

# SCIENCE FICTION

## REVIEW

FALL  
1985

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# SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW

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RICHARD E. GEIS---EDITOR & PUBLISHER  
PAULETTE MINARE', ASSOCIATE EDITOR

## REVIEWS-----

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## Next Issue....

THE FACES OF FEAR, a profile of Charles Grant by Douglas E. Winter.

SCIENCE FICTION BY THE NUMBERS  
By Robert Sabella

OATH OF FEALTY: NO THUD, SOME BLUNDERS  
By Sheila Finch

And other stuff you all expect every issue.



# ALIEN THOUGHTS

## RICHARD E. GEIS

### A RADICAL FORMATECTOMY

is roughly what you see before you. I mentioned in THE NAKED ID that this move was likely, and here it is.

The format of SFR has been...er...altered. 48 pages, now, and a streamlining of the cover/contents pages as well as the back-issue pages. A wider layout page allows 40-character (elite) columns and reduces the typesize to give many more words per page.

This is to compensate for the drop from 64 pages to 48. I'm reducing the size of illos and cartoons, too, to yield the same illo/cartoon count and also provide more space for text.

Why? Ah, the age-old answer, to save money. In fact, it saves around \$500 per issue, counting printing savings, postage savings and being able to use less costly shipping containers to bookstores.

Unless I absolutely hate the result when I see this in magazine printed form, this is the way SFR will look from now on out.

With #62 and the opportunity for a fresh start or a final goobye, I'll decide whether I want to launch another long-term cycle of publishing, or not. The factors influencing me then will be the state of my novel-writing career, the state of my health, the state of my finances, the state of the nation.

### SPEAKING OF SFR #62...

the way the subscription forms are set up, some of you will expire with #61, some with #62. Do not worry. Those who expire with #61 will receive a one-issue subscription form and will have the opportunity to receive the final issue in this format-format.

This will mean the postulated final issue will actually be the Feb. 1987 issue. This will drive most libraries and subscription agencies crazy! Sorry, but I see to other way...short of refunds of all those #62 (and a few larger!) subs.

Well, I never did run this magazine for the convenience of libraries. Them as wants to bother with #62, will.

If SFR continues (in my current thinking it will follow the 8-page format of THE NAKED ID and be mailed approximately every month. But this is ringed with a lot of maybes and ifs and is not a promise---or a threat. I just like to keep you apprised of how I feel about it now.

### HOMING FOR BLOOD

Now forming a writers organization--Horror and Occult Writers League--H.O.W.L. Focus on horror/occult. Send \$5.00 in U.S. funds for progress reports and further information. H.O.W.L., Karen Lansdale, 608 Christian, Nacogdoches, TX 75961.

### THE READERS AND THE NON-READERS---ARE THE BARBARIANS WINNING?

The basic stats seem to show that 60 million Americans are basically illiterate---they can't read a book, a newspaper, the Bill of Rights, or the instructions on a can of Drano. [Hey, man, I think it says mix with Rippole and add a dash of salt...]

And, warn the doomsayers, the U.S. is 24th in book readership, compared to 5th for the Soviet Union. [But what do the Russians read? The classics and their censored newspapers?]

Further depressing statistics tell us that in the United States an estimated one million teen-agers read at a third grade level, while 47% of black youths are illiterate. Not just functionally illiterate, plain, unvarnished illiterate!

More disaster is in the future say the experts who advise readers that illiteracy is rising by 10% a year, while literacy programs are serving only 5%.

Awk! I bleed for all those kids and adults who can't read and don't want to read! That's the bottom, distasteful line of truth, isn't it? These people simply don't give a damn about being able to read.

So to hell with them. They'll rot in the underclass for the rest of their lives. They'll be our criminals. They will be our welfare class.

If they want it, they can have it. There are millions of newcomers to the United States, that 'ideal minority', the Asian immigrants, who know the key to making it in this country (or any country for Christ's sake!) is being able to read the language and speak the language. Regularly on TV and in the papers I read stories and see stories about how quickly these people are progressing, how their kids are three-year whizzes in school,

and how these Asians are working like beavers, saving money, starting businesses...

All the federal, state and local programs in the world, all the billions of dollars we care to spend, will go to waste if the objects of our desire to learn to read simply don't see any point to learning to read. They are irrelevant to modern high-tech civilization. They are out of it by their own choice. As we used to believe, it's a free country. Let them have their visual-oral life-style and be done with it.

Anyone, at any age, who wants to read will learn to read! This illiteracy "problem" is not a problem. The truth is this country probably doesn't need extra millions of readers. [Although writers and publishers naturally disagree. And Liberals and statisticians naturally want to set up a trillion-dollar Literacy Program to force these by-choice illiterates to join Civilization by learning to read---it means high-pay jobs to the Liberals who would staff such a wonderful waste of taxpayers' money.]

My attitude is heresy, of course. The usual non-think feeling is that if a certain percentage of adults and teenagers can't read it must be because they weren't taught correctly or had a bad home life... [U.S. Secretary of Education William Ben-



mett says the problem is caused by parents who don't read to their children! Let's pass a law requiring all parents to read to all their children, and providing in-home readers for those parents who are illiterate and who don't want to learn to read!

But I believe these people have been exposed to the unending propaganda in the media about how important education is, and how vital it is to learn to read and speak well, if you want to succeed in life...be a Yuppie...and they have said to hell with it. They don't see any great need to read. They don't want to be "successful." For complex (and simple) reasons they have chosen to be illiterate. They have rejected the mainstream U.S. lifestyle.

That rejection of our values probably bugs the hell out of the Liberals. Tough shit.

We have a stew of different cultures and lifestyles in this country, all kinds of mixtures and overlaps. The non-literate is one element. [We probably also have a large group who read too much! Is that a problem Liberals will bleed about next year? It might be if they can figure a way to acquire power over people and money from the government to 'fix' it.] Let the illiterates alone. At least they don't advocate federal programs to discourage the rest of us from reading.

#### REVISING THE COMING REALITY

Wot, again? Well, a Gestetner agent called upon me today [6-6-85] and plied me with folders. The new super-automated Gestetner mineograph...the Gestetner line of copiers....

I manfully resisted. But one item of info was dropped in my lap: Mita makes the Gestetner copiers.

I will eventually be interested in a copier, but not at Gestetner's inflated prices. They habitually sell machines to corporations and assume corporations will pay any price.... And these high-powered corporations like Gestetner and IBM always have high overhead and high salaries to pay.

But when the time comes, I'll check out Mita copiers to see if they sell cheaper than the same machines under the Gestetner nameplate.

Oh, reality. Well, I've come to the conclusion that if I continue SFR past #62, it cannot be 8 pages. The needs of material, balance, departments, etc. require at a minimum 16 pages. And the price would have to be \$1.50 for first class mail.

But if my novels sell well enough, and if the money is good enough, maybe that will tempt me to not continue SFR. Yet I love it so... No, no...yes, yes. Maybe, maybe.... Shit, shit!

#### IN CASE YOU MISSED THEM....

My three self-published sf novels will soon be available in microfiche editions from: MICRO INFORMATION CONCEPTS  
P.O. Box 2163  
Dallas, TX 75221

The titles are:

CANNED MEAT  
STAR WHORES  
THE CORPORATION STRIKES  
BACK

STAR WHORES and CORPORATION are erotic sf novels. CANNED MEAT is less erotic. I have no information at this time as

to price or exactly when they'll be offered. I should have precise info next issue.

M.I.C. are also offering the complete run of ASTOUNDING/ANALOG and F&SF on microfiche. They are also in the process of putting all Loompanic titles on fiche, including the two Gilliland cartoon collections and my own just-published HOW TO WRITE PORN NOVELS FOR FUN AND PROFIT (Illustrated with 12 Gilliland cartoons). HOW TO... is available now from Loompanics [POB 1197, Port Townsend, WA 98368] for \$795 plus \$2. shipping and handling charges.

End of commercial.

#### FOUR-LETTER WORDS, WHAT STRANGE POWER...

Mike Hoy of Loompanics reports that my book for him, HOW TO WRITE PORN NOVELS FOR FUN AND PROFIT, will be delayed because his usual printer wouldn't print it. He's trying his back-up printer, now.

I'm surprised. Mike says my work is now in the same category as books on how to manufacture illegal drugs, how to break into people's houses, how to torture guys.... all books this printer has refused to do in the past.

I suppose I'm flattered, in a left-handed kind of way.

#### I DO DECLARE...

In that spite of the above huckstering, SFR is no longer a semi-prozine. It is a fanzine! Hear that Mike Glycer? SFR no longer pays for its material (say rather outgo), and though its print run is declining by about 100 copies per issue, it does still run higher than 1000. Unless I misremember, however, the Rules say a fanzine can violate at least one of the four yardsticks for determining its status as a pureblooded, blessed by Yngvi, amateur fanzine.

Of course, SFR isn't a fanzine (that is, a zine devoted to fans and fan egos and fan dollars), but is instead a fanzine devoted to (horrors!) science fiction and fantasy.

I do so state. Let the revelry begin!



#### AWARDS....AWARDS....AWARDS....AWARDS....

Ah, when will it ever end? The new SCIENCE FICTION CHRONICLE (nice orange and black cover, Andy!) has news of the Nebula Awards and of the SFC Reader Awards.

I "ahem" won the SFC Best Fan Writer award. Again. I think this is the fourth time in a row. Quadruple wow. Thank you, all you readers.

Who won the other awards? Trivial information, but if you must know....

#### FC READER AWARDS

Best Novel: NEURONANCER by William Gibson  
Best Novella: PRESS ENTER[] by John Varley  
Best Novella: BLOODCHILD by Octavia Butler  
Best Short Story: SALVADOR by L. Shepard  
Best Dramatic: 2010: ODYSSEY TWO  
Best Pro Editor-Magazines: Edward Ferman  
Best Pro Editor-Books: Terry Carr  
Best Pro Artist: Michael Whelan  
Best Semi-Prozine: SF CHRONICLE  
Best Fanzine: FILE 770  
Best Fan Writer: Richard E. Geis  
Best Fan Artist: Brad Foster

Congratulations, all. And especially to Brad Foster. His cover on this issue of SFR shows you why he won; great style and humor.

#### NEBULA AWARDS

Best Novel: NEURONANCER by William Gibson  
Best Novella: PRESS ENTER[] by John Varley  
Best Novella: BLOODCHILD by Octavia Butler  
Best Short Story: MORNING CHILD by G. Dozov

Remarkable agreement among the two sets of voters; one set the readers, and the Nebulas are voted by professional writers.

Since SFR is sent to the printer in mid-July, it is unlikely (as it is every year) I'll get word of the Hugo winners for this issue. Sorry. Keep watching SF CHRONICLE and LOCUS.

THIS FANZINE IS WHERE  
OLD FANS GO TO EMBARRASS  
THEMSELVES...



BIG PERSON OF INDETERMINATE AGE,  
RACE AND GENDER IS WATCHING YOU

TOM SAWYER IN TROUBLE WITH LONDON  
CENSORS  
By Joseph Grigg (Cox News Service)

London, 8th April. TOM SAWYER, the Mark Twain classic on which tens of thousands of American children have been raised, is in hot water.

A century or more after it was written, left-wing education officials in London have ruled it "racist" and "sexist" and ordered it removed from school libraries under their control. HUCKLEBERRY FINN, banned by some local school authorities in the United States, so far has escaped this fate in London - possibly because the officials here have not heard of it. The Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) has also banned many other classics for similar reasons. They include:-

# Daniel Defoe's ROBINSON CRUSOE, dubbed "racist, sexist and imperialist";

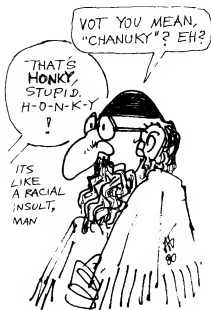
# Charlotte Bronte's JANE EYRE, condemned as sexist.

# Beatrix Potter's PETER RABBIT and BENJAMIN BUNNY children's books because they were about "middle-class rabbits".

Mr. John Coline, until recently Headmaster of St. Charles Primary School in the Kensington district of West London, said, "I was flabbergasted when my staff were ordered to check each book in our library for classism, sexism, racism, and ageism." He quoted Mrs. Pamela Pullen, an ILEA schools inspector, as ordering all books written more than ten years ago to be thrown out of the library and replaced by others approved by the authority. Mr. Coline quit.

But a spokesman for the authority said: "This is a genuine attempt to counter racism and sexism in books and to produce books that give a broader, fairer view of the world." The Inner London Education Authority is an elected local government body responsible for all State Schools in London. It is dominated by extreme left-wing Labourites, called by more conservative-minded Britons "the looney left". Its boss is Mrs. Frances Morrell, prominent left-wing activist and one-time close associate of "hard left" Labourite member of parliament, Mr. Anthony (Tony) Benn. She has ruled that all "sexist, racist and classist stereotypical" are to be avoided and eliminated from education of children in London.

Mr. Coline said that he first knew of the new leftist policy twist when Mrs. Pullen, an aide to Mrs. Morrell, showed up unannounced one day at St. Chares school and demanded to see its library and teaching books. "Only then," he said, "did I learn about the bans on 'so many children's classics'." He said the school library was ordered closed down and any books written more than ten years ago destroyed. He said rather than destroy books, he sold them off to eager parents at 10p a copy. Then he quit and took a less risky job working on Church of England archives.



Other books that he said aroused the ire of ILEA officials included Charles Dickens, OLIVER TWIST, denounced as "anti-semitic", Shakespeare's KING LEAR, rejected as sexist, and a commentary on the BIBLE by the Reverend Ronald Knox, simply because it was written more than ten years ago.

A set of illustrated books much-used to teach reading to five-year-olds was disapproved of because it showed well-dressed little girls helping their mothers in the kitchen and little boys helping their fathers in the garage.

"That," ILEA inspector Mrs. Pullen was quoted as saying, "is sexist and classist." Mr. Coline said: "They were ordered replaced by a reader showing little girls in overalls working in a garage and little boys in a kitchen."

Other schools reported their libraries and teaching books also were subjected to a thorough purge. They said this was based on the new ILEA policy directive banning "racism" and "sexism" and promoting "equal opportunities". They said discarded books have been replaced by others of "multi-ethnic character" approved by the ILEA.

Mr. Ron Letheren, ILEA senior staff inspector for schools, said that "in a multi-racial society it's very important that children should be given books which don't diminish their view of themselves."

Some London schools also have been ordered to stop teaching Latin because it is "elitist".

\*\*\*\*\*  
FROM THYME #44, the Australian  
SF News Magazine, May, 1985.  
The "Big Person..." heading by REG

# THE NAKED ID

THE PERSONAL JOURNAL  
OF RICHARD E. GEIS

The goal here is total honesty and disgusting self-revelation. Alas, I often don't have the guts to attain that...very often.

Four issues of THE NAKED ID have been published so far. I'm spilling my guts now in #5. Some of the things in #4 were:

Self-rage at my failure to write as much as I should. Sloth, sloth, thy lure is endless...

Proposed novels I should write the partials of...when I get the time. Doing THE MASTER FILE NOW (solid).

My opinion of Bernard Geotz, subway shooter extraordinaire.

My opinion of Scientology... and all religion.

The exploitation of sex---by the government.

Good Old Ronnie and his tax reform con game. This guy is worse than President Johnson and Carter combined!

Movie Reviews: RHINESTONE, DECEPTIONS, SIXTEEN CANDLES, ANDROID, FOOTLOOSE, REPO MAN, other.

The Hijacking and what I think is really behind it.

My thinking on abortion and why some women think I should have been aborted.

THE NAKED ID is published whenever eight pages have been completed. \$1.00 per issue. (US\$1.60 for overseas airmail) All issues sent first class. Subscription limit: 10 issues. Please make all checks payable to Richard E. Geis.

P.O. Box 11408  
Portland, OR 97211

# INTERVIEW:

# robert shea

## PROLOGUE

The son of a doctor, Robert Shea was born in New York City on St. Valentine's day, 1935. He attended Manhattan College, where he worked on the college newspaper, yearbook and literary magazine and helped found a fraternity that dispensed with blackballing and pledging. Drafted in 1954, he spent most of his two years in the Army doing public relations writing. After earning a master's degree in English literature at Rutgers University and writing the first draft of an autobiographical novel (as yet unpublished) about his college years, Shea returned to New York, where he tried free-lance fiction writing for a time. His first professional short story was published in FANTASTIC UNIVERSE by Hans Steffan Santesson, who invited Shea to join the Hydra Club. At a Hydra meeting Shea met Larry T. Shaw, editor of INFINITY, who hired Shea to work on CUSTOM RODDER and CAR SPEED & STYLE. (Shea was not to pass a driver's test for another seven years.) In 1963 he joined the editorial staff of TRUE magazine and in 1964 he was appointed editor of CAVEMAN. In 1967 he was asked by PLAYBOY to become one of the editors of "The Playboy Forum" letter column. As a "Forum" editor he represented PLAYBOY in many lectures, panel discussions and debates. By 1977 he was solely responsible for editing "The Playboy Forum." He lost his job at PLAYBOY in an economy drive in September, 1977.

Throughout his career as a magazine editor, Shea continued to write. His work included occasional science fiction short stories and a couple of novels (he tends to be vague about how many there were) that never saw the light of day, as well as other pieces that did. He had better success with non-fiction, his articles and essays appearing in magazines as diverse as TODAY'S HEALTH and the LOS ANGELES FREE PRESS. In 1968 he was one of a group who put together LAW AND DISORDER, a one-shot magazine sponsored by the American Civil Liberties Union in the aftermath of the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago. The publication attacked Mayor Richard J. Daley and the Chicago police and supported the peace demonstrators. Shea writes mostly about subjects related to the behavioral sciences, such as psychology, sex, religion and politics. As his novel-writing schedule gets heavier, his articles become less frequent. An important article was his "Women at War," a critique of the women's anti-pornography movement published in the February, 1980 PLAYBOY. Lately he has taken to doing travel pieces on hotels and restaurants in the Midwest for TRAVEL & LEISURE. His most recent published article was "Nobody Else Can Do For You," in the WRITER, November, 1984.

During his years at PLAYBOY Shea met Robert Anton Wilson, also an editor on

"The Playboy Forum." Together they wrote ILLUMINATUS!, published by Dell in 1975. The three volumes of ILLUMINATUS! have been described as "the anarchist/acid rock answer to THE LORD OF THE RINGS" by David Harris, one of the editors who worked on it.

ILLUMINATUS! is still in print, unusual for a paperback original; it has been produced on the stage in England, the Netherlands, Germany and the U.S. and a small, antic cult has grown up around it. It was republished in a one-volume trade paperback edition in 1984 and has since appeared on a couple of science fiction and libertarian best-seller lists.

Shea continues his career as an editor by getting out his own amateur magazine, NO GOVERNOR. He claims it has a circulation of a little over a hundred.

Shea's next novel, SHINE (pronounced she-*kay*), set in medieval Japan, was published by Jove Publications in June, 1981. It has come out in eight foreign editions and is now in its seventh printing.

His newest novel, ALL THINGS ARE LIGHTS, a novel about a troubadour and the women he loves in the time of the Crusades, will be published by Ballantine Books in the summer of 1986. He teaches part-time for the Department of Communications at Loyola University, Chicago.

Shea lives with his wife, Yvonne, and his son, Michael, in a small yellow house surrounded by evergreen trees in a suburb of Chicago on the shore of Lake Michigan. It is a surprisingly conventional setting for a man who writes science fiction and calls himself an anarchist. The choice is possibly explained by a quotation from Flaubert Shea has tacked to the bulletin board of his office: "Live like a bourgeois and think like a god." He says, "We bought this house because we needed room and it was cheap and pretty, and now the price of houses has gone up so much that it's even cheaper to live here. In fact, we probably couldn't afford to move."

Shea works in a room in the back of the house which has a pleasant view of green fields. Cramped with books, the room is papered with a black and white design of heraldic lions. The walls are decorated with framed posters advertising performances of the stage version of ILLUMINATUS! There is also a small picture of Shea and Robert Anton Wilson side by side, each with his head enclosed in a pyramid surmounted by an eye, the symbol of the sinister Bavarian Illuminati. There is a bulletin board on which, Shea says, he changes the items once a month. This month's items include a calendar of his own devising (the weeks begin on Monday), a schedule of the editing course he is currently teaching at Loyola, the

above-mentioned line from Flaubert and several odd-looking photographs without captions clipped from newspapers. On some shelves the books share space with what Shea calls "my collections of tacky souvenirs," cheap, gaudy objects purchased in gift shops in various parts of the world. There is a gilt replica of the Eiffel Tower, a China pig from Louisville, Kentucky, a Space Needle pencil sharpener from Seattle, a dinner bell from the Sherlock Holmes Hotel in London, a pin cushion from St. Louis, Missouri, and a replica of New York City in a bottle. The centerpiece of Shea's workroom is an Apple IIe computer which he calls "Mr. Chips."

Shea is about six feet tall, slightly overweight, and has a full head of wavy, greying hair and a brown mustache that droops over the corners of his mouth. He wears gold-framed bifocals. His manner is calm and pleasant. He speaks with a slight New York accent in a nasal voice that tends toward loudness, he says from years of trying to talk above subway noises.

SFR: After the publication in 1975 of ILLUMINATUS

SFR: After the publication in 1975 of ILLUMINATUS!, which you wrote with Robert Anton Wilson, your opus enjoyed a remarkable career on the stage. How did that come about?

SHEA: A mad English showman by the name of Ken Campbell discovered the ILLUMINATUS! books and decided to try to produce a theatrical version. Campbell's Science Fiction Theatre of Liverpool production of ILLUMINATUS! opened on November 23, 1976 in a coffee shop called the Liverpool School of Language Music Dream and Pan on Mathieu Street, almost next door to the site of the Cavern Club, where the Beatles got their start. After that it played the National Theatre in London, and later in Amsterdam and Frankfurt. Then the Empty Space in Seattle got wind of the British production and arranged

PHILOSOPHER-KING! WHAT A CROCK! PLATO'S ACADEMY CORNERED THE MARKET IN PHILOSOPHY AND GAVE THE CONCEPT A BIG "PR PUSHI!"

BUT THE ATHENIANS WERE TOO SMART TO BUY IT!



# CONDUCTED BY NEAL WILGUS

to their own, halfway around the world, which ran from September to December of 1978. Campbell and his co-playwright, Chris Langham, an illuminated comedian who used to write for the Muppet Show, originally set up ILLUMINATUS! as a cycle of five plays, one to be performed each weekday night, followed by a Saturday marathon performance of all five plays lasting from noon to midnight, with pub breaks at suitable intervals. For the National Theatre, they were reduced to eight and a half hours. The Empty Space turned it into a cycle of three plays, and their marathon performances lasted about ten hours.

SFR: What did you think of the stage productions?

SEA: What greater delight can a writer experience than to see real people taking the trouble to bring his work to life? When what began as a vague shape in the mind takes on solid form in a theater before an audience, it's a thrill that can't be duplicated. It was one of the most sublime experiences in my life, second only to being with Yvonne when she gave birth to our baby. Novelists are often displeased with adaptations of their works to other media. But Wilson and I were delighted with both the British and Seattle productions. They were ingenious in handling problems of staging and special effects, and they were faithful to both the text and the meaning of the books. The actors were passionately dedicated and gave brilliant performances.

SFR: How were the plays received by the public? Did people have trouble sitting there for eight to twelve hours?

SEA: Audiences at the marathon performances seemed even more enthusiastic than those who saw only one play at a time. ILLUMINATUS! achieves some of its big effects through sheer size and all-inclusiveness. In Liverpool, London and Seattle the house was always full for every marathon performance.

SFR: What did the critics have to say?

SEA: There were dozens of reviews of the various stage versions, nearly all of them favorable. The few negative reviews were invariably aimed at the material rather than the actors. I'm glad we got at least a few hostile reviews.

SFR: Why?

SEA: ILLUMINATUS! was intended to outrage, disgust, disturb and bewilder many sorts of people. When two anarchists write a long novel full of satire aimed at everything from conspiracy theories to government and organized religion, somebody better be offended, or the authors are not communicating very well. The novel is replete with favorable references to drugs and rebellion, it presents a series of pornographic scenes of progressively increasing complexity and perversity and it is peppered with obscene and blasphemous imagery and language. If nobody is turned off, it means nobody is paying attention.

SFR: In addition to its science fiction and anarchist aspects, ILLUMINATUS! displays a strong preoccupation with the occult and the paranormal. Has your interest in this area grown, or are you more skeptical these days?

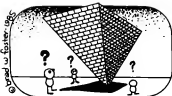
SEA: I've always been pretty skeptical about the occult and the paranormal, but in an open-minded way, if you take my meaning. I think magic, witchcraft and paganism have value as tentative pathways to what the mystics call illumination. I am willing to believe that occult or paranormal phenomena really exist, if ever I'm presented with conclusive evidence. I think that it is a betrayal of science that some so-called scientists try to use their status to discourage research in these areas. But I don't think anything has been proven yet. And don't ask me to take things on faith. I was a believing Catholic until I was thirty, and it was difficult enough to get away from that. No more space for me, thank you. Meanwhile, however, in ILLUMINATUS! and elsewhere I'm willing to use such concepts as story material without worrying about whether they're real or not.

SFR: What about the Ancient Illuminated Seers of Bavaria? Don't you believe in them?

