDER STORIES without any awareness of what this was, or that it was once a fanish focal-point (the letter columns -- I've seen your name in

them a lot, Dick), or that it published some of the very same authors they still are reading, like Ray Bradbury and Jack Vance. (Current fans also do not seem to read copyright pages.) But, when some of these casual readers become casual collectors, any pulp becomes a rare and exotic item from the remote past (whereas to you or me, they are fairly commonplace), and it is expected to be expensive. One problem I've had in selling pulps is that everyone assumes they're all \$20 apiece, even when it's something like a copy of FANTASTIC STORY MAGAZINE for which I'm asking two bucks, or a beat-up copy of a late STARTLING which I've priced at a dollar.

'One-author collectors have driven prices up. Someone who doesn't collect STARTLING STORIES, but does collect Philip Jose Farmer, will pay very high for the "Lovers" issue, which is actually no scarcer than any other 1952 issue. But to them, it's an ancient Farmer item, not a pulp magazine, and the other issues from that year don't count. Some dealers now charge twice or three times as much for issues with Hubbard, Farmer, Vance, or Dick in them. But those of us who are a little more used to pulps know how to shop around and beat those prices.

'I guess the only good point about the ignorance of the current fan generation is that old fanzine items are often quite cheap at conventions, because if, say, 500 people attend, that means there might be two or three potential customers for a run of INSIDES or a copy of HYPHEN. In East Coast fandom, pieces of the late Don Miller's collection have been turning up all over the place, and I've gotten some remarkable things at remarkable prices.

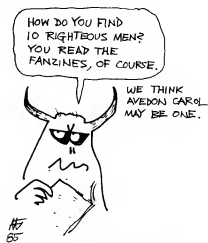
'But if you go to sell, it's hard finding a customer. I'm looking for a customer for a first edition (1954) of THE ENCHANTED DUPLICATOR, and of course, if I have to explain what it is first, I'm not going to sell it.'

((Darrell, if we didn't make a certain number of types in your column you'd have less reason to write locs. Can't have that!))

((I know. I know. In a few more years another generation of Old Fans will be gone, another generation of Old Writers will be gone, and SF will have only a few antiquarians standing in the portals of history guarding the old lore and the old treasures. Fandom will be a thing of ugly, ignorant youths unaware of their roots. Ah, the horror of it all. I weep.))

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #53 Interview with Algis Budrys; Essay by Avram Davidson; "The Glass Bushell" by Bob Shaw; "We Can Remember It For You Wholesale: The Phil Dick Problem: The Phil Dick Solution" by Barry Malzberg; "Advice To A Writer On The Choice Of A First Word-Processor" by Algis Budrys.

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #54: Interview with L. Neil Smith; "Noise Level" by John Brunner; "Red-Haired Heroes, Brown-Haired Losers" by Hannah M.G. Shapero; Damon Knight, Gene DeWeese, Richard Geis, others.



TEN YEARS AGO IN SCIENCE FICTION SPRING, 1975

BY ROBERT SABELLA

Will F. Jenkins died at the age of 79. As Murray Leinster, he wrote science fiction for 56 years including such classics as "Side-ways in Time," "First Contact" and the Hugo-winning "Exploration Team."

The Nebula Awards for 1974 were announced with Ursula K. Le Guin winning two: "THE DISPOSSESSED" as Best Novel and its prequel "The Day Before The Revolution" as Best Short Story. Other winners were Robert Silverberg's "Born With The Dead" as Best Novella and Gregory Benford and Gordon Eklund's "If The Stars Are Gods" as Best Novel-ette. Robert A. Heinlein was awarded the first Grandmaster award.

Important publications included THE COMPUTER CONNECTION, Alfred Bester's first novel since THE STARS MY DESTINATION in 1956; NOR-STRILLIA, the first uncut version of Cordwainer Smith's only science fiction novel; Harlan Ellison's anthology DEATHBIRD STORIES; and James Tiptree Jr.'s anthology WARM WORLDS AND OTHERWISE, featuring the Hugo-winning novella "The Girl Who Was Plugged In."

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #52 "In the Wave's Wake" by Gregory Benford; Interviews with Philip K. Dick, Darrell Schweitzer and Julian May, by Avram Davidson. Commentary by Geis, Elton T. Elliott, Benford.

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #51 Interview with David Kingsbury; "The Decline of Fiction" by Charles Platt, "Flashpoint: Middle" by Barry Malzberg, "The Glass Bushell" by Bob Shaw. Also: Damon Knight, John Brunner, Gregory Benford, Darrell Schweitzer, Gene DeWeese, Elton Elliott.

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SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #46 Interview with Philip K. Dick; "How NOT To Write Science Fiction" by Richard Wilson; "Standing at the Edge of the World" by Steve Gallagher; "The Raising Hackles" by Elton T. Elliott.

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #45 Interview with Keith Laumer; "Pulp!" by Algis Budrys; Interview with Terry Carr; "The Vivisector" by Darrell Schweitzer; "Raising Hackles" by Elton T. Elliott.

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