SEA: At the time the book was written, I thought the legend of the Bavarian Illuminati was a silly, paranoid myth. We were simply using the Illuminati legend and the related plethora of conspiracy theories about the sixties to make political assassinations as a launching pad for an extended flight of black humor and political satire. In the years during which we wrote ILLUMINATUS! the country was awash in paranoia, and we were hoping to exorcise some of it by playing fun at it. It had not been that long since Senator Joe McCarthy had the whole country in the grip of Communist conspiracy mania. It was not that long since a harmless couple named Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were sent to the electric chair as atomic spies. The evidence against them was pure shit, if you look at it today, but it was convincing at the time because of the prevalent hysteria. At the time we were writing the John Birch Society had magnified that conspiracy mania by connecting the Communist conspiracy to the Illuminati conspiracy, which Robert Welch had now discovered, and they were blaming the conspiracy for sex education, fluoridation, rock music, the peace movement and the popularity of marijuana. And they were being believed. It was in that climate that Wilson and I took up our pens to tilt at the windmills of political madness.

SFR: Have you changed your mind at all about the existence of the Illuminati since the book was published?

SEA: You, yourself, having written and researched THE ILLUMINOIDS, which I consider to be a very sane and scholarly study of the Illuminati myth, are in a better position to say whether they actually exist than I am. I still think the Birch Society picture of the Illuminati--which is now also being put about by a Birch-like group led by an extreme authoritarian named Lyndon Larouche--is sheer nonsense. Of course, there are secret deals among world leaders and dastardly criminal acts are committed covertly by government agents. Still, I don't believe in a single, worldwide, age-old conspiracy that explains All of the Bad Things That are Happening.



There is also the tradition of philosophical research whose initiates are sometimes known as Illuminati, a tradition that includes the heretic-martyr Giordano Bruno, the magician Aleister Crowley and Robert Anton Wilson, my co-author. But members of this group have not tried to take over governments or the world economy, only to turn on more light in their own--and others'--heads.

SFR: So you wrote ILLUMINATUS! purely as political satire?

SEA: Our intentions kept changing all the time. At first we saw it simply as an international espionage thriller, with the Illuminati as arch-villains, giving us, as I said, an opportunity to satirize current paranoid. As the book developed, it rolled along like a blob-monster, absorbing everything in its path. We came to consider it what the literary critic Northrop Frye calls an anatomy, a long work of prose fiction that incorporates everything that interests the author--ideas, opinions, curious facts, campy stories. NOW THEN, here is an example of an anatomy. We wanted to outrage authoritarians of left, right and center, so we made the book subversive, blasphemous and pornographic. We threw in generous helpings of anarchist propaganda and our notions about the theory and practice of mysticism. Eventually, we decided to include ILLUMINATUS! might be a more-than-literary experience, might actually have psychotherapeutic or mystically enlightening value, make readers feel as if they were participating in some magical or religious rite. Only, the aim of this rite would be to liberate people, rather than confine their current programming. I think the stage versions of ILLUMINATUS! really did have this magical quality. The marathon performances reminded me a bit of the long Catholic services for Holy Week that recapitulate the trial, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. Of course, ILLUMINATUS! is a good deal more entertaining than any religious ceremony I've ever sat through. Maybe this is what religion was like before somebody decided it had to be boring to be good for your soul.

SFR: You wrote ILLUMINATUS! while an editor at PLAYBOY. Did you find working there an enjoyable or a stultifying experience?

SEA: It was a very lively, creative place to work, especially during my earlier years there. My work on 'The Playboy Forum' gave me lots of material for ILLUMINATUS! Later on, though, the corporation started to run short of money, so the staff got smaller, and I had to take on most of the work that had formerly been done by a group of people. It took all my time just to do the 'Forum' well, and there was nothing left over to develop new ideas or new directions. The job became something of a treadmill. Then there was an economy drive. On a

single day in September, 1977 about 150 employees were axed, including several editors, and I was one of them.

SFR: Was that traumatic for you?

SEA: No matter how much they tried to tell me I was a swell person and my work was first-rate, I couldn't help but feel I had been weighed in the balance and found expendable. Also, Yvonne and I had some family tragedies at the same time that made things worse. Less than two months after I was fired my mother, who died in 1979, became an invalid, and Yvonne's 22-year-old brother was killed in a motorcycle accident. So the end of 1977 was a bad time for us, not just because of my being kicked out by PLAYBOY.

SFR: How did you get through it?

SEA: I was buoyed up by Yvonne's unshakable confidence that I'd find worthwhile work to do. Years of studying Zen helped a lot, too. It's a bounce-back philosophy. When fears of not being able to support my family plunged me into anxiety or depression, I reminded myself that my family needed someone who could stay calm and cheerful more than they needed someone who had a job. That helped me out of a lot of funks. Besides, PLAYBOY didn't exactly cast me adrift without a life raft. There were 15 weeks severance pay, my profit-sharing and several free-lance editing and writing assignments.

SFR: How did you manage to strike out on your own as a free-lance writer?

SEA: I'd always intended to leave PLAYBOY---on my time-table, of course---and try to write for a living. I didn't feel ready to do that when I was unexpectedly fired, but while I was job-hunting a substantial amount of free-lance writing work came my way. At the same time, I gave some short outlines for novels to my agent, Al Zuckerman. One of them turned into SHIKE, the medieval-Japanese novel which was published by Jove in 1981. That's a publishing company, not a Roman god. Once Al got the sole writing contract for me that would pay enough to support us, there was no question about going back to the old office-job-and-paycheck routine.

SFR: What is life like out on your particular limb?

SEA: When I had a regular job I used to observe the free-lance writers I knew and say it must take nerves of steel to live like that, but I had no bone-deep understanding of how frightening it really is until I started to do it myself. It is very difficult to be creating while worrying about when my next check is going to come in. I've learned to put thoughts of money firmly out of my mind, as much as I can. It helps a great deal now that Yvonne now has a full-time job and I can ditch that old role, so destructive to me, of being the sole support of my family. Work is much more of a pleasure than it was when I was a magazine editor. It's hard at times and lonely at times, but what could be more fun than spending all day in a quiet room watching and recording the doings of the creatures of my imagination?

SFR: Have you always had a creative bent?

SEA: As a kid I constantly drew and made models of dinosaurs, space ships, robots and horrible monsters. I made my own toy soldiers out of paper. They were usually supposed to be Martians. I built fleets of paper rocket ships. I staged great battles on the living room rug. At the same time, I was making my own newspapers. Before I knew how to write I would fold pieces of paper and decorate them with regular rows of squiggles, which I would then "read" to any interested adult, making the news stories up as I went along. I made up a long epic about my teddy bear, which I told in daily installments to my mother. As I grew older I developed the ambition to write and draw my own science fiction comic strip. This grew out of my fascination with BUCK ROGERS, which I began reading in 1938. I felt about BUCK ROGERS the way my son now feels about STAR WARS. I drew my own comic strips and passed them out to friends.

SFR: How did you get started as a writer?

SEA: Just as reading BUCK ROGERS made me want to do my own comic strip, reading SF made me want to write the stuff. I started reading science fiction---a CAPTAIN FUTURE story called "Magic Moon"---when I was eleven. Since the magazines didn't come out fast enough for me, I started patronizing a back-number magazine store in my neighborhood, and pretty soon I had built up a big collection of SF magazines. About the time I got the urge to write SF stories myself, I discovered that this strange little stack of back issues of WRITER'S DIGEST, THE WRITER AND AUTHOR AND JOURNALIST. These magazines fed my ambition, and they also taught me that there are principles in the construction of fiction, techniques for telling a story, methods of going about writing. I started reading how-to-write books. Those by Jack Woodford were among my favorites. By the time I was in high school I was turning out short stories pretty regularly. As a senior in high school I wrote a long pseudo-history of the future, which I called THE MARCH OF THE MARTIANS. It leaned heavily on a book I loved, THE MARCH OF THE BARBARIANS by Harold Lamb, a history of the Mongols. I had a couple of short stories published in THE MANHATTAN QUARTERLY, the college literary magazine. I had finished college and done two years in the army and was in graduate school when I had my first professional publication, a short story called "Brave Feast," which appeared in the January, 1958 issue of FANTASTIC UNIVERSE, edited by Hans Stefan Santesson.

ALL I HAVE TO  
INFORM YOUR  
MAJESTY THAT  
AS OF THE FIRST  
OF THE MONTH,  
I'VE BEEN  
TAKEN OVER  
BY A LARGE  
MULTINATIONAL  
CONQUOMERFIRE



H.F. Gold published a story of mine called "Mad Meers" in the July, 1959 issue of IF. I wrote fiction and articles frequently during my years as a magazine editor, but it wasn't until 1975 that Bob Wilson and I came out with ILLUMINATUS-1, which was the first time I had my name on a book.

SFR: Can you remember the first novel you ever read?

SEA: Not for sure, but the most important was THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS. One of the great books of all time. Yvonne and I took turns reading it aloud to each other a few years ago, and I recently read it aloud to Michael, and I still think it is a beautiful and delightful book. SWISS FAMILY ROBINSON was another favorite. I read MOBY DICK and HUCKLEBERRY FINN when I was seven or eight years old, but I didn't understand them very well until much later.

SFR: What books did you like most when you were a teen-ager?

SEA: I read more magazine science fiction than anything else. When I was in my teens there were no publishers regularly bringing out SF books. I was enchanted by Leigh Brackett's SHADOW OVER MARS and by Asimov's FOUNDATION series. Among novels I loved Robert Penn Warren's ALL THE KING'S MEN and Ayn Rand's THE FOUNTAINHEAD. I also liked big gaudy historicals like GONE WITH THE WIND and ANTHONY ADVERSE and the many novels of Frank Yerby and Thomas B. Costain.

SFR: You must do a lot of reading as part of your work. Do you read for pleasure as well?

SEA: A writer who doesn't read for the sake of reading is doomed to lose all sense of what writing is all about. I do most of my leisure reading either for pleasure or for self education. Recently, for pleasure, I have read LINCOLN by Gore Vidal, HERETICS OF DUNE by Frank Herbert, THE WARDLORD by Malcolm Bosse, THE GATE OF WORLDS by Robert Silverberg, THE TOMB BY F. Paul Wilson, and PET SEMATARY by Stephen King. For enlightenment, in the last few months, I've read THE TIME FALLING BODIES TAKE TO LIGHT by William Irwin Thompson, THE C ZONE by Robert and Marilyn Krieger, INTIMATE CONNECTIONS by David D. Burns, THE HOLOGRAPHIC PARADOX edited by Ken Wilber, THE TURNING POINT by Fritz Hopf and PROMETHEUS RISING by my good buddy Robert Anton Wilson.

SFR: What contemporary authors do you get the most out of reading?

SEA: The list is continually undergoing revision as my taste changes and my readings on for reading change, but John Fowles, Romain Gary, Norman Mailer, Yukio Mishima, Vladimir Nabokov, George Orwell, Thomas Pynchon, J.R.R. Tolkien and Robert Penn Warren seem to have taken up permanent residence in my literary pantheon.

SFR: As a former magazine editor, you probably read a lot of magazines.

SEA: Dozens, though I don't have enough time to read as many magazines---or books for that matter---as I'd like to. My favorite is THE NEW YORKER, which I think is the best magazine being published in the U.S. today. I also love NATURAL HISTORY, especially the column on evolu-



tion by Stephen Jay Gould. THE NEW YORK TIMES SUNDAY MAGAZINE and SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN are other favorites.

**SFR:** Could you describe your working habits?

**SEA:** I'm always experimenting with new ways of going about writing. The habits of the moment are not the habits I had last year and may not be those I'll be using next year. Right now, though, I try to follow a routine that varies little from one day to the next. Monday through Friday I get up at six a.m. I start writing between eight and nine. I eat a light lunch and go for a long walk. Then I continue working until six. Those may seem like long hours, but there are interruptions, because I have to be available to our twelve-year-old Michael, though he doesn't need me as much now as he did when I started free-lancing. From six to eight is free time, then I read till around ten, and so to bed. That's my ideal schedule, you understand. The reality is punctuated by all sorts of vicissitudes.

**SFR:** Isn't it boring to follow a daily routine?

**SEA:** I like it. Many teachers of mysticism recommend a daily schedule. By not having to worry about what you're going to do next, you keep your mind on a higher plane. That's why monks the world over follow a regular routine. It encourages the growth of the inner life and of creativity.

**SFR:** How much planning do you do before starting to write a novel?

**SEA:** To get an advance from a publisher you have to submit an outline of your proposed novel. So I write an outline of forty pages or so. But I don't necessarily follow that outline when I write, and I plan the finer details of a chapter or scene only when I'm ready to write that particular section. Also, I welcome changes of direction that depart from the original outline. I go along with John Fowles' rule, "Follow the accident, fear the fixed plan." I try to look at my original idea as nothing more than a springboard, with the real creative process happening as I work along.

**SFR:** Do you work through a piece of writing from beginning to end, then, or do you hop around, writing sections as they occur to you?

**SEA:** I've tried hopping around, but the results are confused and don't seem to fit together too well. For me, the most natural way to write is the way I read most novels, straight through from start to finish. But I often do get ideas for parts of the book other than the one I'm working on. I make notes of those ideas and use them when I'm ready.

**SFR:** When you're writing fiction, do whole scenes appear in your mind, or do you have to make yourself figure out what happens next?

**SEA:** I start by rereading what I wrote yesterday and looking at my notes or outline for the scene I'm writing. This gets my mind back into the story. The scene starts to unfold in my mind as if I were reading it in a book or watching it on a movie screen. Sometimes I'm a passive observer, and I simply write what

I see and hear. The words and sentences come to me without much effort on my part. Sometimes, though, I have to take a more active role in shaping the scene, asking myself what the characters would probably do or say, what would be the details of the setting probably be. Although I like my stories to develop spontaneously, I'm not above manipulating characters and events to push the story in the direction I think it should go.

**SFR:** Do you find that writing dialogue is easier than straight narrative?

**SEA:** So much so that it's a problem. Once my characters start talking to one another it's hard for me to get them to shut up, so we can get on with the story. You know those monologues in Ayn Rand's novels that go on for pages and pages? Well, I could easily write dialogues that would go on just as long. Usually, I let my people talk as much as they want to in the first draft, then cut back on the conversation when I'm revising.

**SFR:** How much revision do you do?

**SEA:** I try to keep it to a minimum. I try to avoid what I call "overfuss," which means tinkering with a piece for seven years or so before submitting it, something I have been known to do from time to time. I think two drafts is best. My first draft writing usually needs that much revision. I did *SHIKE* in three drafts for the most part, typing several pages of first draft material, then rewriting that, then typing a final draft and moving on to the next clump of pages. I don't like to write a whole draft of a novel, then go back to the beginning and start over. But the novel I just finished, *ALL THINGS ARE LIGHTS*, was tougher to do than *SHIKE*. It took me six complete drafts over four years before I finally got it done. This is still not the way I prefer to work. Of course, I could go on revising my writing endlessly. There are always improvements that can be made. But I think the best way for me to develop as a writer is to get a lot of practice by producing a large quantity of work, rather than by perfectionistically polishing a few pieces.

**NW:** That is, do you write with an Apple II+ computer and a word processing program called Apple Writer II, revising

REMEMBER TO  
SNORT YOUR FOOD  
28 TIMES, DEAR



is a lot easier. I just call up the old draft on the screen, type in my changes, punch a couple of keys and turn out a new draft on my Apple letter quality printer at the rate of about a page a minute. As you can see, I'm an Apple loyalist. I got the computer in 1983, and all those later drafts of *ALL THINGS ARE LIGHTS* were done on it.

**SFR:** What do you think is the strongest point in your writing?

**SEA:** Story structure. Keeping the story moving in a definite direction without wandering away from it and without losing track of the various plot threads. I'm also good at imagining and describing pageantry and spectacle, big scenes, events on an impressive scale.

**SFR:** Do you think a work of fiction can satisfy the demands of an intellectual, educated elite and the larger, general public simultaneously?

**SEA:** First of all, the vast majority of people in this country don't read books at all, so as soon as you write a book you are already appealing to an intellectual elite. Within that book-reading audience, I think, it is possible to achieve both popular and literary success. If you'll go back and look at my list of favorite contemporary authors, you'll notice that many of the respected artists and they have all written best sellers. My ideal is to write about people and events that have popular appeal, yet tell my stories with a richness that will satisfy discriminating readers.

**SFR:** Do you have an imaginary reader in mind when you write?

**SEA:** Much of the time I'm not thinking of any reader at all, just doing my best to put the right words on paper in the right order. At other times, all sorts of readers invade my mind. I imagine my agent or my editor, or some friend or acquaintance reading a passage I've just written. These readers over my shoulder tend to make negative comments. I would like to have an ideal reader to whom I could address my work, but I haven't been able to develop such a character systematically in my mind. In lieu of an ideal reader, I try to use myself as the touchstone. I try to write the sort of thing I myself would like to read. I

try to write as my favorite writers do. I figure, if my writing pleases me, there must be some other people out there whom it will also please.

**SFR:** Do you think it's true that a writer is never the best judge of his or her own work?

**SHEA:** On the contrary, the writer is the only judge whose opinion is important. In order to work at all, I must be able to judge my own work and to assume that I am a good judge of it. I have to know when something I've written needs more work, and when it's okay and I can leave it as it is. If I couldn't make such decisions, I'd be writing in a vacuum. It is true that writers often can't predict how their work will be received by others. Others may praise work of mine that I am unhappy with, or dislike something I think is fine. But other people's opinions are not really the important thing for a writer. A writer can't learn from what others think of their work.

**SFR:** Isn't it important for writers to follow editors' directions?

**SHEA:** If you encounter an editor who doesn't like your work, it's better just to go looking for another editor. The publishing business abounds with stories of writers who had a manuscript rejected by twenty-two publishers, only to have it accepted by the twenty-third and become a best-seller. A high-ranking editor at PLAYBOY once spoke categorically at a staff meeting, "Isaac Asimov can't write." Now, Isaac has a strong ego and a huge following, and he could care less what any one editor thinks of his writing. But I wonder how many potential Asimovs may have been cut off at the beginning of their careers because they took some asinine editor's word for it that they couldn't write. In fact, when I was making my adieux at PLAYBOY another high-ranking editor advised me to look for another editorial job rather than try free-lancing because in his opinion I wasn't that good a writer. I thank God I didn't listen to him. The editor whose word you take as gospel today may be a public relations account executive---or a free-lance writer---tomorrow. The only teacher you can rely on over a lifetime is yourself.

**SFR:** Are you very critical of your own writing?

**SHEA:** I try to be neither too severe nor too lenient. You can't fool yourself, and when you are a writer, you're working for yourself. You know when you're goofing off and not getting the word done, spending too much time sharpening pencils. You know when you're doing below-standard work. So there isn't really much danger of a person who is serious about writing being too lenient with himself or herself. The greater danger is paralyzing oneself with per-

fectionism. Aside from listening to too many other opinions, the factor that more than anything stifles would-be writers is an overactive critical faculty. The people who tell you that writing is agony for them are usually criticizing their work even as they try to turn it out. I try to avoid that. When developing story ideas or doing first draft work, I try to ignore the voice of my critical faculty. Get something on paper first. The critical faculty is more useful to me later, when I'm revising and polishing, but I need momentum when I'm trying to come up with ideas or get a first draft on paper.

**SFR:** Could you describe ALL THING ARE LIGHTS for us?

**SHEA:** The title comes from a medieval philosopher, Scotus Erigena, who said, "All that are, are lights." The main characters have an outlook that is as mystical as that statement, only their mysticism is not of the orthodox variety. The main character is a troubadour who achieves illumination in an adult love affair with a countess through the rites of courtly love, which I portray as a Westernized version of tantric yoga. The troubadour is also in love with a woman minister of the heretical Cathar sect. Nowadays they tell women they can't be priests; in those days they burned them at the stake for trying. These people get caught up in the disastrous Seventh Crusade led by King Louis IX, known today as Saint Louis. The crusaders are eventually defeated by the Egyptian Mamelukes. The survivors, including the King, are held as hostages by the Moslems and are to save their lives by paying an enormous ransom.

**SFR:** Sounds strangely familiar. What are you working on now?

**SHEA:** It's in the formative stages and I don't want to say too much about it, but it seems to be a sequel to ALL THING ARE LIGHTS. It will be a continuation of my despectic view of the Crusades and of the Middle Ages generally.

**SFR:** Let's talk about SHIKE for a moment. How did that novel fare in the marketplace?

**SHEA:** Quite well, though it wasn't a best seller. That is to say, it didn't make the NEW YORK TIMES or PUBLISHER'S WEEKLY best seller lists. But it did make the best seller lists of several book store chains, such as B. Dalton's, Waldenbooks and Kroch's and Breton's. It was listed as a best seller by the Toronto STAR. And reprint rights have been sold in eight foreign countries. I has gotten good reviews and gone back for several printings. All in all a respectable performance. And the people who like it, love it. That's the most important thing.

**SFR:** Did you learn anything in researching Oriental history for SHIKE that might be of interest to us in the twentieth-century Occident?

**SHEA:** Many things. For instance, right-wing libertarians often talk about private armies and private police forces as a necessity for a free society. I learn-

ed that the samurai, whom we look upon as the epitome of militarism, were just that: private warriors. They were not official government troops. They were armed retainers protecting the private property of local landlords. The word samurai means "one who serves." But only a few hundred years after the class first appeared, they became the government. Government is based on the power to coerce, and that power exists, there will be government.

**SFR:** Your outlook is both anarchist and pacifist. Did you have trouble writing with sympathy about authoritarian militarists like the samurai?

**SHEA:** Any writer of fiction who sympathizes only with characters whose ideas agree with his or her own is going to run out of material fast. I've always admired Japanese culture, and in particular the samurai. The samurai ideal is to develop oneself as a whole human being, to be an artist, poet and philosopher as well as a fighting man. The samurai often studied under Zen masters, and some who lived long enough retired and became monks themselves. I find this cultivation of aesthetic sensitivity side by side with martial ferocity to be most attractive. You have to go back to the knight-troubadours of Provence, the Vikings or the pagan Celtic warriors to find anything similar in Western culture, yet as recently as World War II Japanese officers were still writing poems in beautiful brush-and-ink calligraphy before charging into battle, thus saving their beautiful, obsolescent swords.

As far as my being a pacifist goes, paradoxically the martial virtues are not antithetical to pacifism. Gandhi remarked that many of his most steadfast nonviolent campaigners were men with military training and discipline. In fact, both Gandhi and the Buddha were born into the Kshatriya, the Indian warrior caste. In the ANGUTTARA NIKAYA, a Buddhist scripture, we find, "Warriors, warriors we call ourselves. We fight for splendid virtue, for high endeavor, for sublime wisdom, therefore we call ourselves warriors." Bob Wilson wrote a nice little essay in NEW LIBERTARIAN several issues ago on the need for an effective pacifist to have the heart of a warrior.

**SFR:** Isn't historical fiction a rather drastic switch from science fiction?

**SHEA:** Well, SHIKE started out as a proposal for a science fiction novel which borrowed its plot from certain historical events---the Wars of the Roses in England and the Mongol invasion of Europe in the thirteenth century. An editor expressed interest in the story, but asked if I could set it in medieval Japan, since he was in the market for historical romances, but science fiction. This is not, by the way, the editor or the publishing house that ended up buying the book. Anyway, I did a little quick research and discovered that there was a Japanese civil war like the War of the Roses. The parallels were startling, even to the opposing sides using red and white as their official colors. I knew, of course, that the Japanese had suffered a Mongol invasion. Since the novel was in an embryo state at that point, it was possible to do a little genetic engineering and program the organism to develop into a historical novel rather than a science fiction novel. This new novel



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is connected to my other work in other ways as well. My hero belongs to the order of warrior monks whose resemblance to the Illuminati is not coincidental and whose teachings suggest many of the ideas about mysticism, philosophy and politics expressed in ILLUMINATUS! There are similar threads connecting ALL THINGS ARE LIGHTS with ILLUMINATUS!

Generally speaking, there are many similarities between science fiction and historical fiction. A lot of science fiction is historical fiction set in the future. In both genres the writers must create in their imaginations a society and a way of life that they cannot know firsthand. Many science fiction stories describe future societies obviously modeled after societies that existed in the past. Asimov, for example, drew on the history of the Roman Empire for the Foundation series.

SFR: What other writing have you done recently?

SEA: The last piece published was an article in THE WRITER for November, 1984 called "Nobody Else Can Do It for You." In it I said at greater length what I've just told you, that a writer has to be his or her own teacher and critic.

SFR: Would you like to write more SF?

SEA: Oh, sure, but I could never be exclusively or even primarily a science fiction writer. There are too many other kinds of writing I want to do.

SFR: Do you have any advice for aspiring authors?

SEA: Write the sort of thing you yourself prefer to read. Use your own taste as a guide to what to write and how to write it, and you are more likely to find a market for your work and to be happy doing it. Don't write what you consider trash just because it seems like a way to make a lot of money. Don't, on the other hand, try to write belles lettres because such writing confers prestige, if reading such literature puts you to sleep. Take as your models, not the writers who make the most money or those who rank highest with literary journals, but the writers from whose work you personally derive the most satisfaction.

There's another word of advice I consider equally, maybe more, important: Don't listen to people who give advice to aspiring authors. As it says in the painting aboard the Lief Erickson, "Think for yourself, schmuck." Obdurate on advice produces confusion, stultification, discouragement. I mentioned reading how-to-write magazines and books when I started writing. After a while, though, I reached a point where too much reading about how to write messed me up. I was forever changing my methods to follow the latest how-to article or professional tip that impressed me. I even followed advice from writers whose actual novels and short stories I had never read. I kept fantasizing that I would discover the secret and feeling depressed because my writing didn't seem to get any better. When you are trying to learn to write, you usually go through a period of having your work rejected by editors, and during this painful time you're tempted to listen to any plausible character who comes along. All this advice hunting made my approach to writing much more erratic and inconsistent and hamper-

ed by discouragement than it would have been if I'd just figured out my own way of doing things and kept on writing and writing and writing. The kingdom of writing is within you.

SFR: Then you agree with the people who say it's impossible to teach anyone how to write?

SEA: Even that notion is misleading, if it is taken to mean that writing is a mysterious ability that can't be studied rationally or developed methodically. People who believe so, if they're not happy with their first efforts at writing, may conclude that they don't have genius or talent or whatever it takes, and may give up. What I'm saying is that you have to learn writing by yourself. You can be quite rational and conscious about it, or you may just practice and allow your skill to develop--whatever suits you. You can learn a few things from other writers, but you have to be very selective. You have to invest your own ideas about writing, your own methods and techniques, your own goals. The kingdom is within.

SFR: Have you yourself followed this advice?

SEA: Not all the time, and that's how I've learned that the advice is good. Whenever I've tried to do some sort of writing I despise or dislike I've been miserable and the result has been poor. Whenever I've uncritically adopted someone else's writing theories or practices, my development as a writer has been held back.

SFR: Looking over your writing career, you seem to have had more work published in the last ten years than you did before that. Why do you think you are accomplishing more lately?

SEA: I've been gaining experience and I've learned my way around the publishing business. The fact that ILLUMINATUS! was a collaboration helped me get that book done, too. I had Bob Wilson's encouragement and example to spur me on. Before ILLUMINATUS! I produced several novels which I never finished.

Perhaps most important is that I

"AND NEVER DARKEN MY MAIL BOX AGAIN--"



started psychotherapy in 1963, when my first marriage was falling apart, and I went into full-scale psychoanalysis between 1967 and 1973. Before all this professional help I had a lot of problems with sticking to projects that I started, with meeting writing commitments, with figuring out what I really wanted to do. Psychoanalysis taught me how to be productive.

SFR: What else besides writing are you working at?

SEA: I'm teaching, among other things. I give courses in magazine editing and magazine-article writing at Loyola University in downtown Chicago. It's great fun pulling all my experience together and trying to make sense of it. In my writing course I stress self-criticism and self-development as opposed to seeking answers from writing gurus.

Then, I irregularly publish an anarchist magazine called NO GOVERNOR. I let this lapse between 1977 and 1984, but then I doing a magazine for Arthur Hlavaty's Golden APA, and that got my editing-and-publishing motor started again. Lately my apazine has turned into a revived NO GOVERNOR. The magazine is now less purely anarchist and has strong mystical and fanzine components.

I write for other anarchist and far-out publications when time permits. I give talks when asked and occasionally attend meetings of anarchist and related groups. I'm a member of the Social-Revolutionary Anarchist Federation, an umbrella organization for a number of anarchist individuals and groups. Several years ago I engaged in some anti-fart activity. For the past few years I've been much involved in the Freeze movement, working at the community level here in Glencoe. I write publicity and propaganda for them and do occasional computerized mass mailings. At the moment the Freeze isn't getting much publicity, but I still think it's the one on practical alternative to the extinction of humanity in a nuclear war.

I'm deeply interested in the study and practice of mysticism, particularly Zen. I meditate. I try to regulate my life in ways recommended by mystical teachers. I have built up a large library devoted to mysticism. I sit now and then with the group at the Zen Center of Chicago.

SFR: What do you do for fun?

SEA: Everything I do is fun.

SFR: Does your fiction have a political purpose?

SEA: Naturally my writing reflects my ideas about politics, religion and what-not. But I do not write to advocate my ideas. Not the way Ayn Rand--whose ideas and work I admire in many ways--did in THE MOUNTAINMAN AND ATLAS SHRUGGED. My primary purpose in writing is to be a storyteller, not a preacher. The ideas in my stories are just more material out of which the story is built. A story, to be any good, must honestly embody the writer's values and beliefs. But the better writer you are, I think, the more those ideological elements will be absorbed into the creative process and become invisible. For over four hundred years people have been arguing about the meaning of various characters and events

in Shakespeare's plays. If Shakespeare was trying to get some ideological message across, he failed abysmally. And he is too good a writer for that. So I have to conclude that he did not intend his plays to be vehicles for messages. We admire Shakespeare because he created events that enthrall us, people that live for us, language that dazzles us. Many other fine writers can do have messages, we admire in spite of what they are saying. Milton's Puritanism, for instance.

SFR: Do you feel a need to take a public stand on political questions, or do you think you should just stay in your study and work?

SEA: I try to participate when I can find time for it. But I think I may be doing my most important work for humanity when I stay home and write. So I have no qualms about letting my involvement in public issues take a much smaller share of my time than writing does. In any case, whatever I do in public it is not political but anti-political, since politics is the art and science of government, and I advocate the abolition of government.

SFR: Insofar as you do believe in political--or anti-political--activism, what do you think is the most libertarian thing a person can do? What approach would be most likely to shake the advent of a totally free society?

SEA: Government will never be abolished as long as most people think there is no alternative they can live with. So the first step is education: Explaining anarchism to people. Showing them that it is not inimical to basic human needs and values, as it has often been portrayed. Offering evidence that it is not impossible utopian thinking either, but a way of reorganizing society that can work in the real world. Helping them to see that, far from being a practical necessity, the institution of government is leading the human race to the brink of extinction. We can do this educating by whatever means are available: Talking to people on the job or in the local tavern. Making speeches. Writing pamphlets and songs. Drawing cartoons. Producing anarchist paintings, novels and symphonies.

SFR: Wait a minute. You previously praised writing that doesn't have any message.

SEA: True, but Blake said that all poets are of the Devil's party, whether they know it or not. I would say that all novelists are anarchists, consciously or unconsciously. All art that affirms life encourages anarchism.

SFR: Do you consider yourself a left-wing anarchist or a right-wing anarchist?

SEA: The argument between left-wing and right-wing anarchism makes about as much sense as the argument between socialism and capitalism makes in a world which is tending more and more toward a single hybrid economic system. The more important question is not what kind of economic system we ought to have, but whether our economic system will develop freely, by voluntary participation and voluntary observance of the rules of the economic game, or whether it is going to be enforced and imposed by a government. I was appalled the first time I heard an anarcho-syndicalist declare that in an anarchist society nobody would be allowed to practice capitalism. I'm equally appalled by people who call themselves anarchists and envision armies of Pinkerton types protecting their real estate and industrial holdings. I imagine a free society as one in which many different communities will undertake many different kinds of economic experiments, with the blessing of humanity as a whole.

SFR: Many anarchists think violent means are necessary in the struggle against government. Why do you insist on pacifism?

SEA: Because as I see it violence is what makes any organization a government. A government is any person or organization which uses force to coerce people into obedience. When anarchists use terrorism, revolutionary violence or military means, they are no longer advancing the cause of anarchism. They have become another government, regardless of what they may call themselves.

SFR: You mentioned that you were a believing Catholic until you were thirty. Has anything taken the place of religion in your life?

SEA: Mainly my own philosophical speculations. I am thinking for myself, as I have learned I must do, trying to decide on a meaning for my life, to work out a satisfactory explanation for the world around me and my place in it, to select values that will help me chart my course. I want a philosophy that will do for me what religion does for a person, but with me in control of it.

SFR: How is your philosophy turning out?

SEA: It's a mixture of mysticism, anti-individualism and scientific materialism, elements that are somewhat difficult to blend. One of my key convictions is that we have to cease to be guided by the ideas of good and evil. The origin of human misery, as the BOOK OF GENESIS tells us, lies in our adoption of the ideas of good and evil. Oddly enough, no preachers seem to have drawn the logical conclusion that we ought to stop thinking in terms of good and evil. However, that is what both mysticism and

the philosophy behind psychoanalysis seem to suggest. I also think, and this somewhat contradicts the above, that people have a natural moral sense that transcends their own culture. So that a sensitive Aztec might feel there is something wrong with human sacrifice, for example. I make it possible for the contradictory elements in my thinking to coexist by keeping my philosophy aphoristic rather than systematic. Some may have noted that I've contradicted myself several times in this interview already. Don't worry, I'm not going to quote Walt Whitman or Ralph Waldo Emerson.

SFR: How did you get interested in mysticism?

SEA: I mentioned how I sedulously read writers' magazines. One very influential article I read, published in THE WRITER in 1958, was "Zen and the Art of Writing" by Ray Bradbury. Bradbury's advice was, "Don't be a perfectionist. Don't think," which is not a bad caveat for the Zen approach to the arts. As I said, I was constantly fussing over my methods and techniques of writing in those days, and it was getting in my way. Later, I read Herrigel's ZEN IN THE ART OF ARCHERY and many books by A. Watts and D. Suzuki, and they all helped my creative development. Practicing an art in the Zen way gradually turns you into a mystic.

SFR: And, I take it, mysticism to this day continues to satisfy some need in you?

SEA: By 1968 I had gone through a radical change in my own point of view, and mysticism, especially Zen thought, was the only outlook that made sense to me. I met Alan Watts several times and became one of his many admirers. I read a lot about mysticism from Bob Wilson. The countercultural revolution of the sixties, in which I participated, was inspired in part by the impact of Oriental mystical ideas on a number of Western minds. By the beginning of the seventies I was meditating regularly and had adopted a number of mystical practices. I started to treat my work, everything in my life, as a Way. I started to treat everything that happens to me as a lesson or problem presented to me by life, the true sensei. To me, mysticism has nothing, necessarily, to do with theology or morality. It is simply a means of making direct mental contact with the ultimate, indescribable reality, thereby achieving a state of peace and euphoria. This is an utterly inadequate description of what mysticism is.

SFR: So you are both a mystic and an atheist?

SEA: Yes. One of the important threads in my thought derives from the existentialism of Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir who teach that the universe is not ruled by a god and is meaningless and amoral in human terms, that there is no hereafter and that life on this planet is a chance event which has no significance. This is, so far as I know, what science appears to have learned about the human condition. Nevertheless, the existentialists assert that it is possible for human life to have value, meaning and dignity, if we realize that we can create these things for ourselves. The universe doesn't have meaning--we put meaning into it.





**SFR:** I'm curious about your outlook on lifestyle as it affects long life and vitality. Do you engage in activities like jogging or running? Yoga or Tai Chi? Is nutrition important in your daily life? Are such concerns likely to help us extend our life spans and enjoy life more?

**SEA:** I used to lead a determinedly unhealthy lifestyle. I was a heavy smoker, drinker and eater. I preferred high cholesterol foods like beef and cheese. I got no exercise. I liked to stay up half the night and often worked or played through two days straight without sleeping at all. Sounds like fun, doesn't it? Gradually I got the message that it's a fun way to shorten your life. So I've been whittling away at these self-destructive habits. Studying and emulating the practices of mystics has helped. I try to follow the Buddha's rule of walking a middle path between harmful asceticism and self-indulgence. I have to say, though, that I am repelled by fads. A couple of the things you mention have become fads to the point where I wouldn't do them even if they would double my life span. When I see a jogger coming down the street in his hundred-dollar Adidas warm up suit, I want to reach for my revolver.

**SFR:** I note that you and I share the unique distinction of having become fathers for the first time at forty. Isn't it great? Do you think it's better than becoming a father in your twenties?

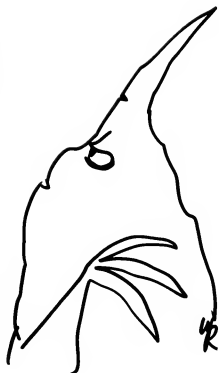
**SEA:** Fatherhood is rather like its necessary precondition, sex, in that the older you get the more grateful you are that something so nice can still happen to you. And, as with sex, parenthood is an area of life in which our cultural evolution has outstripped our biological evolution. Though it is physically possible for us to become parents in our teens, the cultural tendency seems to be to put off actualizing this potential until later and later in life. The fact that we tend to live longer and to be in better physical shape in middle age makes this postponement of parenthood practical. Women are also putting off motherhood until later in life. In their twenties, and even in their thirties, people are still finding themselves. In the old days, if you hadn't found yourself by the age of sixteen, you were dead. But now people have more time and need more time, because life is more complex and there are more options. So it's often not until their thirties or forties

that people have a sense of who they are and where they are going, have mellowed out somewhat and have the matured values that enable them to enjoy parenthood. Parenthood is like any other task--- you've got to enjoy it to do well at it.

**SFR:** Many vital and creative people extol the virtues of will power in making life more than just one damned thing after another. Is will an important part of your approach to life?

**SEA:** For a long time I dismissed will power as an obsolete Victorian notion. I thought Freudian psychology had established that people have no control over the way they act, that it's all determined by the structure of their subconscious. Then I learned that Freud never held any such view. He, and modern psychoanalysts, hold that people can direct their behavior rationally and should try to. Freud even admired those great exponents of will power and character the English Puritans, so much so that he named one of his sons Oliver, after Oliver Cromwell. All the important varieties of psychotherapy, even the non-Freudian ones like behavior therapy, agree that for the therapy to be successful the patient must have a strong will to change. This is a precondition of therapy. Psychotherapy doesn't replace will power, it depends on will power to be effective. In my own case, I thought my bad habits, smoking and the like, were neurotic symptoms that would go away automatically when I completed my analysis. Not so. I still have the same struggle to direct my behavior rationally that I did before. The only difference---and it is a crucial difference---is that I'm a more together person and can struggle more intelligently with my self-defeating tendencies. There is no substitute for will. We must take responsibility for our lives. We can't just go on blaming the silly things we do on our parents or the economic system or the devil. Unfortunately, this doesn't seem to have gotten through to the public at large, which is still looking for miracle cures. All that being said, please understand that I don't consider myself a very strong-willed person. I try to use the power of habit. I'm very conscious of my habits, and I try to strengthen the helpful ones and gradually chip away at the self-defeating ones. I also think that will depends a lot on attitude, and that one's attitudes can be improved---and one's will strengthened---by constantly reminding oneself of the attitudes one wants to have. For instance, if you like to smoke, you have to keep reminding yourself that tobacco is a poison and smoking is slow suicide. This is what is meant by reprogramming yourself. In this connection I also like Gandhi's advice, that you should never give something up just for the sake of giving it up, but only make a sacrifice when you can see it as a way of gaining something else that you value more. Good health, say, or mystical illumination. This is what will is, in a sense---a zeroing in on what you value most. Through a process extending over many years I've become a somewhat more disciplined person. I behave more intelligently than I once did. But I still have a long way to go.

**SFR:** Thank you, Robert Shea.



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# NOISE LEVEL

## A COLUMN BY JOHN BRUNNER

IN RE BEING COMMISSIONED AND CHALLENGES AND SUCH

REG reviewed my novel *THE TIDES OF TIME* on the strength of uncorrected page-proofs. I know that because he was puzzled by cryptic letter-groups in large type, such as UMAAB, at the start of every chapter.

I was pretty puzzled, myself. Those are the automatic system references generated by my word processor, and I never expected a printer to add to his workload by setting them and then having to strike them again.

However, this allegedly experimental device did have one beneficial spin-off. It prompted Dick to send me a letter commissioning a specific column, the first time -- to my recollection -- that he's ever done so. In it he said I was "seemingly breaking away from the safe ways to tell SF stories in novel form" and asked me to explain why.

Cue for still further puzzlement (I baffle easily). After being told in the late sixties, when I published *STAND ON ZANZIBAR*, that I'd invented a wholly new way of writing book-length SF -- I think it was Norman Spinrad, bless him, who said that, in *AMAZING* -- I confess I wasn't accustomed to the way I told my stories being called "safe." Had my then unorthodox techniques now become so much a part of the field's standard vocabulary as to warrant the term? I duly said as much, and REG came back with the following:

"...it seems to me that *THE TIDES OF TIME* and the novel about the aliens who developed through catastrophic changes in their planet" (*THE CRUCIBLE OF TIME*) "were risky novels: *TIDES OF TIME* because of the plot structure, and the aliens because they really were aliens and there was nary a human in sight ... Maybe you could write about why you chose those structures and techniques and what reaction you got ... That sort of thing fascinates me -- the challenges a writer accepts, and why."

Okay, Mr. Editor sir: you're on...

All my working life I've done my best to devise challenges for myself. When I first turned freelance in 1958 I was getting \$1000 a throw from Ace Doubles, and I had to sell four or more books a year simply to avoid going back to a job in an office.

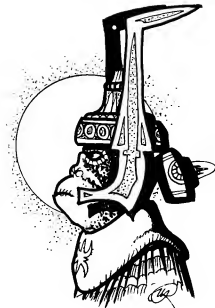
Pretty soon, however, I realized that writing as much as I could, though it brought me a living, was likely to gain me a reputation as a hack and nothing more. I also needed the occasion-

al opportunity to write as well as I could.

So for a period of several years I deliberately set myself an annual task: to take a standard SF theme and see what I could do with it that would bear my exclusive stamp rather than being merely derivative. I hope and believe that some of these exercises are still known to the contemporary readership: the first was *THE SQUARES OF THE CITY*, in which I set out to convert a master chess game into a novel that could be read regardless of its underlying structure, while another was *THE WHOLE MAN*, in which I tried to say something fresh about telepathic powers, and yet another was *QUICKSAND*, in which I attempted to create a tragic hero in the classic sense of a person doomed by forces beyond his control, while working within a format that might or might not be science-fictional. (Someone told me the other day that he didn't like the book because he found the ending ambiguous and never learned whether Urchin really was a visitor from the future, or had merely ensnared Paul Fidler in an exceptionally elaborate fantasy. But that was the whole idea, and I felt like saying so, only for once I managed to bridle my tongue.) I regard *QUICKSAND*, by the way, as a trailbreaker for such recent novels by Christopher Priest as *THE AFFIRMATION* -- which I cordially commend -- and *THE GLAMOUR*, about which I scarcely have call to say anything in view of its deserved success.)

The time when I needed to break loose from the demands of peddling a maximal quantity of wordage daily passed and nowadays I aim to write one book a year. But I haven't given up my exercises; I've done two in the past seven years, one not entirely successful (*THE INFINITIVE OF GO*, which tackled the full implications of a form of matter transmission I'd exploited in sundry earlier books) and one tolerably so, to the point where it gained me a Porgy Award from *The West Coast Review of Books* (*PLAYERS AT THE GAME OF PEOPLE*, a contemporary recension of the Faust legend using aliens in place of devils).

But I'm no longer sure that I can separate my exercises from the rest of my output. You see, after so many books -- about eighty if you include short-story collections but discount revisions and expansions -- I have to make every book a challenge if I'm to convince myself it's worth writing at all. That's why I spent so much of the late seventies on my first-ever historical novel, *THE GREAT STEAMBOAT RACE*. It earned me excellent reviews, plus some of the nicest fan-letters I ever received, including a few from colleagues whose work in



both fields I greatly admire. Unfortunately it was caviare to the general; both B. Dalton and Waldenbooks rejected it as a mass-market best-seller, and according to Chip Delany it had five days' exposure at his local bookstore in midtown Manhattan, being put on show on Monday and on Saturday sent back to the warehouse. Not much, to be candid, for a book that won a \$ank more than five years' hard graft.

I did at least learn one lesson from that venture. It's easier to write SF than historical novels. If you paint yourself into a corner in an SF story, you can conjure up a space-war through the wall. If you're writing a historical you have to make do with what was available in the real past -- that is, if you take your job seriously. But I've written about this elsewhere (*FOCUS*, AN SF WRITER'S MAGAZINE, #8, Autumn 1983: "Researching *THE GREAT STEAMBOAT RACE*") so I won't repeat myself.

I will, however, add one further point, to illustrate the impossibility of distinguishing nowadays between what I set myself as an exercise and what I simply want to write. A couple of three years ago I was at a NovaCon, and I realized after talking to a handful of stimulating people that one of the projects I'd never tackled was a novel without any human characters whatsoever... and virtually nobody else had tried it, either.

"Fine!" I said to myself, and went home to see whether I could bring it off. The result is *THE CRUCIBLE OF TIME*. Whether it's an exercise or not, I leave you to judge. (Please read it -- I need the royalties!)

A related point: Since the outset of my career I've now and then felt the need to do something totally out of my usual run, because if I didn't I could too easily fall into the trap where sundry of my colleagues have wound up, mechanically rehearsing ideas that justified a single book and letting them sprawl into a trilogy or even a series. In some cases this means a lot of money, admittedly. But to do that would remind me too acutely of the plight I was in all those years ago when I wrote for the

Acé Doubles. I've been struggling to avoid a recurrence ever since.

And if moving into a different field -- the Max Curfew thrillers, THE DEVIL'S WORK, THE GREAT STEAMBOAT RACE -- didn't solve the problem for me by providing the financial independence I've always dreamed of, *videlicet* the resources I'd need to cease relying for income on what I write during any given year, a goal that even now eludes me...

Well, at any rate such adventures broadened my skills. I've shown I can tackle an immense variety of themes, in and out of SF. I've enjoyed experimenting -- not in the sense of pioneering at the frontiers of contemporary fiction, but of turning my hand from the plain narrative of THE PRODUCTIONS OF TIME to the subtleties and indirections of QUICKSAND to the first-person bitterness of black spy Max Curfew to the calculated pyrotechnics of STAND ON ZANZIBAR to the Victorian panorama of THE GREAT STEAMBOAT RACE to the...

You name it! I have great respect for versatility. I vastly admire Anthony Burgess, for example. I try to cultivate something of the same kind in my own work. Above all, I want to be eclectic in my craftsmanship. I want to match style to subject, as best I can.

In other words, I try not just to tell a story, but to tell it in the most suitable manner.

Yet and still.... Hang on; I just hit an analogy from a totally different field. I used it before, but never mind.

Since I was about fifteen, I've been pretty much of a jazz fan, mainly of the traditional and revivalist New Orleans style but with a little bit of the more thrills jump bands, early R&B, boogie-woogie and the like.

I don't follow jazz the way I used to, but I still listen and enjoy when there's a retrospective on BBC Radio 3 -- there was a recent month-long series on Benny Goodman, for example, and we just had another on Bill Evans -- and no matter who you name who's made it in that field...

He or she, instrumentalist or singer, keeps coming home to the blues. In that brief sequence of twelve bars there is an infinity of possible variations. This is despite the fact that, with the passage of time, hundreds of alternatives have opened up.

In exactly the same way, a writer keeps coming home to the narrative format at that has its roots in the oldest kinds of story-telling: the folk tale, the legend, the ballad, the ILLIAD and the ODYSSEY and GILGAMESH. (Blasé you, Silverbolt! I've had Gilgamesh on my list of "jobs to be tackled" for not less than twenty years! My own fault for procrastination or not knowing the right buyer. I wanted to write the film script, not the novel.)

In our times the said narrative form has become marvellously flexible. If you want my full views concerning it, please consult THE CRAFT OF SCIENCE FICTION AND SCIENCE FANTASY edited by Reginald Bretnor, published by Harper & Row in hardback and Barnes & Noble in paperback. Again, I don't want to repeat my-

self. But in my contribution to that volume I enshrined -- or hope I did -- everything I know about telling a straightforward story to maximum effect: in other words I set out what I believe to be the rules one has to understand the reason for before one dare start breaking them. It's a bit like learning to play an instrument in only one key; to progress, one has to know why such a concept as 'key' exists... then what the other keys are, and which of them will be most useful... and so forth.

Coming home to the blues is very much like writing a good plain novel with a sequential narrative whose chapters succeed one another in real time and the characters interplay with one another in strict chronological order (stress on logical)... as they do in THE TIDES OF TIME, by the way. Dick, I'm surprised at you. I'm astonished how you missed the point that this is a story eventuating in real time, one day per month being singled out during the progress of Stacy's pregnancy until the birth, whereupon one extra day forms a coda. I might add that my British agent, Leslie Flood, caught on. Furthermore, I'm very proud of the fact that he sent me a fan letter saying it's rare for him to be emotionally moved by a science fiction novel but in this case it had happened. Agents are tough; one doesn't often penetrate their armour.

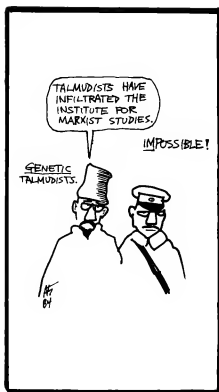
I can't help wondering whether the book might not have done more business than appears likely had my original choice and second choice of title both been discarded by the publishers. I called it CONTINUUM and was told I couldn't use that because allegedly the name had been spoiled by a series of anthologies published by Roger Ellwood. My second-favorite title, then, was AN ISLAND LIKE A SPHINX. (I wish I'd been able at least to tie that on the British edition! It's a pretty good name, don't you think?) But that was rejected, too, and I suspect the outcome is that quite a lot of buyers have been misled into imagining THE TIDES OF TIME has some connection with THE CRUCIBLE OF TIME... which of course it doesn't.

At all events: THE TIDES OF TIME is for me a good plain narrative in sequential time. But you might say it's like a blues by Charlie Parker rather than one by Johnny Dodds.

All the foregoing goes partway toward answering one segment of REG's inquiry, that concerning "why you chose those structures and techniques." There remains the matter of "what reaction you got." You really want to know?

Well, someone in KLIATT (February issue, Vol. XIX #2), hiding behind the initials DAW, gave a kindly review to THE TIDES OF TIME, but said I'd written "fifteen" SF novels and called me a "rather pedestrian writer with no real style."

That's the reaction I get ... after 33 years!



TEN YEARS AGO IN SCIENCE FICTION -- SUMMER, 1975

BY ROBERT SABELLA

James Blish died at the age of 54. One of the most important writers in science fiction, he published his first story in 1940. He was best known for his "Okie" series (collected in book form as CITIES IN FLIGHT) and the Hugo-award winning novel A CASE OF CONSCIENCE.

Rod Serling died at age 50. He achieved widespread recognition as a leading television dramatist in the Fifties, his most famous work being "Requiem for a Heavyweight." Later he created, hosted and wrote many episodes of THE TWILIGHT ZONE and its short-lived successor NIGHT GALLERY.

The Hugo Awards were announced at Aussiecon, the first worldcon held in Australia. Professional winners included Ursula K. LeGuin's THE DISPOSSESSED (giving it a sweep of every major award for 1974), George R.R. Martin's "A Song For Lya," Harlan Ellison's "Adrift Just Off The Islets of Langerhans," Larry Niven's "The Hole Man" and Mel Brooks' "Young Frankenstein" as Best Dramatic Presentation. Two fan winners were Best Fanzine, THE ALIEN CRITIC, and somebody named Richard E. Geis as Best Fan Writer.

Important publications included the Robert Silverberg-edited anthology THE NEW ATLANTIS, containing the title story by Ursula K. LeGuin and James Tiptree's "A Momentary Taste of Being." DAW Books published Marion Zimmer Bradley's THE HERITAGE OF HASTUR, the most mature Darkover book to date which set the tone for those to follow. THE MAGAZINE OF FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION published Richard Cowper's "The Custodians" which earned a Hugo nomination and catapulted a vastly-underrated writer to instant fame in the science fiction world.

# RAISING HACKLES

BY ELTON T. ELLIOTT

It sounds as if civility and good manners were at a minimum for a few "gentlemen" at the Nebula Awards Ceremony and Banquet. The gathering of members of the SFPA and various professional hangers-on was held the first weekend in July at the Warwick Hotel in New York City.

As usual, awards were presented: William Gibson won Best Novel honors for his compelling and powerful *NEUROMANCER*; John Varley won for his paranoid vision of computers in "Press Enter!"; Octavia Butler won for the splendid novelette, "Bloodchild"; and Gardner Dozois for his arresting short story "Morning Child." But unfortunately, the highlight (or lowlight) of the weekend was violence.

Harlan Ellison slugged Charles Platt in what was apparently another in an on-going and highly personal feud between the two. But what was surprising was Thomas Disch's unprovoked attack on William Gibson. According to various accounts in the SF media, Disch spotted Gibson walking down a hallway with his Nebula cradled under one arm. Disch muttered something to the effect of "there goes my Nebula!" and then either punched or shoved Gibson (reports vary).

These churlish acts are but the latest in a long line of boorish behavior at various and sundry SF events. At this year's Norwescon one author's life was threatened, another writer stomped off a panel after calling a panelist "a stupid fool" and telling two other panelists to "shut up." Other events recently have included one fan berating Robert Adams at a recent Orycon and at last year's Westercon some unruly fans trashed a hotel room, destroyed a fire alarm and raised enough havoc that the '84 Westercon committee is offering a \$500 reward for information that would lead to their identification.

These incidents taken in isolation might seem to be evidence of nothing more than mere lack of manners at best or individual and random acts of violence and vandalism at worst. Taken together they add up to an unhealthy trend that might spell danger down the road to SF conventions and SFPA meetings.

The danger is twofold: that somebody might get injured and sue the convention and the hotel or that the hotel will sustain such damage that it will sue the convention if it is unable to find the perpetrators and the result might be the blackballing of SF conven-

tions around the country; a second and less obvious problem is that the violent, unruly and generally churlish behavior might turn off fans to the extent that they will, in larger and larger numbers, cut down on conventions or stop going altogether. As an example of the latter, there are many friends of mine who are readers of SF and are delighted to find out about SF conventions. Most go to one or two, are turned off and never go back. These are good people, the kind of attendees SF cons need. What turns them off the most is the violent atmosphere: the omnipresence of weapons with costumes in hallways and the swaggering behavior and attitude of some members of the SCA.

The solution as I see it boils down to a number of varied items. A "no weapons policy" for hallway costumes would certainly help. I for one am tired of dodging poorly-secured swords and open spears and knives. Next, limiting numbers of people might help (although the SFPA banquet was certainly limited). This could be done by eliminating items that attract kids with little or no interest in SF, such as video programs and "hallway persona games" like Logan's Run. (Generally board and role-playing games are fine because the participants are not underfoot causing a racket.) Also, less free booze would greatly help. I for one am tired of seeing drunken buffoons lurching around with assorted lethal weapons, but at this point just a greater awareness of the problem would be a desirable first step.

The answer might be, take two Nebulas and call me in the morning.

IN SEARCH OF SCHRÖDINGER'S CAT  
By John Gribbon  
Bantam, 1984, 303 pp., \$8.95

Space limitations necessitate a briefer review than I'd like of this fascinating book. Gribbon does a splendid job of making the complex world of quantum mechanics and the bewildering number of theories proposed to make sense of it come across in a smooth and discernible manner to the reader. This is an invaluable reference guide for SF writers: FTL communications, time travel and parallel universes are looked at along with some scintillating theories and how these SF notions could happen.

On an ontological and epistemological level this book is marvelous. Especially fascinating is the Everett Many Worlds (or Parallel Universes) Interpretation of quantum reality: the notion that for every possibility on a particle level (subatomic) a new universe is created. Thus this universe is in the continual process of branching off into an infinite number of alternate universes. Everything is real as opposed to the Copenhagen Interpretation (which Einstein rebelled against) which says that nothing is real.

But by far the most exciting idea in the book comes out of the paradox which gives the book its title: Schrödinger's cat, the observer interaction and the limits of knowing the action of subatomic particles. In one of the great theoretical leaps, noted physicist John Archibald Wheeler (the man who coined the term Black Hole) reasons that due to the infinite regression of cause and effect "the whole universe may owe its 'real' existence to the fact that it is observed by intelligent beings" (p. 208). Thus, in quantum terms, intelligence acts as a wave function making Newtonian reality possible. If this interpretation of quantum reality is true, and the universe needs awareness or self-awareness to exist, it opens up many philosophical and religious doors. A "maker" might be necessary, whether from the beginning, middle or end or -- somewhere else -- is problematical. I suspect that Wheeler might not like my interpretation of his interpretation. Just as Science supposedly put the kibosh on deistic creation and seemed to make atheism or agnosticism more in tune with reality than simple faith -- so Wheeler's interpretation seems to introduce the concept of awareness and a "creator" at some level as necessary for a discernible, causal Newtonian everyday universe. In any case, the notion of our landscape circumscribed by a surrounding quantascape which is affected by the future presents not only the most bizarre timescape but might be allowed by Wheeler's delayed-choice double-slit experiment (p. 211).

Buy this book. Unless you're dead, stupid or hopelessly bored it'll freak you out. Who needs drugs when reality is this weird!

ORION by Ben Bova  
TOR, 1984, 432 pp., \$3.50

ORION is a collection of short stories tied together into a novel. Most of the stories appeared in *WEIRD HEROES*, (where they were the highlight of that Byron Preiss experiment for Pyramid Books). The title page also gives publishing credit to "Floodtide" which appeared in *ANALOG*.

Despite the necessarily episodic nature of the book, ORION hangs together beautifully as a novel. It is similar in tone to Bova's marvelous short story, "Stars Don't You Hide Me." Bova seems to be at his best when he's dealing with material which has strong mythic overtones. I've enjoyed his other material but ORION has the magic. The narrative deals with a man, John O'Ryan, who attempts to save the human race from death at the hands of the most hated enemy, Ahriman. He is aided by a god-like being, Ormazd, and a woman who helps him through the ages.



Bova fuses the time-travel notion with a revenge motif, adds a touch of ancient Persian mythology, and all in all has created quite a delightful, smooth, yet intense novel.

**DOWNTIMING THE NIGHTSIDE**  
TOR, 1985, 284 pp., \$2.95

**THE MESSIAH CHOICE**  
Bluejay, 1985, 380 pp., \$16.95  
By Jack L. Chalker

Here are two more novels from the prolific Mr. Chalker. **DOWNTIMING** is a time-travel novel with a twist using Chalker's frequently-used notion of body-switching. A secret U.S. project has learned how to travel backwards in time. A group of Marxist terrorists take over the installation (an abandoned nuclear power plant) and travel back in time to warn Karl Marx of a plot against his life. From there things get weird. It is a pleasant read and Chalker includes some interesting notions on the physics of time travel.

**THE MESSIAH CHOICE** is a horror/occult novel which still gives me shivers. It is dedicated in part to August Derleth. Fans of Derleth and H.P. Lovecraft and his Cthulhu Mythos will enjoy this dark tale of a multi-national corporation and the strange creature of force that lurks on a Caribbean island owned by the company. The company's founder and owner is mysteriously murdered and a detective is called in. What he finds endangers his life and the world, for what is brewing is high-tech occult evil of the worst kind. Read this in the daylight with all the doors shut and a passel of people in the house; do not read it at night alone. A marvelous chiller - this book scares the shit out of me. I'm getting nervous just typing this review.

**ARTIFACT** By Gregory Benford  
TOR, 1985, 533 pp., \$16.95

I enjoyed this novel of archaeology, suspense and science fiction immensely. I think it's Benford's best novel since **TIMESCAPE**. The narrative concerns a discovery made while uncovering some Mycenaean ruins. It is the near future, Greece is sliding further to the left and anti-American sentiment is at an all-time high. Politics intervenes when a headstrong Greek radical tries to close down the dig. Intrigue, suspense and a fair amount of gunplay result as the Americans attempt to steal the artifact.

The novel is also a detective story involving science and the very strange properties of the artifact. Benford brings all the various elements of the story together for a thrilling climax. In **TIMESCAPE** he proved he could handle

characters and scientific interplay in a smooth understated style that was highly successful. In **ARTIFACT** he adds the spice of the international thriller to that list. Benford is already one of America's best novelists and **ARTIFACT** shows he's growing and improving even more.

**THE GAME OF EMPIRE** By Poul Anderson  
Bantam Books, 1985, 288 pp., \$3.50

Poul Anderson is one of my favorite writers. I have practically every book he's written and have enjoyed them all, but my favorites are his stories about the dashing agent of The Terran Empire, Dominic Flandry.

In **THE GAME OF EMPIRE** Anderson introduces Flandry's illegitimate daughter Diana, in what I hope will be the first of many adventures. In this book she tries to foil the plans of a military commander out to save the empire for its own good. Included are the exotic locales and characters Anderson specializes in. His lush poetic style is perfectly suited to the decaying worlds of the Empire, and Diana Flandry is a welcome viewpoint character: Dominic Flandry has grown increasingly tired and cynical over the years as the adventures take their toll.

There are several sidekick characters of whom the most enjoyable is a Wodenite philosopher (a Jewish Catholic) who is looking for the existence of Christ. It's a good mix and Dominic Flandry does make more than a cameo appearance. (I also found the political commentary valid and revealing.) I want to see more involving Diana Flandry. Read and enjoy; this one's special.

**THIS YEAR'S BEST SCIENCE FICTION: SECOND ANNUAL COLLECTION** Ed. by Gardner Dozois  
Bluejay, 1985, 573 pp., \$10.95

Once again, cudos to Dozois for the most complete "Best" anthology. With over 250,000 words in which to play around, Dozois has chosen many of 1984's memorable stories. Foremost among these is John Varley's brilliant novella, "Press Enter #," which should sweep all the major awards this year. It is a chilling tale about computers and crime, with a deliciously paranoid ending. Varley is SF's premier writer at shorter lengths and in case anyone had forgotten, this Nebula Award winner provides an ample reminder.

Incidentally, all three of the traditional "best" anthologies included "Press Enter #."

Bluejay is to be commended for allowing Dozois enough room to show off all the facets of the SF short fiction field, in particular the novella length.

Other stories include the Nebula award-winning novelette, "Bloodchild" by Octavia Butler and top-flight material by Robert Silverberg, William Gibson, Bruce Sterling, Tanith Lee and twenty others.

**THE 1985 ANNUAL WORLD'S BEST SF**  
Edited by Donald A. Wollheim  
DAW, 1985, 302 pp., \$3.50

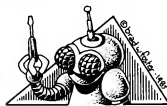
This ten-story best-of-the-year has been consistently superb over the years. 1985 is no exception. In addition to the Varley and Butler award winners, this volume also includes the memorable Berserker story, "What Makes Us Human" by Stephen R. Donaldson, Ian Watson's marvelous and overlooked "We Remember Babylon" and George Alec Effinger's "The Aliens Who Knew, I Mean, Everything."

**THE BEST SCIENCE FICTION OF THE YEAR**  
Edited by Terry Carr  
TOR, 1985, 384 pp., \$3.50

This anthology, number 14 in the series, contains all three Nebula winners. It once again confirms that Terry Carr has a superb insight into what stories are likely award contenders as well as selecting other noteworthy material. In this year's anthology, "Fears," a quiet but superb story by Pamela Sargent, deserves special mention. Also included are "Summer Solstice" by Charles Harness and "Instructions" by Bob Leman.

**THE SCIENCE FICTION YEARBOOK**  
Edited by Jerry Pournelle with Jim Baen and John Carr  
Baen Bks, 1985, 352 pp., \$15.95

THE SCIENCE FICTION YEARBOOK is the least traditional of the four best anthologies. It contains four essays and stories picked for ideas as much as fad. It contains fiction by Gregory Benford, Robert Silverberg, William Gibson and David Brin. "The Crystal Spheres" by Brin presents an original notion for why aliens aren't already here. Of the essays particularly like Benford's on hard SF, which I believe was recently printed in **SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW**. I hope this yearbook becomes an annual event. Highly recommended.



# 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.

**BRAINZ, INC.** By Ron Goulart  
DAW #629, \$2.75, 1985.

Up to his usual satire and inventive mockery, Ron uses his lively Hildy and Jake Pace, operators of Odd Jobs, Inc. to solve a murder. Well, at least bring to justice them as did it. The fun isn't in the mystery, it is in the jokes, characters, and acute jasper of the social body of America.

Ron's robots and androids are marvels of studied insult and rational stupidity, mirroring the humans they deal with and 'serve'.

There is some delicious Tuckerizing in this novel, too: a lecture room named after Harlan Ellison, and there is a dread disease called Malberg's Syndrome which causes increasing lugubriousness in its helpless victims.

Ah, but I love the character names: Barf McBernie, Professor Zuleika Pater-noster of Kansas Pop College, consulting editor of THE SCHOLARLY JOURNAL FOR THE APPRECIATION OF MASS MARKET TRASH, Felony Fulson, Sheldon Sickman...

Every page is rife with sly digs and blatant witery. Ron Goulart is not appreciated enough.

**THE BERSERKER THRONE** By Fred Saberhagen  
Fireseed Books (Simon & Schuster) 1985.  
\$6.95 (paper), \$14.95 (cloth)

This time a Berserker control unit, a highly intelligent Berserker leader, attempts to bribe/lure humans in a strategic ploy to use two human leaders (one an exiled Prince, another a rapacious conspiratorial would-be emperor) to betray entire planets of humans to the Berserker single-minded aim of destroying all life in the universe.

But the Prince is a Good Guy and only pretends to be Goodlife [intelligence life willing to help the Berserkers].

This story, set in the Temporal Radiant, a vast, spherical fortress constructed around an ancient, benign, star-like source of inverse gravity, is filled with plot, counterplot, mystery, suspense and violence.

Predictable, with a few surprises at the end. Well done.

This series can go on as long as Saberhagen is willing to write it. Indeed, it could be handed down from one generation of writers to another...

**THE WILD ONES** By A. Bertram Chandler  
DAW, #623, \$2.95, 1985

We're not supposed to speak ill of the dead, and A. Bertram Chandler died a few months ago. This is the last John Grimes novel.

It is also the first John Grimes novel I've read all the way through. It is a bad novel: it takes forever to get to the telegraphed action, it has no surprises, it has John Grimes having a vision which robs the high point of the novel of most of its tension and suspense, and for 80% of its length it is a plodding series of 'development' scenes. The religious extremists of New Salem are puritanistic idiots who are set up for their just deserts (which are fed to them off-camera by a vengeful robot.)

Give it this, though: the novel is definitely anti-religion, anti-fanatic and pro-sex, pro-life, pro-rationality. It's a good morality tale for teenagers.

**TOM O'BEDLAM** By Robert Silverberg  
Donald I. Fine, \$16.95, July, 1985.

Bob has a literary religious yen. He loves to explore the basics of religion, and loves to throw the suspecting and unsuspecting reader into the jaws of Decisions:

Now here in 22nd century America, after a traumatic war which has left the Midwest a radioactive dust bowl, with a fractured society and anarchy just around the corner, with a spreading new psychosis plaguing the land, Bob shows us a man who is apparently a crazy, a man who has vivid, detailed, repetitive visions of far planets and alien peoples. And he tells us that these identical "dreams" are spreading among the peoples of the West coast states.

And Bob shows us a bastion of scientific mental technology, the Nephente Center, where a kind of selective lobotomy, a mindpick, takes away the previous day's memories, including dreams.

And Bob shows a religious movement building tremendous momentum based on these utterly real identical visions which are shared by all the followers.

In an utterly inevitable series of events, all these people come together at the Nephente Center during the climactic final chapters of the novel, and Bob insists on asking the reader questions inescapable:

Are these alien planets real?  
Does the human soul exist and can it be transported to these heavenly places?

Or---is Tom O'Bedlam a psi-cursed psychotic who is spreading these hallucinatory "dreams" wherever he goes? Is he actually killing people when he "sends" them to their favorite alien planet of their visions, or is he really sending souls to a new life, a new, wonderful body?

You have to decide. And it will make your head hurt. It will make you think. It will make you look at yourself. My God, Bob, how could you do this to us?

**MERVYN PEAKE--A PERSONAL MEMOIR**

By Gordon Smith  
Victor Gollancz, \$19.95, May, 1985.

Gordon Smith, Peake's life-long friend, here provides a personal remembrance of Mervyn Peake, whom he calls a genius. There are boyhood incidents, many quotes from letters, but rare insights into Peake's soul, and no real analysis. Gordon is too courteous and gentlemanly to let us look at the real Peake he must have known.

Mervyn Peake died of "premature senility" in 1968 at age 57. He had suffered nervous breakdowns in the Army during the war... Plainly, this talented man had severe emotional problems, but Smith does not reveal or describe them. The book--large-size (8x11) is filled out with many of Peake's pencil and ink drawings. A few poems.

The book is available from David & Charles, Inc., North Pomfret, VT 05053.

**AN EDGE IN MY VOICE** By Harlan Ellison  
Dunning, \$12.95/\$9.95, 1985.

Here is Harlan on the attack. He rages, snarls, cajoles, purrs, satirizes, savages... And not only his favorite hates like the Moral Majority, but his readers as well, as he lashes with argument, with data, with quotes, in his endless, frantic, determined, angry effort to shake his readers to full attention, to make them think and know and act!

He writes with his throttle stuck flat on the floor. He writes his fascinating, discursive, parenthetical, conversational Harlanesque prose which is so distinctive and uniquely Harlan that no one could match him--or perhaps wish to. He's a fucking dervish! He feels so strongly, is so idealistic and realistic at the same time.... Now. He knows where bodies are buried, digs them up, and throws them in the faces of the murderers. He takes no prisoners.

I can't read these collected columns of his from FUTURE LIFE and L.A. WEEKLY for very long. I dip in and emerge reeking with his intensity.

Sometimes a small voice in my mind whispers that Harlan's ego is behind all this up-front rage, and whispers that this man is too noble and right-thinking to be real (though many would dispute his rightness). And Harlan admits to feet of clay and admits to being driven and flawed sometimes... But he puns his body and his guts and his money where his mouth is... on the line... and I admire that more than a lot. Harlan Ellison has tremendous drive, courage and talent. That combination is magnificent and a target. Sometimes, after I've read things he has written, I'm surprised he's still alive.



## RICHARD E. GES

# ONCE OVER LIGHTLY

## BOOK REVIEWS BY GENE DEWEESE

### EMPRISE

By Michael P. Kube-McDowell  
Berkley, \$2.95

In a near future where atomic fission no longer works and scientists are largely pariahs, a startlingly simple message is received from the stars. It says, in effect, "We are on our way," and the world finds it has only a few years to get ready. Just what "get ready" means, however, is another matter. To one paranoid, militaristic nation, it means setting up an impenetrable defense. To a world-wide religious cult, it means preparing to greet either the new Messiah or possibly God himself. To the scientists responsible for the contact, it means years of suspense while they wait to learn the true nature and motives of the aliens. And no one, including the reader, gets quite what he expects.

Subtitled "Book One of the Trigon Disunity," *EMPRISE* is apparently only the beginning, and that's fine with me. It's one of those rare books where the ideas, the plotting, the writing, and the characters are all first rate.

### SINGULARITY

By William Sleator  
E.P. Dutton, \$10.95

Sixteen-year-old twins Harry and Barry, alone for two weeks on a Lovecraftian midwestern farm inherited by their mother from an eccentric uncle, find a spot where time virtually stands still and where things, both living and non-living, are coming through from another universe. The narrator is a trifle annoying now and then, and the explanation for the spot plays a little fast and loose with the science of singularity, but from the first page on, it was hard to put down. According to the publisher, it's aimed at "12 and up" readers, but a lot of adults, especially dimensional-door fans like myself, will enjoy it too.

**BLOOD MUSIC** By Greg Bear  
Arbor House, \$14.95

An irresponsible biotech researcher creates intelligent microorganisms and, when ordered to end the experiment, smuggles them out of the lab by injecting them into his own bloodstream. The result is the ultimate plague -- or is it?

The reviewer has already called *BLOOD MUSIC* the "CHILDHOOD'S END of the eighties," and in a way, it's true. The mystical conclusion, with mankind being transformed into "something else," is certainly comparable to Clarke's masterpiece. However, where Clarke's story of the next step in human evolution was both spine-tinglingly awesome and grandly inevitable, *BLOOD MUSIC* with its accidentally created microorganisms and echoes of the mindlessly euphoric victims in *INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS*, is awesome enough but not all that grand or spine-tingling, and certainly not inevitable.

Such comparisons, however, aren't really fair, since *CHILDHOOD'S END* is arguably the best SF book of the last four decades, and *BLOOD MUSIC* is merely one of the best books of 1985.

### ORBITSVILLE DEPARTURE

By Bob Shaw  
DAW, \$2.95

After several years' wait, we find out what Orbitville (a Dyson sphere around a distant sun) really is and who built it. Not up to the original, *ORBITSVILLE DEPARTURE* is still a great book to skim through rapidly, pausing for more thorough reading when you get to the parts directly involved with the mystery of Orbitville. That way, with its multiple-viewpoint, easy-to-follow build-up to the final revelations, it's hard to put down.

### THE COPY SHOP

By Evelyn E. Smith  
Doubleday, \$12.95

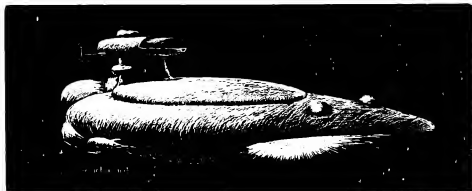
This book is, to say the least, unusual. Not much really seems to happen, even though the exceedingly self-possessed narrator gets involved with New-York-based aliens, a disembodied glow that talks to him through his computer and identifies itself as his father, and several episodes of subway cannibalism. However, even if nothing happened, the narrator's rambling monolog about New York and its denizens ("The Indians hunted and camped and fished ((on Manhattan)), but never lived there. They were a lot smarter than we.") would be hard to put down. As it is, the clever and leisurely narration grabs you on the first page, and by the time you reach the end, you realize that a lot of things really did happen, and you enjoyed every one.

**THE WORLD OF FANTASTIC FILMS: AN ILLUSTRATED SURVEY** By Peter Nicholls  
Dodd, Mead, Paper, \$14.95

If there's one thing that's as much fun as going to the movies, it's reading about them and seeing how often you disagree with the author or, even better, how often you can catch him in an error. This book, simply because its 200+ very large pages cover 700 films, a couple hundred of them in fair detail, can supply many weeks of happy browsing. It certainly has more information and analysis than most such books, and I'll probably still be dipping into it next year at this time, even though (or perhaps because), on page 32, the author appears to have totally misheard Kilauea's closing speech in *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL*.

**GATEWAY, BEYOND THE BLUE EVENT HORIZON. HEECHEE RENDEZVOUS**  
By Frederik Pohl  
Ballantine/DelRey, \$2.95, \$2.95, \$3.50

These 900+ pages make up *HEECHEE SAGA*. The Heechee are a superscientific race that ruled much of the known universe in the distant past, but they totally vanished, leaving behind countless mystifying artifacts, including a planetoid full of spaceships, each with a specific but unknown and possibly fatal destination programmed into it. Eventually, we find out where and why the Heechee went and what they're up to now, and it is indeed all very mind boggling. The problem, at least for me, is that Robinette Broadhead, the primary narrator in the first and third books, spends



# RACISM IN THE MEDIA AND SCIENCE FICTION SUBTLETY AND THE FAITHFUL DOG SYNDROME OR IS MR. T A WOOKIEE?

BY ALAN DEAN FOSTER

All my life I heard about something called "unconscious racism." I grew up wondering what it was, since the pieces on the evening news on racism illustrated attitudes that seemed to me anything but unconscious. It took me a while to realize that unconscious racism actually existed, that it was something more than the invention of a facile journalist. It's that kind of racism that these ruminations and ruminations are concerned with, the "White Only" and "No Indians Allowed" signposts along the roads of the American consciousness. Specifically, that particular and peculiar off-ramp we call speculative fiction.

I first became aware of the unconscious variety of racism through what might be called racism by omission. In many ways it's the most onerous kind of all because it's so thorough. You can't discriminate against what doesn't appear to exist. Instead of a Stepin Fetchit to laugh at or a blood-thirsty Indian to hiss, you eliminate minorities altogether. When you grow up regarding yourself as one of the underdogs, as I did, you become especially sensitive to their absence in films. It's hard to root for the underdog when there aren't any. In this respect SF films are among the most grievous violators.

Consider what is still my favorite SF film, MM's classic **FORBIDDEN PLANET**. Takes place in the real far future. Chock full of super science and special effects and production values. But is there a place in this wondrous future for anyone but wasp males? Sure -- one female type love object, decorously placed.

Not that **FORBIDDEN PLANET** was unique in this respect. It was typical of all SF and fantasy films until fairly recently. You admire **FORBIDDEN PLANET** as a film, enjoy it as an SF fan, but there are no underdogs to root for. The Krell are dead, a reflection of how Hollywood at large treated all minorities.

Trouble is, we expect more from an SF film. We expect SF to be on the leading edge of sociological and political as well as technological change. When it isn't, we're left disappointed and let down. The racism of omission glares out at you in an SF film.

Ah, but there's not only racism of omission in **FORBIDDEN PLANET** there's also overt unconscious racism. Very carefully disguised, as it had to be in all SF films. The black man as faithful dog and obedient servant.

In case you've forgotten, the black servant in **FORBIDDEN PLANET** is named Robbie.

A case can be made for Robbie as the ideal Hollywood dorkie. Superstrong, responsive to his master's wish, intelligent enough to obey orders but unable to think or make suggestions on his own, sexually unthreatening, able even to pro-

duce booze on demand and (this is most important) inherently unable to harm his master.

Which leads to the rule of thumb I have devised for deciding if any cinematic minority role arises from genuinely thoughtful casting and writing or from unconscious racist attitudes. It's similar to one propounded years ago by Damon Knight. If the role in the film could largely be carried out equally well by a well-trained mutt, you know from whence it arises.

Jim Brown's role in the **DIRTY DOZEN** certainly qualifies. And of course he sacrifices himself at the end to save his buddies (masters?). Because he's a good dog, stronger and faster than any of the others, and stupider, the proof of the latter being that his character doesn't even ask to draw straws to see who gets to make the suicidal grenade run.

It can be argued that there are worse things than being stereotyped as big, strong and tough. What this does, however, is limit the public perception of your ethnic group, just as Jews are limited by being perceived as smart and clever with money, or Indians as stoic and quiet.

Television is often pointed to as a leader in changing the way the public perceives minorities. No doubt it is, even when it's leading in the wrong way. Or does anyone think Mr. T of **THE A-TEAM** is an advance over Bill Cosby's pioneering role in **I SPY**?

Way back about 1976ish, the well-known actor Raymond St. Jacques penned a letter to the *Caldwell section of the Los Angeles Times* in which he decried the fact that so positive a film as **STAR WARS** used no minority performers (not entirely true: one black extra does take a walk through a scene when Luke and Obi-Wan arrive in the desert town). Shortly thereafter **THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK** appears and introduces us to Lando Calrissian.

Lando gives us problems. In creating the role for Billy Dee Williams, Lucas was demonstrating his sensitivity to St. Jacques and others (I am convinced George Lucas has not a racist bone in his body). But in so doing he screwed up his storyline. Because there's nothing really for Calrissian to do. In **EMPIRE** and **JEDI** he pretty much stumbles around taking up cinematic space. This is because his character arose from a need to film a sociological need, not a fictional one. His presence in the latter two films does not serve so much to advance the tale as to decorate it.

Now we are to have Eddie Murphy in **STAR TREK IV**. I'll believe it when I see it. For one thing, William Shatner is far too savvy an actor to appear on



the same set as a scene cruncher like Murphy. This is Hollywood's way of cross-collateralizing one of its few minority superstars. Beverly Hills Starship.

Maybe the reason this all bothers me so much has to do with my all time favorite book (which I believe is Lucas's as well). A. Conan Doyle's **THE LOST WORLD**, of which three film versions have been made, each one worse than its predecessor. The best was the 1925 silent version starring Wallace Beery as Professor Challenger.

Among the exceptionally well-defined cast of characters in the novel is a Brazilian servant named Zombo, "a black Hercules, as strong as a horse, and about as intelligent." That line hurt the first time I read it. It hurts still because it marks an otherwise joyful book. Zombo was superstrong, just intelligent enough to obey orders, sexually unthreatening -- racist stereotypes go back a long way to take many forms. Translating them from black skin to polished metal does nothing but a disservice to the field of SF.

There were exceptions. My favorite film of all time is still **GINGA DIN**. Fantasy, if you want to stretch the definition (the India of the Raj was never quite like this). You could call it the most anti-racist film Hollywood made in the thirties. Because for one thing, it actually shows white heroes as racists. Watching the film, you sympathize with Gunga Din (the underdog's underdog, a minority among his own people) and decries the attitudes toward him as expressed by such white stalwarts as Victor McLoughlin and Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. Even his "friend" as portrayed by Cary Grant treats him as one would a faithful dog.

Director George Stevens manages to get away with this because this is India, not Indiana he's portraying. I'll never forget the impact one scene had on my childish self. It showed an Indian general leading Indian mounted troops in a charge against the bad guys. Name another film from the 1930s that shows us a member of a foreign minority (and an old man to boot) leading a cavalry charge on the side of righteousness. It was tantamount to giving Paul Robeson a role as a captain of horse soldiers.

Number two on my film list is the 1939 *THIEF OF BAGDAD* (number three, *BABY*, does not pertain here). *THIEF OF BAGDAD* must have given its Hollywood distributors a real headache because everyone in the film is a minority, though an effort is made to picture the prince and princess as white as possible. I always wondered if Sabu could have gotten served in Selma.

But *THIEF* is interesting for another reason, because it offers an opportunity for one of the great black actors of early Hollywood to play something besides a stereotypical black role. Hollywood didn't know what to do with Rex Ingram. With his James Earl Jonesish voice and bearing he couldn't be squeezed into the house servant or shuffle 'n jive mode. So they made him a genie, whom Sabu frees from imprisonment in a bottle, and in so doing let him create one of the truly memorable roles in fantastic film history.

Not to mention his final scene in the film when he flies off over the mountains shouting, "I'm free at last! Free, free, free!"

What happened to Rex Ingram?

Sometimes Hollywood's unconscious racism is perversely amusing. Ingram cropped up in a WWII flick starring Humphrey Bogart as the commander of a U.S. tank lost in the North African desert. In this memorable little oddball of a war film, Bogart and his men dig in their tank in an abandoned structure that guards the only waterhole for miles around. Along comes a troop of bedraggled, equally lost, and very thirsty German troops who desperately try to wrest the waterhole from the Americans. The ensuing fight reminds one of nothing so much as the opening waterhole fight sequence of 2001.

Ingram? He plays a sergeant in the film who meets the same fate as Jim Brown in *THE DIRTY DOZEN*. But since the U.S. armed forces are strictly segregated in WWII, how to work Ingram's character into the script?

I love this. They made him a sergeant in the Sudanese army. Shouting the Mahdi. Or as Tom Bosley says repeatedly in syndication, "That's Hollywood!"

Or as the airman says in an oft-overlooked moment in *THINGS TO COME*, "We'll make it a great, white world!"

American television is decades ahead of British TV in this regard, by the way. British comics still play degrading roles in blackface. Benny Hill is not funny in blackface and neither is Monty Python.

There's also such a thing as reverse racism. How else to explain the explosive proliferation of female oriental news anchors in this country? But I've got to admit the names are marvelous: Tiritia Toyota, Connie Chung and my all-time favorite, CNN's Sasha Fox.

You never know where sociological breakthroughs will come from. Take the best daily newspaper comic currently going, Berkeley Breathed's *BLOOM COUNTY*, wherein our diminutive pre-adolescent computer hacker (who happens to be black) is learning about apartheid. ("Does Jesse Jackson know about this?!" Whereupon his father replies tersely, "He's been briefed.") Ever seen Gary Coleman or Webster working with a computer? Years ago we had the black male as faithful dog. Now we have the black male as faithful puppy. Television progress.

Want to know what the great secret anti-racism weapon of the '50s was? Want to know what helped to change infantile racist attitudes among kids throughout the South and the rest of the country? I'll tell you: it was the Tarzan comic book. Not because of Tarzan, though it had its moments. No, it was the strip that ran in the back of the book, a strip entitled *BROTHERS OF THE SPEAR*. About two married young co-ulers of an imaginary African kingdom, one white and one black, each married to a beautiful woman. Name another American comic book of the 1950s that showed a gorgeous black woman in skimpy attire? With a natural instead of straight hair? I'm telling you, that strip was subversive.

Who created it? How did they ever manage to slip it past the corporate collywobles at Western publishing? Did the comic ever appear in South Africa? We're talking nineteen fifties here. Where's the doctoral thesis on this neglected piece of Americana?



And what about Turok, Son of Stone, which showed American Indians as intelligent, sensitive human beings? Sure, we kids all bought the book because the artist drawing it did great dinosaurs, but how many stripings did he influence? How many routine formula westerns did Turok counteract?

These historical musings were brought forth by the recent spate of comments in *SFR* and elsewhere about the publishing industry's reluctance to place minority (specifically black) characters on the covers of their books. Covers are particularly important influences on young readers. You can't admire role models if you can't see them.

Maybe one month every member of *SFWA* will turn in whatever story or book is due that month with every minor character described as black. The squirming in New York is already starting.

I once did a book called *CACHALOT* in which, for the hell of it, I included representatives of every ethnic human grouping except white folk. Guess what the paperback cover looked like? It showed a gigantic whale looming over a tiny ship on whose deck stood two minuscule figures, who could have been martians for all you could tell. But the *SF* book club version showed portraits of three of the principal characters, two mixed-blood Brazilians and a Polynesian, and showed them accurately.

Odd and perhaps significant that the cover artist was Esteban Maroto.

Nor does this attitude in publishing extend only to covers. The two most renowned *B&B* artists of the past thirty years were Eric Stanton and Gene Bilbrew (better known as ENEG). Bilbrew studied at the National Academy of Art in Washington under, among others, Burne Hogarth of Tarzan fame. Few know that Bilbrew was black. He was compelled to draw mostly white characters for his audience. Buck Brown has to do the same thing today in his cartoons for *PLAYBOY*.

I dunno. Sometimes the lines are clear and sometimes they isn't. But this I do know. It's up to *SF* to lead the way, and when we turn out stories that deal only with white characters we shirk a certain social responsibility. Sure, it's just "entertainment." Entertainment is what you use to change people without turning them off. If *STAR TREK* can do it in television, we should strive to do it in print, and insist whenever possible that the covers of our books fairly reflect their contents.



# You Got No Friends In This World

## THE ARTIST-PARTY FICTION FACTORY

Sometimes it seems like a disease. Time after time, writers with real talent, who have good stories to tell, bury those stories eight feet deep in the worst sort of literary excesses.

There are lots of ways a story can be made unreadable. Some of them are subliterary—the story that begins on such an emotional peak that you can't possibly engage with it; the story so badly written that you can't pay attention to the events; the story so shallow that you can't believe the characters for a moment. But such stories don't bother me much—I just set them aside and figure that either the writer will learn how to do it better, or not, in which case I'll either like something he does in the future—or not. Time will tell.

What worries me are the good writers whose stuff is unreadable. It throws you out of the story just as surely as the garbage writing does, but for quite different reasons. There is so much description and detail that nothing happens; the characters sit around contemplating their psyches ad nauseum; the writing is distracting, not because it's bad, but because it's weird; the writer has some annoying affectation (so it goes . . .); the story keeps jumping around in time and place and point of view; the story is so vague that at the end you have no idea what actually happened; nothing seems connected.

Worst of all is that you know this writer is talented. He isn't throwing you out of his story because he doesn't know any better. He chooses to throw you out. He's a snob. He refuses to tell his story to anyone whose sensibilities are not finely tuned enough to deserve his jewel-like writing.

### "I CAN HEAR THEM YELLING"

I can hear them yelling at me already—Gardner Dozois, Bruce Sterling, Jack Dann, Michael Swanwick, Pat Cadigan, Michael Bishop, John Kessel, William Gibson, Ed Bryant, Lucius Shepard, Carter Scholz, Kim Stanley Robinson, James Patrick Kelly. "We aren't snobs!" they shout. (Actually, of these writers, all whom I know personally never raise their voices. Just their eyebrows. But it feels like yelling when you're on the receiving end.) "We do not want to throw people out of our stories. We want people to read them and be changed by them. We want what every other story writer wants."

To which I answer: I know that. You didn't bother to write stories if you didn't want readers. Besides, every one of you in that list has written stories that blew me away—stories that I carry with me in my memory more powerfully than most of the real memories of my own life. Of all the established writers in the field, you are most of the ones whom I most admire, in whose work I most hope to find the stories that will shape the way a generation of readers conceives the world.

But, to my frustration, every single one of you has also written stories that commit some or all of the crimes of artsy-fartsy writers, stories that are impenetrable to all but the most sympathetic and persistent readers. And this is not an accident. You reinforce that tendency in each other, because, unlike the so-called "Labor Day Group" that Thomas Disch conjured out of thin air several years ago, you really are a group. You all interconnect; you read each other's stories, collaborate in various concatenations, recommend

each other's works for Nebulas, buy each other's stories for anthologies.

There's nothing wrong with such a network—you're all terrifically talented and, taken together, I think you're the most potent group of writers since ever known. But because you all have certain sensibilities, certain preoccupations in common, you seem to read each other's work with far more understanding and sympathy than is helpful. Few if any of you are able anymore to read each other's work the way a stranger would, and say, "I see what you're getting at, but there are only twelve human beings in America who will read past your one. Some of you even seem to think you're slumming when you write a story that is clear and interesting to people who don't like *Roby Dick*."

What frustrates me most is that there's not one of you that doesn't have the talent—and the sense of story—to write powerfully to an audience as large as Larry Niven's. Some of you, alas, have come to believe that most pernicious and snobbish of the lies of academia—that "quality" always attracts a small audience, and what "masses" like is, by definition, driven. The truth is quite the opposite: What almost no one reads might as well not have been written; what many people read shapes the conscience of the community. And by tolerating, even encouraging impenetrability in your own and each other's work, you are depriving a generation—my generation—of what could and should be our most powerful stories, our most compelling vicarious memories. And it matters. Storytelling is as widespread in human societies as the incest tabu. Human beings need stories the way we need air. And if you, with your talent and vision, don't speak to all those hungry people, then they have no choice but to devour the junk food we hack writers give them, picking up a few crumbs of nutrition here and there among the empty paragraphs.

Enough of this. Those of you who are my friends have already heard me rage about this; those of you who are not are probably wondering who the hell I think I am. (I wonder that too, much of the time.) But while I probably can't convince you to change direction, I can at least explain to other people what's really going on in some of your artists' writing.

### WHY DO THEY WRITE SO WEIRD?

Contrary to the currently fashionable doctrines of criticism, a story does not consist of the language it's written in. A story is the ordered presentation of causally related events, and the place where it is created is in the memory of the audience. There are many ways to put the story in the audience's memory. Some use language—novels, short fiction, audio drama; some of them use words and visual images—film, plays, comic strips; but it can be done without words at all.

### HOW TO USE THIS COLUMN

These are reviews of science fiction short stories, novelets, and novellas published mostly from June to August 1985. (I went back and picked up the January *Twilight Zone* and the February *Twilight Zone*, which I missed in the last column.) Out of nearly 150 stories I read this quarter, I have chosen to discuss more than 90 that I feel are important, because of excellent or daring writing, thoughtworthy ideas, or a plain tale of unusual power.

My silence about most of 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.

I ONLY DO MY  
JIMMY CAGNEY  
IMITATION FOR  
ADULT-TEENERS.

OR LITERARY  
CRITICS.



BY ORSON SCOTT CARD

The audience has to cooperate with the storyteller. They have to pay attention from beginning to end; they have to comprehend the story; and they have to believe the story. This represents a major investment of time and attention, and the audience puts itself at risk; the act of receiving a story can and usually does change the person who receives and believes it. So, while the audience is hungry for stories to structure their universe and give it meaning, they are reluctant to give their trust to any particular storyteller, for any particular story.

Every storyteller faces the same problem with every story you care about enough to tell. You must win and keep the audience's interest; you must tell the tale in such a way that the audience can understand what's happening; you must persuade people to believe you.

No storyteller can present exactly the same story in exactly the same way to everybody, and win them all into your audience. It can't be done. The best you can hope for is to win a certain portion of the public and your audience. Most readers go through a natural progression. At first we can handle only the plainest, most undorned tales, with a few mythic elements repeated over and over without disguise. As we become familiar with those story motifs, though, most of us become jaded or skeptical—"That again?" we say. The stories all sound the same, and we seek for stories that spend more time on differentiation. Their characters' motivations are more complex and contradictory, their settings more specific and detailed.

As the stories become more differentiated, they continue to keep our interest. But the reader who is just beginning, who still believes that differentiation boring, and he rejects it; while we, too, are bored by stories that are still more differentiated than we need, and so audiences progress, from level to level. Fortunately, each reader finds plenty of fiction with exactly the degree of differentiation he needs. And only a fool would sneer at the storytellers who feed the hunger of the newest audience—they are doing the same work, feeding the same need, as the writers whose tales are most differentiated.

Some layering is unavoidable. But the best writers try to defeat this layering process by writing highly differentiated tales that are still accessible to audiences that don't need so much differentiation. This is most easily achieved by presenting the differentiation in small, digestible flecks of spice, which can be ignored by those who devour stories in great mouthfuls, and savored by those who linger. The differentiation is allowed to slow or stop the action. Shakespeare did it. Dickens did it. Twain did it. Gene Wolfe does it.

Ideally, storytellers should never erect barriers that make it unnecessarily difficult to understand a story or to become interested in it. On the contrary, we should make great effort to strike down barriers of class and style that unnecessarily drive pawns out of our work, even as we find other ways to increase the differentiation to make the story more compelling and believable to sophisticated readers.

Sometimes, though, the story itself, the events we believe in and care enough about to tell them, don't easily fit into the clearest, most common, most easily grasped format of story. I know has times when he has a story in his head but can't think of the right way to approach getting it down on paper. Where to begin? How to choose a point-of-view to use; how to structure it: With some stories the answers are obvious, but with others they are agonizingly elusive.

The solution to a problem may finally be something completely off the wall—something that works only for that story. In that rare case, there is no remedy but to do something eccentric; but the result is so wonderful that the eccentricity is quickly absorbed, overlooked.

For instance, the movie 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY moves incredibly slowly. It is, in fact, boring. The reasons for this, which I won't go into here; enough to say that the movie could not possibly have trotted along as briskly as STAR WARS. To do what Kubrick wanted to do, the movie had to violate convention and be almost as slow as evolution. Once the audience surrendered, trusted the line, and slowed down enough to stay with it, it offered an experience that was available in no other way.

Does this mean that slow-moving films are somehow "better" than fast-moving films? Of course not. Fast-moving stories engage and keep the audience's attention much more easily than slow ones (up to the point where time runs too fast to be comprehensible). Most of the time, the fast-moving tale will be the storyteller's best choice. Anybody who refuses to make a fast-moving film because it's too vulgar and popular is an idiot. They'll get exactly the audience that they deserve, because instead of working to make the story as accessible as possible, until the story itself forces an eccentricity, they have let some theory of film-making introduce eccentricities that the story does not need.

Almost always, the best way to tell a story is the plain tale, plainly told. You start where the tension begins; you stop soon after the tension ends. You write it in the most transparent, common voice—third person past tense with a strong point of view—and you generally confine yourself to telling what people see and hear and say.

But sometimes the story is so difficult—spread out in time, involving too many characters, depending on complex emotions—that the straightforward technique doesn't work. Sometimes, too, you have the story to tell, but the peripheral effects, and so you decorate the plain tale or reorder it (like the "twist" ending, where key information is withheld until the end, when its revelation changes the meaning of everything that went before).

Then the storyteller departs from the plain tale plainly told. The eccentricity of the story is due to what the writer believes they are the only way, or the best way, to solve the story's problems or achieve the desired effect. Usually the writer is, of course, and if he had worked a little harder and been a bit more resourceful, the story could have been better presented plainly. But sometimes you have a whole lot of readers sitting their scratching their heads and wondering what the hell is going on.)

This kind of writing feels artsy because the eccentricities distract the audience from the events of the plain tale. Sometimes the story is so good that it works anyway. And sometimes not.

#### DISTRACTIONS

Take, for instance, Roger Zelazny's 24 VIEWS OF MR. FULTZ, BY BORISLAV (Mr.) Jovanovic. The story is as artsy-fartsy as it can be: Present-tense first-person by a narrator who dies before the end of the story; with long passages of the most mind-boggling description. Worse, Zelazny withholds information which, if he told it earlier,



#### ABBREVIATIONS AND ISSUES FORWARDED

Am = Amazing Stories (Sethers) Jan, Jul, Sep  
An = Analog (Schmidt) Jan, Jul, Aug  
Av = Isaac Asimov's (McCarthy) Jan, Jul, Aug  
F&SF = Fantasy & Science Fiction (Ferman) Jan, Jul, Aug  
N&S = Night Cry (Rodgers) Sum, Fall  
Om = Omni (Dattow) May, Jun, Jul  
SW = Sword & Sorceress (Dab; Bradley) Feb  
Tz = Twilight Zone (Klein) Feb, Jun, Aug

would make most of the boring introspective passages completely unnecessary.

In other words, 24 VIEWS has just about everything wrong with it that can go wrong with an artsy-fartsy story.

Except one thing. The plain tale that Zelazny is trying to tell is very much worth telling. If he had told it another way, had told it plainly, then it would make a compelling romance. Kind of like most of Zelazny's early stuff.

But in recent years, Zelazny has been groping for something else. Like Samuel R. Delany, he proved early in his career that he could do the plain tale plainly told. (Like Zelazny, he refused to reach out to try to get control of an art that he had performed instinctively. Like Zelazny, the result is been partial failure.) But in the last few years, in fact, this is the most complete Zelazny story I've seen in years. This time he actually achieved closure, which has been missing for a long time.

Zelazny was trying to do more than tell the plain tale. It was the heart of the story, yes, but he wanted to do something else, too. Perhaps it began with a series of paintings or drawings of Mr. Fultz; Zelazny wanted to write a story that could duplicate the effect of repeatedly painting the same mountain from different perspectives, with different foregrounds. Perhaps the "24 views" idea was itself a solution to another problem—how to create an assassin of compelling complexity, a loving murderer.

Whatever the starting point, 24 VIEWS is not exhibitionism or dazzle. There isn't a lie in the whole story. There are even moments of great power, like the story-within-the-story told in section 9—a moment that would have been less possible had Zelazny chosen a different form.

24 VIEWS doesn't work. It's a failure, as a whole. But it's still worth reading, for it will show the patience of waiting through some stilted and tedious sections, because Zelazny the tale-teller is still alive inside the cover of the book. And when he finally gets it all under control, will really be something to see.

There's something to be said for writers like Larry Niven and Isaac Asimov who, being excellent at telling a certain kind of tale in a certain way, continue to tell those tales to an appreciative audience. I admire both those writers, and have long loved their work.

I have a different sort of admiration, however, for a writer like Zelazny, easily the equal of Niven, though

not as lucid as Asimov who nevertheless is trying (consciously or not) to change and grow. Niven today writes like Niven always has; Asimov has changed little; but Zelazny is taking risks. I hope for an encouraged that seems to be getting closer to writing complete, successful stories again.

#### THIS ONE'S SIMPLY HARD TO WRITE

A lot of the stories with distracting "artsy" elements are a writer's attempt to tell a seemingly untellable story. Usually the story contains untellable; sometimes, though, it turns out that the untellable story was tellable after all, but at a price that will be accessible to fewer readers. One such story is James Patrick Kelly's *SOL-STICE* (Av's Jun.).

It's not as if Jim set himself a simple task. Tony Cage is a designer of recreational drugs who made it big; a long way, he stepped on (or could be seen as having stepped on) a man who once was his mentor, who once saved his life.

That's one story. The other story is that Cage is so self-obsessed that he has cloned himself, though he had the clone X'd instead of Y'd, so she is a clone-daughter (twint?) who has left her "free," but without realizing it has controlled her life to an amazing degree. He feels possessive. She feels possessed.

Tied in with this is a third element—Cage's obsession with Stonehenge, the site of an annual solsticial celebration that Cage is drawn to. And all three stories come together in a climax that is disturbing, if not brilliant. The story ends with Cage setting his clone-daughter free—but destructively, by abandoning her completely, because he still can't get control.

The story is tragic, and almost religious: Its strongest current is the way that Cage knows what is right and wrong, but still can't find a way to be a completely good man. And Jim Kelly has a whitefire talent that can sear you with a touch.

But the effort to bring all three stories together into one short tale would have strained any writer's ability. The result is that *SOL-STICE* definitely feels artsy-fartsy: frequent interruptions with seemingly irrelevant passages from accounts of the history of Stonehenge; flashbacks galore; an anti-hero as obnoxious and yet pathetic as any that ever aroused Jerry Pournelle's contempt; a milieu of people whose primary pleasure is self-destruction and whose primary attitude is cynicism.

At first glance, the story seems to be "typical" exhibitionistic writing. But it isn't. The "irrelevant" Stonehenge passages quickly become deeply relevant, like a second instrument feasting, without embellishment, the motif that another instrument has just played with dazzling declarations. Cage's gradual confrontation with his own flaws begins to ennoble him, as he tries to find ways of undoing the harm he has done. The hero's revenge adds tension just when it's needed.

And, though the story is not easily accessible the way a straightforward romance is, I believe Kelly has told it the only way it could be told, and that it was well worth telling. He attempted a labor of Hercules, and brought it off. It's not a perfect story by any means, but it works.

#### A WHOLE NEW LANGUAGE

Felix Gotschalk's *VESTIBULAR MAN* (F&SF Mar) is a perfect story. It is also very hard to read. This is because, to be perfect, the story had to be written in a very strange diction, with an almost alien point of view. It is very difficult to get into the story. It takes time both to understand why the language of it sounds weird and then to

get used to it and let it have its powerful effect on you.

Derek is a country boy from a future Louisiana who has gone into military training under a tyrannical drill instructor. Derek seems to be a "typical" southern bigot, only instead of being a white supremacist, he is a flesh-supremacist. His DI is Alpha 430, a "97-percenter," which means that 97 percent of Alpha 430's body has been replaced by machines, including most of his personality.

The obvious idea would be to tell a story of a bigot getting his comeuppance. Gotschalk is not the obvious sort of writer. Alpha 430 is exactly as inhuman as Derek thinks he is, and Derek is completely vindicated at the end, when he returns to the organic life of the swampland of Louisiana. The irony is that he, too, has some nonorganic implants does not undercut but rather enhances the power of the character's life view.

I can tell you the story. What I can't tell you is the curious, compelling effect of Gotschalk's highly idiosyncratic language. It is not just a matter of word choice, though the diction and vocabulary are unusual and elevated. Gotschalk narrates closely from Derek's point of view, and in so doing we see Derek experiencing his own body in a way that we never experience ours, rejoicing constantly in the organic nature of his body, and yet expressing it in mechanistic language. By the end of the story I felt like a stranger in my own flesh, or rather, like a newcomer just settling in.

The strangeness of the language will throw you out of the story at first. But stay with it. It will take you places you can't get any other way.

That, in a nutshell, is the only valid reason for using distracting literary techniques.

#### LESS WE OFFEND

One of the most frequent complaints about literary stories is their

vagueness, particularly in the ending. Time after time I have read a story and thought, What the hell just happened? And then, when somebody explains it to me, I think, Well, why didn't you say so?

For instance, take James Sallis's *IMPOSSIBLE THINGS BEFORE BREAKFAST* (Av's Jul.). This very short story is told in the voice of a young child, who reports on a world where mad as if the city around her had been destroyed and only her cat comes to report on events outside. As the story progresses, we see that in fact this is her way of "destroying" a world that has abandoned her as she lies, paralyzed, in her bed. Her cat is dead; yet, dead, it remains the only living thing in her world, while all the living people around her are, to her view, dead.

I think that's what the story is about. Sallis's manipulations of reality, the repeated shifts, got to me just the way he would them to. But it was one sentence short of perfection—and that one sentence made all the difference. Give us one more sentence, one in which clarity is achieved, and the story would work.

Of course, Sallis might fairly answer, "Intelligent people don't need that sentence you're asking for, and I don't write for stupid people."

But what's so unfair to us stupid people.

My guess is that Sallis, and the many other writers who publish as stories plagued by vagueness, are not really elitists; they simply don't want to limit the intelligence of their readers. They don't want to over-explain. They don't want their readers to think, OK, I know, I understand already.

The fact is that a story can't amount to anything if you can't see what's going on. Yes, it's possible to over-explain—but over-explaining doesn't kill a story the way under-explaining does. There's nothing useful in explaining it out so that any idiot can understand it. Us idiots need good stories, too.

#### IS THE HERO TRAGIC, OR JUST UGLY?

One of the most common complaints about artsy-fartsy stories is that the hero is a jerk. And it's a valid complaint. Still, the jerk hero is a natural reaction against the pristine Galahad of the pure romance. To make the hero believable and interesting, the writer has to vary the hero to some degree from perfection.

This can range from Hercule Poirot's annoying vanity and Nero Wolfe's invariable habits to the painful inspection of Spenser and Fletcher's cheerful opportunism-verging-on-amorality.

It's no accident that my examples are drawn from mystery fiction. The most delicate and difficult task for the creator of a mystery series is to come up with a protagonist who is interesting and yet whose life is unstructured enough to allow him to get involved in an endless series of adventures. This task of differentiating the protagonist from all other protagonists gets more intense the farther the writer removes himself from the plain tale well told. Until sometimes the hero gets to be so ugly-looking and loathsome-of-soul that Jack Nicholson can be cast in the part.

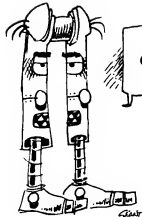
Sometimes, though, the ugly hero crosses an invisible line and becomes, instead, the tragic hero. Macbeth is as vile as any artsy-fartsy anti-hero you could ever hope to find, and yet we have seen him become a murderous tyrant without ever really wishing to, and with terrible remorse and self-loathing. The result, ironically, is an ennobling story instead of a debasing one.

I dislike William Gibson's novel *NEURONANCE* for the very good reason that it never passes from ugly to enno-



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bling. The protagonist has all the good qualities of a turd. In the whole novel, he never makes a single decision on his own initiative. He never acts. He is self- and other-destructive. Only two characters in the whole novel did have any initiative, and both of them existed only as electronic life—the one, an artificial intelligence; the other, a computer simulation of a once-living man. And who inflicted the most was that Gibson had the only genuinely living characters in the book wishing for death. This was obviously a conscious decision on his part, and it was subverted at every turn by his unconscious choices: almost every piece of information, almost every original act in the whole book came from these supposedly death-wishing creatures.

The result was that, despite Gibson's brilliant creation of a milieu, despite the excellent action-adventure writing, despite the dazzling language, despite the fact that I couldn't put the damn thing down, the novel left me with a gnawing pain, a deep anger, because the book obviously wanted me to care about the protagonist, and there was nothing there to care about.

I know it won't be the Nebula. I know it won't be the Dick. It can win the Nobel and the Pulitzer for all I care. Flash and dazzle can't compensate for the fact that any person with enough bonding drive, enough social impulse to write a novel, cannot be autocratic and isolate enough to believe in the pursuit of death for its own sake. Gibson doesn't believe in it. But for whatever reason (and I suspect, with no justification whatsoever, that the reason is that Gibson was sucked into fashionable existentialism just enough to pervert his book) Gibson chose to make his book say something he doesn't believe. In other terms, I call that a lie, and I think it's just about the worst thing a storyteller can do.

I can include this gentle criticism of *NEURONANCE* so that you'll know that I am not an uncritical fan of William Gibson's work.

So when I attended Mike Swanwick's reading at DisClave and learned that he was reading a story that he had written with William Gibson, I was deeply disappointed. Swanwick, too, has committed arsey-fartsy writing before; surely, though, I, Gibson and Swanwick will bring out the worst in each other.

My prejudices can't be right all the time. The story Swanwick read was *DOGFIGHT* (Omni Jul). If there's a better story written this year, it will damn well be near one of the best stories ever written.

*DOGFIGHT*, you see, crosses the line. The ugly hero becomes a tragic hero. No lying here—Gibson and Swanwick tell the truth, and tell it magnificently.

Deke is a loner, on his last bit

of money, but he sets himself the goal of winning a complex holographic video-game against a burned-out military pilot named Tiny. For Tiny, fat and crippled, the game of Dogfight is his whole life, and he's brilliant at it. For Deke, the game itself is nothing. He's not particularly good at it. What matters to him is not winning the game, but defeating Tiny, bringing down a man who's better than he is. The idea of a fair contest doesn't occur to him.

In the process of the story, however, Deke meets a woman, Nance, who offers him a real chance for love—not to mention a cynical opportunity to climb out of the hole that Deke has dug for himself. Instead, Deke explicitly acts out my definition of evil: He is willing to sacrifice anyone else in order to achieve his own worthless goal.

It could have been a morose, depressing story. Instead, it is full of action, exciting from beginning to end, until the final sentence: You see, Deke?

*DOGFIGHT* would be a memorable story even if it weren't a perfect expression of the cost of evil.

Swanwick swears that the process of collaborating with Gibson was so painful for both of them—that each was so demanding of the other—that neither of them is willing to do it again.

I toyed with the idea of all of us getting together and making them collaborate anyway—the results are too good for it to end here. The way I figure it, Gibson deserves the punishment for having written *NEURONANCE*. But none of Swanwick's occasional literary crimes is worth doing (except to him); so for his sake, I guess, we'll have to let them off.

I only hope that both Gibson and Swanwick see that the power of *DOGFIGHT* arises from its clarity, even its decision. There are no arsy idiosyncrasies or passages of boring introspection. Yet the character is fuller and richer than any I've ever seen. It's a real Upside or Below. The impact of the story is equally emotional and intellectual.

This story is the reason why if and fantasy are a living literature, while go-called mainstream literature is a corpse that feeds no one but worms. Another generation of writers created our community of storytellers; when they die, the writers, the stories, the books I listed at the beginning of this column are the ones who will keep it alive.

You can have it all. You can give it all. That's what they've done with *DOGFIGHT*, and it makes all the arsey-fartsy writing look foolish and compulsory. You can't get around the fact that even when your writing is arsey for the most compelling reasons, it cannot match the power of a story that exerts no barrier between storyteller and audience.

That is the end of Orson's essay for this issue. Now I can get down from the soapbox and do some good old-fashioned bloody-handed reviewing.

#### TRUE ROMANCES

All storytelling endlessly repeats certain motifs. Even history and journalism, which pretend to have their roots in reality, emphasize the same motifs because they are the elements in a story that make it feel important enough to be worth retelling.

In romance, from medieval times to the present, these motifs are more nakedly expressed than in the realistic novel or history or news story. Let's take a look at how some of our quarter's stories deal with the time-honored and inescapable myths.

#### THE DESCENT INTO HELL

If you're a freudian, you might call it a return to the womb. I'm not, so I don't. But one of the most common motifs in story after story is a descent to an underground place, dark and fully enclosed, a place of death and retribution, where the hero is in danger of becoming captive. Often he has to retrieve something and bring it out. And in our Western tradition, this motif is most commonly expressed as a descent into hell.

Brad Strickland's *PIRA* (#4SF Aug) has the bride-to-be of a prince descend into hell in order to bring back the talisman that will heal the disease that afflicts her fiancé. Reality changes in hell; there are dangers, and she is helped by a stranger who turns out to be the true form of the crippled dwarf she thought she left waiting for her outside. The dwarf sacrifices himself (another common motif); it becomes even more notable when she discovers how he was crippled in the first place. I don't care if you are tired of medievalist fantasies. This one's excellent, and you should read it.

#### THE SERVANT OF SAIDIZEL (Amz Jan)

by Diana L. Pardue. It is far less complex, and sword-and-sorcery heroine finds herself trapped in a pitch-black labyrinth under a temple, where an inviolable suspension helps her slay the worm that guards it. Just enough to show you that even when the story coasts along the surface, the old motifs are often strong enough to pull it through.

#### JOURNEY TO FAIRYLAND

Another motif is the passage from the "real" world to one which is somehow less or more substantial, where events don't mean as much, or mean much more. In many medieval romances this is explicitly a journey to fairyland. In *Y GARNIS* (Anlg Aug), Eric Vinicoff's characters make the journey through video-games, which are not "real" but still change them in ways that "reality" never can. Fairyland captures you, and it is only with difficulty that you win your way back. I only wish Vinicoff had not treated it as a traditional Anal problem story, because his solution is both unnecessary and unbelievable.

Esther M. Priesner almost pulls off the impossible—writing a fairy tale with the same brevity and clarity and power as Jane Yolen without being Jane

#### 14 STANDOUT STORIES

For the power of the plain tale:

- Michael Swanwick & William Gibson: *DOGFIGHT* (Omni Jul)
- Michael Kube-McDowell: *WHEN WINTER DIES* (FASP Jul)
- Gerry Kilworth: *THE THUNDER OF THE CAPTAINS* (Amz Jun)
- John Barnes: *FINALITIES INSIDES THE GMAF* (Amz Sep)
- Bruce D. Arthurs: *UNION'S BLOOD* (3+Se 2)

For the idea at the story's heart:

- Wayne Wightman: *IN THE HEART OF THE HEART, IN THE VOICE OF THE VOICE* (Amz Jun)
- Juan Gunn: *HAM OF PARTS* (FASP Aug)
- Richard Grant: *PAINS FROM OLD RAMBO* (Amz June)
- Eric G. Swenson: *ROULETTERENDECK* (Anlg Jul)
- Christopher Gilbert: *THE ULTIMATE DIAGNOSTIC* (Amz Sep)

For the way they're written:

- Karen Joy Fowler: *THE POPULAR STREET STUDY* (FASP Jun)
- Susan Falwick: *THE WEDDING'S WIFE* (Amz Jul)
- Pelleas: *THE KATSKALAK VESTIBULAR MAN* (FASP Mar)
- Sharon N. Farber: *ROLLS REX, KING OF CARS* (Amz Sep)

Yolen. Also, she marks it with a vague ending still, a **FRIGID GAMER OF CRUSA** (Amz Sep) is worth reading, as it takes a phantom on a passage into the world of mortality, where, as is usual with this material, he is captured by the experience and does not want to go back.

#### UNMASKING

Another motif so common that it shows up, in one form or another, in most stories, is the unmasking of a character, the revelation that somebody was not who others thought he was. Sometimes he was in disguise; sometimes he himself did not know who he really was ("I'm the heir to the throne?" Goliath). The moment of unmasking is often the climax of the tale.

Paul di Filippo tells this story in its simplest form, but does it very well, in **STONE LIVES** (P&S Aug). A boy finds out the real reason he was forced to grow up blind and alone in the vicious society of the Bronx Jungle; even when I see it coming, it still seems as exciting as it did in **CITIZEN OF THE GALAXY**.

The unmasking is much more painful in Karl Hansen's **DREAMS UNWIND** (Omni May), in which the hero discovers that he is really the thing he most loathes in the world. I don't know Karl's work, you won't be surprised to discover that this story is exciting to read but set in a milieu so cruel that at the end your grateful to have escaped. In C.J. Cherry's **THE UNSHADOWED LAND** (S&S 2), the heroine is fleeing from the knowledge of who she is and what, by her nature, she does. I thought it was impossible to tell an interesting story about a goddess. But everybody knows Cherry can do the impossible.

Rolaine Huchmes's **NEIGHBORS** (P&S Aug) is a strange circular tale, in which a couple moves into an apartment building and, by studying their neighbors' garbage, transforms themselves into people of taste and breeding. Then they discover who the neighbors really are, and how they have decayed—a small but unforgettable story. Richard Grant's **LYRIC FOR THE DARKMAN** (Amz Jul), set in the same universe as his novel **SARABAND FOR LOST TIME**, shows a young man who is, of course, changing as he grows up, but only when he comes to the house of an instrument-maker and hears a particular song is his new identity clearly revealed to him. It's as haunting as if you could actually hear the music.

A story that epitomizes all these motifs is John Barnes's **FINALITIES BESIDES THE GRAVE** (Amz Sep). The hero is a Monitor, sent by outside nations into his native America to eliminate anyone who is trying to develop any high technology. It is obvious that this is a descent into hell; America is a place of punishment. It is also a passage from the shadowy but safe outside world to the peculiar rules of fairyland. Con-

stantly changing identity is one of the techniques of his trade, but it is also the hero's greatest dilemma; he was born in America, was an outcast, is at once a traitor and a savior. He tries to unmask himself many times, but always finds another mask beneath. It is not because of these motifs that **FINALITIES** is an outstanding story—their very prevalence means that they are in good and bad stories alike. It is what Barnes did with the motifs that makes this so good. (If this is how well he does with his first published story, we substitute-level writers have to get together and shoot this guy before he pulls another Lucius Shepard routine and leapfrogs all of us.)

#### BONDING

Telling stories is a pro-social act. In a world where people are condemned by nature to perpetual isolation, storytelling provides one of the few occasions where someone can guide us into sharing the same experience. It creates a community.

Besides being a result of storytelling, the creation of communities is also a frequent theme.

#### LOYALTY VS. BETRAYAL

Communities are built by shared experience; they survive by mutual trust. Bruce S. Arthur's **BLOOD** (S&S 2) examines people who have been betrayed in their trust. The heroine is a woman who was sexually abused by a priest, the ultimate betrayal of trust, I believe—and has grown up to be that rarest of creatures: a virgin who exploits the instant affinity between virgins and unicorns in order to kill the trusting creatures and take their horns. The story goes much deeper, into layer after layer of trust and betrayal, as a crippled former prince comes back in a quest to avenge his injury by killing a black unicorn. I'm sick of unicorn stories, too. This one? Read it anyway.

James Patrick Kelly shows us the invasion of a small town by a group of vandals who turn out to represent an ancient enemy. In **THE LAST** (P&S Jun), Hester Pichwork bears the burden of leadership; the community's survival depends on her wielding their only weapon. It's a wonderful story, and my only quibble is that it ends too abruptly. I guess when a writer develops a novel's worth of character and situation, I want a novel's worth of story afterward. The sense of community duty is at heart the very short version of **THE NEIGHBORS' WIFE** (Amz Jun). Susan Palwick's story is so short I don't dare synopsise it except to say it shows a community dealing most tenderly with the madness of a grief-stricken neighbor. Otherwise, they'd cheerfully be as bigoted against their alien visitor as any other small town.

Loyalty is completely discarded in **TIP OF THE SCORPION** (TZ Aug), by Steven Popkes, in which a new breed of electricity-generating plants gives more than the usual satisfaction to a girl and her husband. His wife is not crazy when she fears that the fields are seducing her husband away from her.

#### I MADE YOU, BUT ARE YOU MINE?

There are many ways in which parents can create a child. Richard Grant may have married **PAGES FROM COLD HARBOR** (Avs Jun) by writing it in first person present tense, but it's still a strong emotional story of a man who manufactures an artificial child that is all too human—Pinocchio without the fairy to save things at the end. Jennifer Hester's **MARTIN** (Avs Jun) tackles almost the opposite problem—a surrogate mother

who does not want to know anything about the child born from her womb, who does not want it to be human. The story sometimes gushes, but it still works.

Robert F. Young shows compassionate humans adopting the long-preserved children of an ancient Martian race. The war the Martians children return the favor makes **MARS CHILD** (Amz Jan) that rare thing—a genuinely horrifying horror story. And in **LEGACY** (TZ Feb), Leigha Essex shows us a child learning all too well how to be a parent. Perhaps because Twilight zone looks for the twist ending, Essex withheld the information that the child is still not a human child. I tell you this because the story reads much better if you know; the twist merely cheapens an otherwise excellent tale.

#### MAKING FRIENDS

A good kid who's into magic befriends the new boy in school, who knows some really neat tricks in **FRIGID NIGHT** (NCry Feb), by Vincent McHardy. It's a good, solid story, with fair foreshadowing instead of a twist ending; the characters and setting are well enough realized that it could have gone on—and I wish it had. And William R. Trotter's **BAGMAN** (NCry Feb) is a good portrayal of the decay of a down-and-out musician in New York City, who gets a constant companion who's a little more demanding than he expected. What wrecks it is an unbelievably offensive intrusion. Believe it or not, here is what appears at the bottom of page 18: "Must wait, reader! All right, I'll stop for our desperate young hero! Turn to page 194 for our tale's exciting conclusion." I don't know if the editor at *Asimov* or the editor; whoever it was should be forced to watch old episodes of *The Flying Nun* for a year.

#### HEROES

Nature abhors a vacuum, and romance abhors a committed. The great deeds of storytelling are all done by the Chosen Hero, who is at once isolated from and savior of his community. Even though the hero is the one who saves the hell out of it, all their heroes are bigger than life, too.

#### I DIDN'T LOOK FOR THIS JOB

In Sharon N. Farber's **ROLLS REX, KING OF CARS** (Amz Sep), Billy Jean is just a curious little girl—she's not looking to be anybody's savior. But she ends up inadvertently liberating the long imprisoned Rolls Rex, a magical, autonomous car with the ability to hear the speech of cars. I'm not often enjoy whimsy, but then, whimsy is almost never done this well; Farber never lets up and it's a wonderful ride the whole way.

Andrew M. Greeley's **GABY** (Amz Jan) is also a bit whimsical, with a nubile guardian angel of the most desirable sex who takes Professor S.S. Desmond's trip to Colorado to find out if he's interesting than he expected. The story is going along quite well until Greeley cops out and wraps it up with a completed first chapter. I don't know. Having Adolf Hitler as the bad guy is what writers do when they don't want to bother creating a character. In **THE WEIGHT OF IRON** (TZ Feb), by John Alfred Taylor, the "chosen hero" is selected to be the physical incarnation of the anti-Christ; and doesn't seem to mind.

#### THE GREAT LIBERATOR

Moses isn't the only hero to say "Let my people go." Following a long tradition of heroes who free oppressed people, Rand B. Lee brings a dangerous intruder into a small community of telepaths long kept isolated during a deadly plague. In **DESPERATE MARCH** (Amz Jan), despite occasional over-sentimental



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lality, we join the community in gradually coming to trust, until he gives his life to save them.

Jayce Carr's protagonist in **CATA-COMBS** (Amz Jul) really doesn't want to stir up trouble in his unbelievably oppressive underground society. But a kind-hearted outsider saves his life and gives him a gift that transforms first him and then his people. Carr apparently didn't like the story as well as I did, since it was thrown away with a last line that only a most fanatic cat-fancier would think was not stupid.

**MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN HISTORY**

Michael Rubie-McDowell's first novel, **EMPIRE**, proves that he can handle the vast sweep of historical events with a skill that few other writers can match. He does it also with **WHEN WINTER ENDS** (P&S Jul), in which some people are hired to prepare something that will outlast the coming nuclear winter and tell the few remnants of humanity something of our own time. Rubie-McDowell writes his characters with compassion and understanding, so that even the contemporary sections ring true, but he really shines when he creates a far-future society, still crippled by the lingering effects of nuclear war. As they try to receive the gift that their ancient ancestors prepared for them.

Barry Turtle dove, in one of the last stories to be published under his old pseudonym Eric G. Iverson, deals with a similar idea of trying to make a difference in a society you can never belong to. With **NONINTERFERENCE** (Amz Jul), however, the society is alien, and the hero is an observer. He has the thought that in this newly developing civilization, the queen who has done so much to enlighten her people is going to die of a disease that has no cure. It's the journalist's dilemma—do you report or prevent the disaster? The question is raised cleanly and answered believably.

#### \*\*\* TERRIBLE TITLES ON GOOD STORIES \*\*\*

Titling is a different art from story-telling, and just because you're good at one doesn't mean you'll be good at the other.

#### **FINDING LIES BEHIND THE GRACE**

It may be a quote from Frost, but it still doesn't make sense, before or after you read the story.

#### **IN THE REAR OF THE HEART, IN THE WORLD OF THE BEAR**

When the story is a melodrama (albeit an excellent one) it's a good idea not to have an over-dramatic title.

#### **MAN OF PARTS**

The story is so girly that the cute title goes far beyond black humor—all the way to bad taste.

#### **TUNICATE, TUNICATE, WILT THOU BE NICE?**

This wins the award for Worst Title of the Year—and the year's only half over. Some titles are so bad it would be better to publish the story without

#### **PAGES FROM OLD HARMONY**

#### **LYRIC FOR THE DANDYMAN**

#### **SARABAND OF LOST TIME**

The award for consistency in Mis-titling goes to Richard Grant, who tends to put moody college-writing-class titles on stories that are powerful enough to deserve titles that invite the reader in, rather than put the reader off.

An almost identical dilemma is faced by an alien visitor who has come to judge the Earth in **RESPECT** (Amz Jun), by Bill Johnson (an obvious pseudonym, if I've ever seen one). Knowing that he shows him the best of humanity, the people struggling for survival in a perpetual border war show him humanity's pain—and he comes to share it and eventually take part in their war. The story would be flawless except for a tendency to repeatedly explain the meaning of the story, as if one clear exposition weren't enough—a frequent problem in Analog stories of late.

#### **SACRIFICE**

The hero is often called upon to sacrifice in order to save others. Three of this quarter's best stories take this theme. James Carr's **MAN OF PARTS** (P&S Aug) carries the idea to revolting but magnificent extremes in his best work of late.

Wayne Wightman, about whom I gush at length elsewhere, has dealt with the theme of sacrifice in **THE REALM OF THE HEART, IN THE WORLD OF THE KNIFE** (Av's Aug). Unlike Wightman's **TENSOR OF DESIRE** (part of a series that will continue with a story in two months), this story doesn't have much action. It is played, instead, in a single room, where a man who is regarded as the savior of mankind carefully accounts the cost of his great deeds; and he has made certain, over the years, that the sacrifices were all made by other people with a strong belief in some unforgettable characters.

And it is only Christopher Gilbert's second published story, but in **THE ULTIMATE DIAGNOSTIC** (Amz Sep) he does an excellent job of showing us a doctor who can diagnose a disease through the ultimate empathy: actually inhabiting someone else's body. But at one point he had to permanently take over someone's healthy body and leave them in his own dying one. He tried to choose someone who "deserved" to die, and that's the way it works out. He has to make someone else perform the sacrifice.

#### **BAD GUYS**

The good guys may be the ones we root for, but the bad guys usually seem to be the ones who get things accomplished at the beginning of the story.

#### **COPS. IT WAS ME.**

Four stories this quarter depend on the same technique—the gradual or sudden revelation that the narrator, a good guy hero, is actually a bad guy. Barry Malzberg's **REASON SEVEN** (Omni May) gives us a bureaucrat whose job is making up lies, faking documents purportedly stolen from foreign powers to "prove" their menace to America. But, as we all do, he has found a way to take pride in his work Malzberg at his best. Charles Jackson's narrator goes to Africa with friends on an African trip, where they discover the survivors of an alien landing. But the alien, which looks like a little white circle, has a way of ensuring its own survival in **TUNICATE, TUNICATE, WILT THOU BE NICE** (Av's Jun).

**SNOW BLIND** (TZ Aug), by Peter Heyman, shows us a woman trapped in her house with her murderous husband—and she provides a good example of a twist ending can do when it works. Gene O'Neill's **THE WHITE QUETZAL** (P&S Jul) is the story of a man recognizing the hideous thing that he is doing and a solution to it. It is psychologically fully realized, with all ends tied. The only thing that bothered me was what the stupid Quetzal had to do with it. It could have been an albino lizard or a blown head gasket for all the difference it made in the story.

#### **JUSTICE, REVENGE, AND PUNISHMENT**

Stories of getting even are some of the most delicious in all literature. August's **THE FIFTH WORKS FIVE WARS** (NCRy Sum) is a viciously amusing story of how a persecuted black man uses alien invaders to get even with his tormentors. It is matched by Lord Allen's **FAMILY OBLIGATIONS** (TZ Feb), in which a woman keeps revenge and punishment for Aunt Bessie's death deftly within the family. And in **THE WORKS OF CROEN MAIDEN** (Sw's 2), the designated virgin preempts the sacrifice by striking a prior deal with the dragon herself; as a result, the priests who were running this virgin-sacrifice racket get just what they deserve.

What do you do when the person who must be punished is yourself? The protagonist of Roger J. Dunkley's **SIDE TRACKED** (TZ Aug) finds the most appropriate answer in the Bible. Self-punishment is also the theme of A.R. Norlan's story **FOUR DATES BEFORE THE SNOW** (NCRy Sum), in which a woman is not sure how it's being done, but she knows she is being punished for having an abortion; the babies she sees are dreams, but the babies that eat baby food on the porch are real enough.

#### **THE BITTER BIT, THE SWEET EATEN**

**IN THE BLUE GULARIS** (P&S Jul), Robert Charles Wilson gives us a wonderfully horrid story of a little girl afflicted with a nasty family, who gets rid of them by eating them. I don't get rid of them all. The piano teacher, however, has his own motives. Much more complex is Ian McDonald's **SCENES FROM SHADON** (Amz Jul), in which Don Perellen seeks vengeance against the man who stole away the woman he loved. The same devices he used are turned against him in **THE SILENT VOICE** (TZ Aug), in which a man milieu is haunting, and this story is beautiful, but the voice is so strange at the beginning (and, alas, unnecessarily so) that the story is almost impossible to get into. Such a shame when the writer erects a barrier at the doorway into a very fine tale.

Magic doesn't work out the way it's supposed to in Stephen Gallagher's good story **THE PRICE** (Av's Jun). The members of the rock band are only trying to help their leader; if they had understood him better, he might have lived through their helpfulness. But nobody does it like Gene Wolfe, whose **THE WOMAN WHO WENT OUT** (P&S Jun) shows what happens when a husband and wife both seek magical help in their effort to get a little action on the side. It's the kind of perfect little story that Boccaccio would have loved. But unfortunately, only he'd been good enough to write it. . . .

Irony is taken to its final delicious extreme in Robert F. Young's **THREE-HAIR STRENGTH** (P&S Aug), in which people dying of an inoperable plague are kept in time stasis until it is discovered, the hard way, that the plague was nature's way of preparing human beings to live in a radioactive world. It was enough that the main character was a total son-of-a-bitch; it hurt an otherwise excellent story when, at the end, the needed medicine turns out to be a placebo. In W. Jon Williams's **SIDE EFFECTS** (P&S Jun), an unethical doctor combines the testing of two different drugs in order to make a good rip-off of the pharmaceutical companies. It turns out that the combination is actually a fountain of youth—but everyone in a posi-



# •• LOOK OF THESE TALENTED MEN WRITERS ••

**Jim Alcala** Last issue I praised his **MY LIFE IN THE JUNGLE**, but considered it so airy that I doubted he would find a large readership. To my surprise, his first novel, **WALK THE MOON'S ROAD**, is wonderful washbuckling adventure with a hero who's a cross between Peter Blood and Leonardo da Vinci. Forgive a boring first chapter and a tacky cover, because the rest of the book is one of the best this year.

**Richard Grant** Not only are his stories **PAGES FROM OLD HANDBOOK** and **LYING FOR THE DARKNESS** first-rate fiction, his first novel, **SARABAND FOR LOST TIME** (Avon), is surprisingly mature, with an intensity of characterization evocative of Dickens and Wolfe. If the ending disappoints, it's only because the rest of the book is so good that I don't think anybody could have written an adequate ending to it.

**Other Good New Writers to Look For**

- Bruce D. Arthurs (S&W 2)
- John Barnes (Jan Sep)
- Leigh Essex (TZ Jan)
- Karen Joy Fowler (PSF Jun)
- Christopher Gilbert (Amz Sep)
- Rand B. Lee (Amz Jul)
- Vera Nazarian (S&W 2)
- Paul Reyes (S&W 2)
- Jennifer Swift (Av's Jun)

(I wrote one of this quarter's best stories)

tion to notice is so incompetent or drugged up that they never make the connection; the tests are discontinued, and a brilliant chance is missed. It's fortunate that such a horrendous story idea is buried in such a tedious mass of detail. Surely there's a way to write competently about incompetence.

## WHAT IS REALITY, REALLY?

Stories that speculate on the nature of reality have a tendency not to be stories at all, but rather essays. Certainly that trend is not broken by Jerry Olton's **THE BASIC UNIVERSE** (Anlg Aug)—but story or not, it's still fun to speculate. What if the present universe, with its speed-of-light limits, is like a computer program written in BASIC, and if we only knew how, we could get a universe that functioned at machine-language speed? Kate Wilhelm's haunting **O BOMO, O FEMINA, O TEMPORA** (Omni May) is much closer to being a story, as a physicist becomes obsessed with the untestable idea that time is slowing down. Alas, it remains a frustrating fragment.

Normally, I dislike science fiction stories about science fiction writers, but I'll make an exception for Jerry Olton's and Kevin Hardisty's **ALL YOUR DREAMS COME TRUE** (Anlg Jul), in which an SF writer wakes up from frozen sleep to find himself the most important man in the universe—since all his science fiction stories have come true during his sleep, except the one on which the Earth's survival depends. The story ends up as a pretty standard time-travel bootstrap story, but with the heck, it's still a lot of fun. And in Geoffrey Landis's pleasant little story **DIAGNOSIS** (Anlg Jun), a group of psychics turn out to be America's only defense against a system during a nuclear attack. They handle the attack, not by destroying the incoming missiles, but by sending them in time—where they cause the extinction of the dinosaurs.

In **MENTAL BLOCKS** (Amz Jul), Steven Gould asserts, to hilarious effect, that if you act like it's true, it becomes true. He wastes sure how to end it, but it's fun along the way. Much more

serious is Gary Kilworth's unforgettable **THE THUNDER OF THE CAPTAINS** (Av's Jun), in which two friends in military school invent their own gods to help them survive an unbearable childhood. This intense and passionate story says they never quite decide whether the gods are real or not; it doesn't matter, for the character lives as though it's real, as he becomes obsessed with the idea that he has sacrificed the great love of his life to his god.

## FUTURES

There are two kinds of future in science fiction, ugly futures and pretty futures, and on the whole, I'd say that the ugly futures allow for the best stories.

Still, there's something incongruously old-fashioned about John Shirley's ugly-future story, **THE INCORPORATED** (Av's July). He writes of a future in which pollution is institutionalized, big-name corporations run everything, and all in all it has the quaint feeling of those earnest social-change movies of the 1960s, or the anti-consumerist stories from the 1950s. Doesn't he know that there are fish in Lake Erie? It's quite a good, suspenseful story of what our memories are being stolen from him with the cooperation of his less-than-loyal wife, but I couldn't shake the feeling that Shirley got caught in a time-war in 1972 and still hadn't noticed.

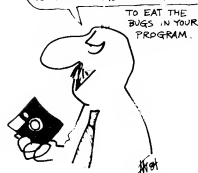
Tom Purdom has a rather uncomfortable solution for city crime in **EYES** (Anlg Jul)—cameras are installed to watch all the back alleys, and citizens are told that the most important element. A little boy isn't sure what's real and what isn't, but even though he manages to save a life, the author is unsure about all that watching.

## SATIRE

Ugly futures are often introduced as satire—exaggeration of faults in order to call for correction. Unfortunately, satire is one of the hardest arts to do well. It takes surgical precision to get the tone exactly right, and too many writers think they're using a scalpel, when in fact they're using either a bludgeon or a noodle. Norman Spinrad is never one to err on the side of the noodle—it's definitely a bludgeon he's wielding in **WORLD WAR LAST** (Av's Aug). I won't bother with the plot except to tell you that it's so outrageous that it will leave you either laughing helplessly or staring in bafflement at the page. Most satirists are a little better at being funny and retain some connection with reality. Spinrad, knowing no such limitations, lithely sets about offending just about every element of the world he lives in. He has enjoyed it more if the authorial stance did not imply so clearly the author's contempt for everything that he decries—and everything that he does.

Ian Watson errs, alas, on the side of noodledom in the clever but ultimately ineffective satire **SKIN DAY**, and **AF-TER** (PSF Jul), a satire piece is attractive: in a world crowded with causes and special interests, everybody gets to sign up for a limited number of causes and they're given only one day a year to be obnoxious and offend everybody else. Then they have to shut up about it. Lisa Tuttle's **FLYING TO BYZANTINIUM** (TZ Jun) is the most deft of the satires. Tuttle's fantasy is supposed to be the most of all—because it was so well done. Her protagonist is a one-time nerd who finally escaped nerd-dom and became a famous fantasy writer, only to be trapped among fans as a guest of honor at a convention, she is relentlessly driven back to nerdhood and can't es-

A SPECIAL FEATURE IS  
10 K OF FORGET-ONLY-MEMORY.



cape. (And someday she'll have to explain how a large mountain can be in the middle of a small town.)

The August Analog had two good stories to read in much brighter futures. Not perfect ones—af writers have a way of wiping out large sections of the world as background—but futures in which mankind survives present peril and makes the best of things. **TRADER'S SECRET**, by Charles Sheffield, is a plausible tale in which a man and a woman from different and sometimes competing societies are able to overcome their rivalry to promote the good of humankind. It sounds pretentious, but it works as a simple mystery/adventure tale. Likewise a mystery is Harry Turtledove's ("Eric G. Iverson") **LES MORTES D'ARTHUR**, in which an unknown assassin has murdered several contestants in the low-gravity Olympic events. Maybe sports fans would not find the long exposition of the off-Earth games as tedious as I did, but as is usual in mysteries, once people start dying, the story picks up.

## DEATH IS THE ONE SURE THING

Most of us take the future quite personally—I'm not half so interested in the settlement of other planets as I am in the net today in 1990. And no question of our personal future intrigues us as much as death. Oliver Loebnick's **LOMBOSORE COYOTE BLUES** (TZ Feb) is a wistful story in which people who are about to die get to hear the radio station playing all the rock tunes written by the legends of rock 'n' roll since they died. Royce R. Dunkley's **TWISTED SHADOW** (TZ Feb), a reprint from an English publication, brings together visions from an ancient and a future disease, the former being a plague and perhaps causing—the nuclear accident that destroys the little English garden. The best of the warning-of-death stories is the genuine thriller, though, in the fashioned sense of the word, **THROUGH THE SAFETY NET** (TZ Jun), by Charles Baxter, in which a psychic who is generally reliable keeps trying to get a fix on a rather vague warning.

It's probably just sour grapes, but we do enjoy stories in which life after death turns out to be worse than life before death. Larry R. King's **HUGHESBOY** (TZ Feb) gives us a man who refuses to except that he's really dead, even though the other corpses are doing their best to encourage him to accept reality. George Alec Effinger, with his customary madness, gives us two versions of life after death. In **INFERNUM** (Av's July), Morton Rosenthal gets to know the miserable place just as he's readmitted to heaven, so that the position of Chief Tormentor is open. He takes naturally to the job. Effinger's serious side gets clear in his verse story **MY FIRST GAME AS AN IMMORTAL** (PSF Aug), so that what could have been a trivial comparison of heaven to a football game becomes instead quite haunting.

A more pleasant view of life after death comes in **TINA RATCH** (Amz July), where **THE CENTRAL LINE** (Amz Jun), whose protagonist discovers how the next life is handled when she keeps noticing dead Russians on the subway. **THRILLING ROMANCE!** (TZ Feb), Ron Wolfe makes the pleasant suggestion that life is a carnival ride, and sometimes the machinery breaks down. **THE GUILLOTINE** (TZ Feb) is a story about a man who, if you didn't get your money's worth the first time, you can go around again.

#### ALIENS

Perhaps the most common vision of the future is contact with aliens, and no moment is as compelling as the first contact. P.M. Foster's **THE FIRST UNLIEVABLE POSSIBILITY** that the first contact may be between utterly incompetent representatives of both species, in **BODY LANGUAGE** (Amz Jul), is a story that is much more serious in **BATRACHIAN** (Amz Sep), in which a college student falls in love with an alien who is also about to "graduate." It is a story that produces the bittersweet feeling Foster was trying for. Foster is a talented writer, but his characters never seem able to hold onto their alien love desires at a time; I wish he would try some of the misdirection and complexity that makes characters interesting.

In **FERGUSON'S WEALTH** (PSF Aug), Mike Conner gives us a good twist in a mystery that involves an alien who, like **Yusef's** sirens, lures human pilots to their death; unfortunately, the narrator turns out to be a completely incompetent, without any sign that the author realizes the nothing the guy does works. In **THE LIGHTS** (PSF Aug), Robert Onopa's characters are not sufficiently qualified to contact alien life, but he's the best available on the transport ship that happens to notice the strange patterns of lights. Once there, though, he becomes fascinating and the story is carried by the lights. I only wish that Onopa had not trivialized the transformation at the end by having it give the guy more of a knock at picking up girls.

What if the aliens come with irresistible power? Reginald Brenhor shows us aliens who are absolutely arrogant, even though their offensive weapons are nothing much. But when humans violate a truce in order to try to wipe them out, they find out what the **Tar Baby** story was all about in **THE PROUD POOT OF THE CONQUEROR** (PSF Jul). Pat Cadogan's **ROADSIDE RESCUE** (Omni Jul) is much more powerful, a fine story in which a passing alien helps a stranded motorist—and then takes repayment in a way that leaves both the motorist and the reader feeling raped.

The best of the stories about aliens this quarter is Karen Joy Fowler's **THE POPULAR STREET STORY** (PSF Jul). The aliens are not very threatening but they must maintain a control group that continues to live in a "natural" habitat. The people are frightened, disoriented, but they find ways to survive in this hauntingly beautiful story.

#### MAGIC

There are holy places, places of magic and miracles, places that priests try to explain with the power means. So says Kate Wilhelm in the excellent mystery/adventure **GORGON FIELD** (Amz Aug), in which a pair of private detectives, married and each other, investigate the meaning of a natural labyrinth of stela in the western Mexican desert. As works both as a mystery and as a fantasy, **GORGON FIELD** is successful, but with a lighter touch, is Charles Barnes's **GEORGE WASHINGTON BLAKE** (Amz Jul) in which some contemporary brick-builders find a tough little lady who has been around the Washington, D.C., area a long time—long enough to have been worshipped by the Indians and to have attracted more than a passing acquaintance with George

Washington. And Gary Kilworth tells the story of still another magic place in **IMAGE IN A DARK GLASS** (TZ Aug). The discovery of Narcissus's pool might have been more effective if the archaeologist somehow deserved to fall victim to its spell of permanent self-contemplation.

The assassin heroine of Rachel Pollack's **THE RED GUILD** (SWSs 2) finds that magical power is within her: she is an assassin because murder brings her the greatest pleasure in her life, greater than love. She cannot help but kill; all she can choose is the target in this powerful, bitter story. Much more fun is Phyllis Ann Karr's **WINTER AT WINDY HILLS** (SWSs 2), which has continuing characters Postflower and Thorn are forced to choose between two magical innas, one of which will be very pleasant above the other. They destroy them. (And the anthology that presents both stories, Marlon Zimmer Bradley's **SWORD AND SORCERESS 2**, while it contains the predictions of a clumping formula stories, also has a surprising number of excellent stories. It's worth a look.)

#### SCIENCE

Many there are who try to be funny, and few who succeed. So here's a round of applause to the ones who made it this quarter. Besides her **ROLLS REG**, reviewed above, Charles Onopa also had a humor piece in the January **Amazing**: **MS. FOUND IN A CRUET SET**. Sherlock Holmes's morphine stupor keeps him from solving part, so he writes a series of cases—I only wish I were well-read enough to get all the allusions.

R.A. Lafferty is even better than usual in **MAGAZINE SECTION** (Amz Jul), the tale of a writer whose incredible Sunday supplement stories—but a writer with impeccable standards, who will only write those incredible stories if they are true.

And here's a really off-the-wall recommendation. In the July issue of **Computer Entertainment** magazine there appears the story **FUN CITY**, written in the form of a computer text adventure game. It's only as if in the sense that there ain't no computer game that good; but the story is delightful from beginning to end. The author is listed as Rand Backer. Certain that he was in a computer magazine had to be a pseudonym, I telephoned, and was assured by the editor that Mr. Backer's parents had their first name long ago taken by the guys at MIT gave it a different meaning. She's a wonderfully talented writer, and I hope she writes more fiction. I also think there are real possibilities in writing fiction as if it were a computer text adventure. So I shall rip off her idea as soon as I think of a story good enough.

#### NOT THEIR BEST WORK

Generally if I don't like a story, I don't review it. But in the case of writers whose work is usually wonderful, I make a gleeful, bloodthirsty exception.

Ed Bryant's **THE MAN WHO ALWAYS WANTED TO TRAVEL** (Omni Jun) is the story of a failing physics teacher who gets stuck down for a trip on the shuttle, then happens to go to a carnival where he happens to meet a real alien creature who happens to communicate with him. Then his lawyer brother helps him find the alien's freedom, and the alien helps the physics teacher realize his dream of travel to faraway places, plus the considerable alien. The story has all the superficiality and unbelievability of humor without ever being funny. Ed has proven before that he knows how to write this kind of absurd tale; in

this case, I suspect he just didn't make it absurd or intense enough.

Tanith Lee's **AFTER THE GUILLOTINE** (Amz Jan) begins brilliantly, with an explicit account of exactly what the guillotine feels like to three of its victims in the French Revolution. But it peters out in an account of a dull, entropic afterlife. It may be Lee's point that the afterlife is dull, but there must be some way to write about it without making us want to watch another guillotining.

Perhaps it's premature to give Lucius Shepard his debut here while he's still new enough to be eligible for the Campbell Award, but after being the first human in history to place three stories on the final Nebula ballot in the same year, he can't claim novices' immunity anymore. Shepard is a terrific writer; **THE MAN WHO PAINTED THE DRAGON** (Amz Jul) was the best story published last year. **THE FUNDAMENTAL THINGS** (Amz Jul) was a real departure for him, however—an attempt at the kind of mad humor that is R.A. Lafferty's trademark. It begins very well, with a deep personal relationship between a man and his golf ball. But this kind of thing is very hard to write; it may be impossible to write it at great length. Shepard is not an excellent writer. Very good. The story stops being funny; soon after, it stops being interesting. No doubt it was fun to write it; no doubt the whole thing would be read at a party and break everybody up with laughter, especially if they've been drinking. But in cold print, it just doesn't hold up. My guess is that Shepard puts together his first story collection, he will conveniently overlook this story, which is what I recommend the rest of us do, too.

The story which earns the Stinker Award for this quarter is **PEASANTS** of this year—is actually very well written, very powerful, just what we've come to expect from Connie Willis. **ALL MY DARLING DAUGHTERS** (in back cover) Firewatch, is a tale of the abuse and molestation of little girls, and it has exactly the excruciating emotional effect that Willis intended.



It also succeeds in being the most offensive piece of sexist trash I've read in a long time, and it is ten times more culpable than the ignorant sexism of thousands of stories in decades past, because a major plot of the story is to attack sexism. This writer is supposed to be aware.

You see, all the male characters in **ALL MY DARLING DAUGHTERS** are depicted, not merely as exploiters of women, but as little more than objects. Every male character who is given the opportunity is depicted as preferring sexual intercourse with small helpless creatures to intercourse with women of the act. Not just the major characters, but the minor characters and the background characters as well. And only female characters are victims of the molested children or animals are male.

If Willis had written a story in which every black male had a secret desire to rape white women, and only white

women, and did it every chance he had, there isn't an editor in New York who would not have advised her strongly not to include such racism in her story collection.

If Willis had written a story in which there were many Jews, and every Jew was shown as a liar and a thief who would betray any guy, but only goyin, in order to cheat them out of a few pennies, there isn't an editor in New York who would not have urged her to curb her anti-semitism before publication.

So why did Willis and her editor let this story appear this way? I prefer to believe that Willis, who has always seemed to me to be a very nice person, besides being a very talented writer, simply did not realize how unfair, how offensive, how vicious her story is to the overwhelming majority of human males--those of us who do not prefer our sex to be linked with submission, who do not lust after our little daughters, who do not like to hear our sex partners whimper in pain.

And I hope that before the paperback edition comes out, Willis will revise the story so that its effect she probably intends; not to declare that all males are child molesters, but that child molesters are monstrous. That story would be one of her best, instead of her very worst.

#### WINDING DOWN

Last issue I made some remarks critical of L. Ron Hubbard and Scientology, some of which may have been interpreted as aimed at accusing me of hating Hubbard. In the context in which I was writing, I was clearly explaining my prejudice against anything his name is connected to, in order to show how good writers of the future have to overcome that prejudice. I'm proud of my prejudices, but I don't pretend they represent objective reality.

#### MY SCIENTOLOGY WORKS

In response to my remarks about Scientology, I received a letter from David Palter, who, as a former participant in Scientology, had a much keener perception than I about how and why the religion has no success rate. I remember not long ago having a former Moonie illuminate for me why he--a brilliant, talented, and strong-willed person--could be part of what seemed to be a mindless brainwashing sect; I find that Palter's insights are just as helpful in shedding light on Scientology.

He has published a personalization, **APPLE OF DISCORD**, which deals with why he believes people in Scientology stay and there--and why he got out. I found it fascinating. He's glad to distribute copies to anyone who sends him a self-addressed, standard business-size envelope (a single first-class stamp will do); but I happen to know what Xeroxing costs, and it won't hurt if you tuck a buck into the envelope. If you're interested in the subject, you'll find that his account is worth at least that much.

#### WORLDWIDE WRITERS' WORKSHOP

Those of you who go to Confederation, the Atlanta Workshop, may be interested to know that I'm working with John Kessel and several others to put on what we hope will be a first-rate writers' workshop during the next year. For a limited number of well-screened participants, in addition to what should be really exciting programming for beginning and would-be writers, we will not actually in the workshop itself.

Nothing is final yet, except that we're doing something, but I expect that applicants will be chosen from ten-page story fragments; there will be some reduction in the price of Workshop membership to cover advance xeroxing and mailing of stories; there will be at least two professional writers at every workshop session; and the workshop will run every



#### \*\* HAVE YOU NOTICED WIGHTMAN'S WORK? \*\*

Wayne Wightman's first stories appeared in the *Elinor Mevor Amazing and Fantastic* back in '79, '80, and '81, but circulation was so small that it was the moral equivalent of disappearing. Gradually, though, with recent appearances in *PS&F* and *Asimov's* it is becoming better known that Wayne Wightman is one of the most dependably excellent writers working today.

His recent outstanding stories have included **GAMGLION** (*PS&F* Aug 84), **THESOR OF DESIRE** (*PS&F* May, reviewed last time) and **IN THE HEART OF THE WORLD**, **IN THE WORLD OF THE KNIFE** (A's Aug). He is the kind of writer who can handle strong emotion, exciting action, and important ideas; he is both literate and readable. I expect his to be one of the most important and best-read writers in the field within the decade.

Wightman has taught English at a junior college in Hesperia, California, for fifteen years. I understand he has written a novel; also, some of his best works (**GAMGLION** and **THESOR**) are obviously part of a continuous story that will make an excellent book. The magazine editors already know about him; if I were a money-grubbing book editor, I would want to get Wightman on my list now, while he's still humble and cheap.

morning of the con from 9 a.m. (informal breakfast; 10 a.m. workshop session) to noon, followed immediately by an hour or two of workshop programming open to the public.

If you have any suggestions about how you think such a workshop should go, or programming about writing that you'd like to see, I'd be glad to read them.

#### SF BULLETIN BOARD

For those of you with 300, 1200, or 2400 BAUD modems who also like if you might want to call the Science Fiction Writers Bulletin Board in North Carolina at (919) 922-3308. The long-distance charges are yours, but there is no charge for the bulletin board itself. The first time you call, all you'll be allowed to do is register (keep out the vandals); within twenty-four hours, though, you'll have full access.

I've found that the conversation on the bbs is a good deal more intelligent than what I've seen on most others, and a fair number of professional writers call up and leave messages for each other. I also keep a weekly update of the Nebula Awards Report on the board, for those who follow such things.

#### ONCE OVER LIGHTLY CONTINUED

so much time on his own psychological problems that the Heechee take a back seat much of the time. He's also a particularly irritating and generally unlikely type, so it's hard to ever sympathize with his problems.

To be fair, **GATEWAY** did win both the Hugo and the Nebula when it was first published, but my own recommendation would be to start -- and possibly end -- with **BEYOND THE BLUE EVENT HORIZON**. In that one volume, you'll get all the excitement and sense of wonder of the whole trilogy, but without a lot of Broadhead's distracting problems. Also, the secret of the Heechee is revealed at the end of **HORIZON**, and you're given nothing really new in the final volume, only a closer look at the Heechee themselves and a lot more about Broadhead's mental and emotional failings.

MILLENNIUM By John Varley  
Berkeley, \$2.95

Regardless of the awards Varley has gotten for his other books, **MILLENNIUM** is still my favorite, simply because it is so much fun to read. If you want more details, check my review in **SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW** #48 of the original trade paperback. Or better yet, rush out and buy this new mass market edition.

STAR HEALER by James White  
Ballantine/Del Rey, \$2.75

For many readers, "a new Sector General novel" just about says it all. If, like me, you liked the earlier ones, you'll like this one. However, for those who have yet to read one of White's futuristic, interstellar medical adventures, a few more words may be necessary.

The central character is an Earth human doctor named Conway, serving on a huge space-going hospital (Sector General) with thousands of other doctors of all races, from fluttering, hypersensitive empathic to virtually indestructible juggernauts. The patients are even more diverse, as are the environments that must be maintained for their survival, not to mention the medical problems that bring them to the hospital. In **STAR HEALER**, for instance, one of the major problems involves a patient -- an expectant mother, no less -- who, in order to survive, must be continually and savagely beaten. Without the physical stimulation provided by the attacks the patient would simply turn comatose and die.

As in previous books, White's style is relatively plain, with none of the flourishes of a Zelazny, for instance. Also, since the novel is a bit episodic, there is no real sense of urgency to send you racing from page to page. The multitude of fascinating aliens and their bizarre problems, however, are more than enough to keep you interested, even if you don't feel compelled to finish the book in one sitting.

# SMALL PRESS NOTES



PKDS NEWSLETTER #6, April, 1985. \$6. Yr. Box \$11. Glen Ellen, CA 95442.

This issue of the Philip K. Dick Newsletter has some choice items in it: the revelatory letter from Ted White concerning ME CAN BUILD YOU; the chilling, revealing items about Phil from two women who had been close to him, Grania Davis and Tessa B. Dick.

Was he a disturbed, tormented genius? Or was he a crazy who could write, and who became worse as time went by?

The major item in this issue is the second part of an interview with Phil by D. Scott Apel and Kevin Briggs from June/July, 1977.

## THE INN OF THE HAIRY TOAD

By Mike Resnick. \$3.75

Published by John W. Guidry, One Finch St., New Orleans, LA 70124.

Ah, ha! A very funny sword and sorcery story by a very clever, funny writer.

The hero is Cretin the Beggar, and he is beset and threatened by a Djinn of the Fourth Order name of Kakkab Komir Khastu, also self-named Steeljaw.

There are deals to be made, Tasks to be performed, freedoms to be earned... a wizard to be killed. It's all hilarious.

I honestly never thought I'd like any kind of S&S, but Resnick is a master of the craft... of humor.

This is a very small press, limited edition: 199 copies printed, with only about 100 copies still available.

RANDOM WRITINGS By Jim Stamm, Box 29, Hiler Branch, Buffalo, NY 14223. \$1.00 cash [or \$2. by check].

This is #1, and coincidentally it is issued whenever 5 pages are completed [similar phrasing to my THE NAKED ID, which is published whenever eight pages are completed]. Jim discusses the concept of inalienable human rights (do they really exist?), but the major item of interest is a very perceptive listing/comparison of two types of libertarian by 22 attributes, from class origin to lifestyles, attitudes, and morals. A devastating contrast.

For instance, Type 1 libertarian is essentially a false libertarian, as shown by his position on laws:

'As a good citizen, obeys even bad laws while waiting and working for their repeal. Or may violate a bad law openly, seeking maximum publicity, to bring to court a test case, or to make a political or moral statement.'

Type 2 libertarian has this attitude on laws:

'Despises laws and lawmakers. Ignores their edicts and does what he pleases, but quietly, on the sly.'

To me, what Jim is describing in his Type 1 listings are phoney libertarians who are really "shudder" liberals. They are double-thinkers like the young women who join protests against capital punishment while simultaneously maintaining the right to legalized abortion. Human life is sacred except when it is inconveniently in their wombs.

If future issues of RANDOM WRITINGS are as interesting and provocative as this one, Jim has a superior personalization here. I wish he'd use both sides of the paper, though, and thereby double the wordage.

## FILE 770

Edited and published and largely writ by Mike Glyer, trufan. Five for \$4. 24 pgs. 5828 Woodman Av., #2, Van Nuys, 91401. Fandom's news and reviews zine, ably done, fairly done, mimeographically done. [With a little humor and satire on the side.]

## THE METAPHYSICAL REVIEW #3

Edited, published, printed by Bruce Gillespie, GPO Box 5195AA, Melbourne, Victoria 3001, Australia.

Available for letters, fanzines, articles, reviews, phone calls... and money donations and advertising. [That's a metaphysical approach to subscriptions, I suspect, or something due to Australia's tax laws or postage laws, or...]

This zine used to be SF COMMENTARY, but Bruce is having trouble getting a wider variety of material from sfy contributors, so SFC may come back.

Whatever, he's still talking to his friends.

Interesting letter from Joseph Nich-

olas who in a naked idish way says:

"...I've lost interest in fiction, and thus no longer care to read detailed criticism of it... This must be a pretty awful admission, coming from someone who edits a reviews magazine for the BSFA, but the dreadful truth is that I just don't bloody care any more. Once upon a time sf mattered a great deal to me, and the desire to write lengthy and intelligent criticisms of it arose from that fact; but after two or three years of this I began to realise that I was essentially wasting my time. A very small proportion of [sf] is very, very good, but the rest of it is absolute rubbish; and no matter how much you cajole the authors and rail at the readers that's he way it always will be. To pretend otherwise is to waste your time; better to get on with the things that really matter, on which you can actually have some effect. Never mind the Utopian ideal of reforming an entire literature, just get on with remaking the bits you can!"

Ah, soured idealism, soured ego, soured ambition. I understand Nick's disappointment, but I don't labor under the same illusions or delusions; I never felt I could change sf, don't really want to. SFR has continued because it was in the fun/entertainment business mostly, with a few idealistic jobs here and there, a few more realistic recognitions of the true nature of writers and readers and editors and publishers. It all comes down to the old, old realization that 100



# RICHARD E. GEIS

years from now nobody will give a fart whether I or SFR lived. So the only real reason worth a shit for doing this thing is for the fun, because it pleases me, and because it provides an outlet for a peculiar talent I seem to have, which makes my life more livable. Then, too, good writing should be noted, and bad writing should be either ignored or killed in public. There's pleasure in doing that, too.

Christ, I'm putting forth arguments for continuing SFR after #62! Ass!

#### A MEASURE OF CALM

By Andrew Joron & Robert Frazier  
The Ocean View Press, P.O. Box 4148,  
Mountain View, CA 94040.

This is a quality half-size booklet containing a poem, "A Measure of Calm." Its cost is \$3.00.

It is a despairing cry from a future of cold electronics, warm robots and hot angst. It is poetry by its structure and its often impenetrable metaphor. The occasional rhyme is accidental, coincidental and inconsequential.

Why do they send me these things? I am prejudiced against modern poetry; my loves are Robert Service, "The Charge of the Light Brigade," and "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner."

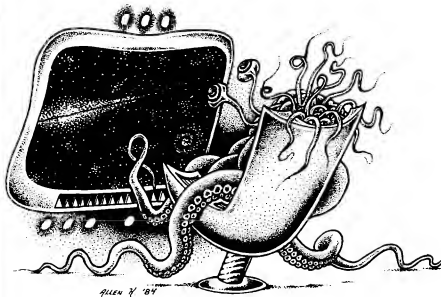
Ah, they don't write real poetry like they used to; they haven't the skills, the discipline, the talent, or the desire to be read by others than their minuscule coterie of self-indulgent fellow pretentious "artists."

**DAMN!**  
**damn!**  
**DAMN!**  
**damn!**

**WHY CAN A WOMAN  
BE MORE LIKE A  
FAN?**



## Interview With STEPHEN KING



**SFR:** Considering your achievements with the full-length novel, why do you continue to write short stories?

**KING:** Maybe it's surprising, but, I tell you, it's a great exercise. *THE TALISMAN* was about 900 pages long, and my current project is over a thousand. The shorter form reminds me of the virtues of brevity.

**SFR:** Do you read much short fiction? Do you feel that any particular writers embody those virtues?

**KING:** As a matter of fact, I read a lot of short story collections. Joyce Carol Oates, Raymond Carver. I'm especially fond of Ray Bradbury for his ability to create, with such economy illusions that seem so real. It's a little tougher to read short stories, I think, because we have become such a novel-reading culture.

**SFR:** Well, if short stories are tougher to read than novels, which is tougher to write?

**KING:** It changes as a writer ages. The short story is an easier thing to do when you're younger and you haven't mastered the novel yet. In many respects, novelists are like distance runners; pacing is acquired with age and experience. Correspondingly, the short story is a sprint, and many times old marathoners have to relearn it.

**SFR:** You seem pretty adept at both. When you get an idea, do you have problems deciding if it will be a short story or a longer work?

**KING:** Oh, no, I know immediately which it will be on the basis of the idea.

**SFR:** Any examples come to mind?

**KING:** Sure. There's a story in *SKELETON CREW* about a little boy who has to go to the bathroom, and discovers that

there's a tiger in the bathroom. The situation is fun and entertaining, but only for maybe 15 minutes.

**SFR:** Tell me about *SKELETON CREW*.

**KING:** This collection represents my work from high school through last November. They're stories of unease and stories of the supernatural.

**SFR:** Which isn't surprising, coming from you. Is there any specific unifying theme?

**KING:** I guess they're stories in my style. Several of them are all-out gross-outs. The story equivalent of kids sitting at the supper table, and one of them hanging his mouth open with a bunch of food in it and saying, "Bobby, look! Gaaaaahhhh!" You know, the story that leaves you feeling a bit sick.

**SFR:** You have this great reputation for being superstitious and afraid of the dark. Any truth to it?

**KING:** I don't really believe in superstitions, but then I believe it's best not to take chances. If there's a ladder on the sidewalk, I'll walk around it rather than under. Not because of bad luck, but why walk under when you can walk around? And I am terrified of the dark. I sleep with the lights on and my feet under the covers so the monsters don't get me. I think these attitudes come from training your imagination too much.

**SFR:** What's in the works?

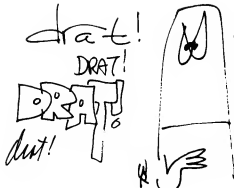
**KING:** I've always wanted to do a story about a killer toilet, but I don't think anybody would publish it. I think it could be pretty good, if I could find a way to do it. After all, you're so vulnerable when ... oh, never mind.

**SFR:** Thank you, Mr. King.

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**Conducted By Peter Strupp**





# THROUGH NO FAULT OF OURS WE ARE PRESENTING LETTERS

to judge his writing as writing as best I can (which means finding the time to read his output). As a kind of maverick and non-conformist and libertarian, I can even admire his Dianetics/Scientology efforts, even if I am, as are you, an atheist and in some ways anti-religious.))

# LETTER FROM A. J. BUDRYS  
824 Seward St., Evanston, IL 60202  
May 2, 1985

'Please don't fold SCIENCE FICTION  
REVIEW.

'On another important topic; on behalf of us who worked on the Writers of The Future anthology, I'd like to thank Orson Scott Card for his detailed endorsement of this project's results so far. I was very worried that the writers -- almost all of whom I have met, and every one of whom strikes me as a human being entitled to due consideration -- might suffer from reviewers who could not separate some opinion of Scientology from their ability to appraise talent. It's been an enlightening experience to discover that with a few insignificant exceptions, the many commentators on the book have been able to accomplish that piece of restraint.

'I have begun to be troubled, however, by the appearance of a proposition that saying good things about the writers and their stories, and about Hubbard's specific contest project, then confers a license to go to extremes in characterizing Hubbard. I think it's possible to dislike someone -- even someone one does not know and has never met -- and yet come a little short of calling him a liar, a cynic, and only one remove from a murderer, a child molester, a rapist and a torturer. That is a pretty hefty bill of (non)particulars, and apart from being a peculiar echo of what was being said about Joseph Smith not all that many generations ago, is a way of unintentionally tarbrushing the writers while with all good will attempting to say nice things to them.

'No one in SF who ever met Hubbard has ever characterized him as a shrinking violet. Restraint is not his style and many who knew him did not like him for one specified reason or another. (S one did, or at least was favorably impressed; Heinlein reportedly declared Hubbard was the one man he wanted at his back in a dark alley.) Being self-assertive and/or being disliked by many people except Robert A. Heinlein is nevertheless at more than one remove from being a pedophile.

'Conversely, many of us -- myself among them -- have very little use for any form of organized religion, considering that the age-old track record speaks amply for itself in every language ever graven. But personal religious belief is an ineradicable human

propensity. It persists under the most unlikely circumstances, and is, like it or not, among the dearly held things that must be defended if we are to defend human for what it is, rather than, paradoxically, for what some ethical system says it ought to be brought to be.

'In our community, Hubbard is widely reported to have once remarked that the way to get rich is to found your own religion. I imagine that, being an entrepreneur by nature, he did say it or something very much like it; it wouldn't have been an original thought in this culture, or in most others. But that as far as I know is the only "evidence" anyone can cite for a specific charge that Hubbard doesn't believe in the procedures that Scientology teaches, and I don't really see a sequitur there. If that's all the data Scott can cite to support his specifically calling Hubbard a liar on that point of belief, or if he doesn't rely even on that, then I think he has in effect declared a belief that being the founder of any religion creates a conclusive presumption of fraud per se. That's delicate reasoning

'The question of how to regard Hubbard is going to have to be thrashed out before the definitive history of twentieth-century SF is writable. He looms among us and will not just go away; those who wish he would are expecting totally uncharacteristic behavior of him. If they wish him gone, they are going to have to provide a legitimate and effective push, if they can.

'Having made the decision to re-enter the SF community, he leaves himself open to legitimate resistance from other community members who sincerely cannot abide his presence for whatever reason. That's the sort of chip-falling that goes on in all the arenas, and no one can take credible exception to it. But I would be happier if the reasons for objecting were documented and the arguments were well founded -- and if what he is demonstrably causing to happen well were not being mitigated by assertions of what he is reported to have done ill.'

((Most of the problem is Hubbard's inaccessibility. Given the lawsuits extant involving (or wishing to involve) him, I can understand his desire to remain incommunicado. I also admire his tremendous production of fiction and his desire to encourage young and new talent in science fiction. I will continue

# LETTER FROM LEAH ZELDES SMITH  
2007 N. Howard St.  
Evanston, IL 60202  
May 20, 1985

'Recently I arrived in my new city with my new husband and was greeted by an unpleasant surprise: A fanzine, containing malicious and insulting material about many of my friends and acquaintances and some complete strangers, had been circulated in my name, marked with my return address. I was shown a copy, by friends; none was sent to me (although a few, sent to people at incorrect addresses, have been redelivered by the post office to the address in the upper left -- mine).

'As it seems there are still a few people left who are still so idealistic about fandom that they believe the name in fanzine's colophon must be the author's, I am compelled to explicitly disclaim responsibility for "Aunt Leah's Big Thing," mailed May 3 from Niagara Falls, New York. I did not write, edit, publish or distribute it; I had no knowledge of it until roughly a week later when friends asked me if I had lost my mind ....

'I am hurt and saddened. If it was the intention of the perpetrators to cause me pain and upset during what should have been a most happy time, to prevent me from enjoying the first weeks of my marriage, I regret to say they have succeeded. If this was someone's idea of a joke, I confess I do not find it funny. While to purvey anonymously a pack of vicious lies and insults is cowardly, to attribute them to another is despicable.

'The question of myself I do not mind, but the derision of others in my name fills me with outrage. Frankly, I believe the culprits are so foul that they will make themselves known to me, when next we meet, by the smell. To those who have also been maligned in this piece of ordure, I offer my profound regrets and sympathy.'

# LETTER FROM PAT MATHEWS  
1125 Tomasita NE, Albuquerque, NM  
87112  
1985

'DEAR MR. L. NEIL SMITH: (Letter  
SFR #55)

'Let me disagree with you about the reasons for the failure, if it is failure, of your Lando Galarrissian books.

'When the first one came out, I rushed to buy it. I had read THEIR MAJESTIES'S BUCKEYEERS and found it funny and interesting; I had seen STAR WARS and Lando was one of my favorite characters. The nice, rather wooden youth I met in

your book was nothing like the Lando of either the movie or the novelization. I could picture one of TV's cloned heroes playing the part, but not Billy Dee Williams, who has been compared to the young Clark Gable. (I don't know. I don't remember Gable in his youth. But it's very plausible.)

'He lacked, for all your trying, the true, heartfelt dash Lando did in the movie-and-book. One line from the novelization stuck in my mind, in which Lando is musing how nice it would be to go back as a general and rub the Empire's nose in his status. Not good Libertarian thoughts, alas, but pure Lando. Your version was far too straight-arrow for that.

'Write a novel in which you can imagine a real rogue -- young Gable, for example -- in all his Not-Niceness, and I'll try another. In short, too much milk chocolate in your version of the recipe; not nearly as much spice as in the original. Sorry.'

# LETTER FROM BEV CLARK  
10501 8th Avenue, NE, #119  
Seattle, WA 98125  
May 31, 1985

'It's discouraging to report, in response to L. Neil Smith's comments about the fate of his Lando Calrissian books, that I too suspect the reason is that the protagonist was black.' I say this to someone who is a Star Wars fan as well as an SF fan, and active in SW fandom. It's not just the Lando Calrissian books that didn't go over, it's the character himself, even among "active" SW fans. These are people who write erotic fantasies about Darth Vader, apologize at interminable lengths for anything Han Solo might conceivably have done, that was the least bit questionable, and form distinct fandoms around every character with enough lines to be more than a spear carrier. Except Lando Calrissian; SW fans' reactions to him ranged from lukewarm to outright hate. No erotic fantasies, although he is (to my taste) far more appealing than Solo. No defenses of his actions even in the movies, let alone of hypothetical ones. No stories, no portraits, and so on. The subject of racism was raised once, delicately, in a SW letterzine, ignored, and quickly dropped. We like us (to my taste) as enlightened and liberal in our attitudes, media fans as well as SF fans, but sadly, Smith is right. We are not ready for a black protagonist.'

((Ah, yes, unconscious racism. The editors and publishers know it exists and rarely publish SF or fantasy novels with black protagonists. Yet, consciously, most SF and fantasy and Star Wars fans would loudly deny they are racist. Yet when entering into the world of identifying with the hero...they reject being a black. They "vote" with their basic instinctual racism. They don't feel comfortable "being" a black in reading a novel. (And does that explain why there are so few black SF fans and readers?---They don't like being white, blonde, blue-eyed...))

((But is this kind of racism

bad? Or is it simply a natural reaction? Should readers of fiction be made to feel guilty because of an unconscious, gut-level resistance to being/identifying with a black (or a really slimy alien with dripping goo and green tentacles)? I don't think so. Reader/hero linkages in fiction are often very intimate, private, sensitive. And the choice of which novel to buy and read is bedded in deep unconscious needs. The reader's choice is still acutely private. This kind of unconscious racism is part of it. I cannot condemn it or lament it. It is part of our make-up.))



# LETTER FROM ALLEN WARNEY  
1817 E. Olcott, #1006  
Austin, TX 78741  
1985

'Thanks for SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #54 (Spring, 1985), and for printing my review of Howard Chaykin's AMERICAN FLAG comic book. Did you know it received three nominations for the Nebula award preliminary ballot? Of course, it did not make the finals, but I suppose that is only a failure of publicity ...

'I write regarding the article in SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW awhile back about Richard Bachman, author of THE LONG WALK, ROADWORK, RAGE and THE RUNNING MAN. The new Bachman novel, THINNER, has just been published in hardcover byNAL. You'll recall that the SF article discussed the possibility of Bachman being a pseudonym for Stephen King; as a King fan, I promptly searched out the Bachman books and came to the same conclusion. When I wrote to SFR to spread the new gospel, you said (rightly) that stylistic similarity was not enough to base my conclusion on, and that you'd gotten letters from people who had actually met Bachman.

'Enclosed is a clipping from the February 11, 1985, AUSTIN AMERICAN-STATSMAN: A news service story revealing that King really is Bachman, and quoting him to the effect that he used Bachman because there is "too much stuff" on the market under his own name. (An incredible reason; King was the bestselling author, bar none, at the bookstore where I used to work -- no matter how many books came out at any given time.)

'So the question arises: Who did those people meet when they claimed to have met Bachman? And who's the guy in the inside jacket photo in THINNER?

'In lieu of reviews of the books, I would like to pass along some brief comments on the Bachman material I've read: RAGE, the first written, is pretty primitive though well paced, a short novel of a high school kid who shoots his teacher and takes the class hostage -- and then the class begins to come around in his way of thinking. It holds the interest.

'I'll echo the comments on THE LONG

WALK in the earlier SFR article: it's masterfully told, beautifully paced and frightening. The ending is creepy. The allegory isn't carried off well, but it hardly matters.

'ROADWORK takes the beginning of THE HITCH-HIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY and plays it straight: This poor sod's house is about to be demolished to make way for a highway bypass, so he buys a load of weapons and barricades himself in it. The psychology is unusually good for King (as the guy who manages a commercial laundry) watches the times pass him by and waxes nostalgic.

'THE RUNNING MAN is the best of the four I've read (THINNER waits on my bedside table even now). It's the old Robert Shekley story of a deadly game show played straight. This poor sod has to get money to cure his infant daughter's sickness (no, really) and goes on the show of the title. If he can evade everybody in America for a month, he wins a million dollars. It's easy to forget the limp premise early on, as the pace accelerates until the entire novel becomes a relentless Hitchcockian chase scene. Don't start this one late at night, because you won't put it down until it's done. No one but King could have written it.

'So there you are. I told you so. Nyah,.'

# LETTER FROM STEPHEN P. BROWN  
1621 Wisconsin Avenue, NW  
Washington D.C. 20007  
May 11, 1985

'By now you have probably heard the rumor that Stephen King wrote five novels under a pseudonym (Richard Bachman). Well, I was the guy that found that out (copyright research). I interviewed King, Kirby McCauley and Elaine Koster (King's long-time NAL editor) on the subject. My results appeared in the WASHINGTON POST. King told me repeatedly that my article was to be his only statement on the subject. I send it to you because of the nature of newspapers, the article has appeared only here in DC and in Minnesota. I am trying to peddle it to other papers right now (including the good one in CROFTON). But the bulk of King's fans still don't know this.

'I am selling the article to Chuck Miller for a new hardcover Miller book, UNDER COVER OF DARKNESS. It is, at the core, a pretty sad story. King is, as I state, a great pulp writer. It is his misfortune (millions in the bank notwithstanding) that he has become trapped in to his mega-event publishing pattern. He writes twice as fast as he publishes.

'I must disagree slightly with John Shirley's letter. Perhaps it is true, that hardcore SF is the only true SF. Perhaps it is true that the work of LeGuin, Bishop, et al is "something else." But to me this just points out the idiosyncrasy of categories at all. Fiction is fiction, man, and who ultimately gives a shit whether or not a new novel fits in to anyone's pigeonhole?

'Like most of your readership, I am somewhat disturbed at your coming hiatus. It would be tough to get along without a regular infusion of Geis (thus I enclose some cash for THE NAKED ID, includ-

ing back issues, please). But I am not going to insist that you reconsider. God knows you've given more of yourself to the SF field than any ten writers, and you deserve to do whatever you want to do. The inevitable outcry of 'Geis! Don't do it! Give me more, and more, feed me! Feed me!' is ultimately selfish at the core. You do what is right for you, and we'll follow along. I am reminded by something Bill Gibson told me at the Nebula banquet. After he had won his Lucite cube, he was surrounded by earnest pros giving him sage advice on how to conduct the rest of his career. "Okay, you've gotta get a hardback out as quick as you can, to keep the critics happy. Then shove out three paperback originals in a row, and hit them with the trilogy in '88." Bill was mostly amused at this, and said, in effect, "Fuck 'em! I'll finish the one I'm doing now, maybe do another one, then I'll take three years off and do something completely different."

'It isn't SFR that created your fandom, it isn't Elton Elliott, or O.S. Card or D. Schweitzer, or the interviews or the letters (well, sometimes it's the letters), or any of that. It is Richard Geis. And I look forward to THE NAKED ID.

'P.S. A note about my new, more formal byline. There are many Steve Browns at work today. Last year, I wrote 1,000 words of book review for the WASHINGTON POST. A week before they ran, I picked up that paper and read a review of a TV movie about hookers, improbably starring Debbie Boone. The POST's TV critic, Tom Shales, wrote two paragraphs about the sins of the screen writer, one Steve Brown. He accused the guy of every known writing sin. So I called up the POST and had them change the byline to what you see, Stephen P. Brown, and am forced to use it henceforth.'

# LETTER FROM ALEXANDER B. NEDELJKOVICH  
Jankovic Stojana 35, 11090 Beograd  
Rakovica, Yugoslavia  
June 4, 1985

'I want to admit publicly that I did make a mistake and under-represent the extent of Philip K. Dick's praise for Jeter's book, DR. ADDER. Not by much, I think, but I did under-represent it. But my analysis was (I hope) in every other way accurate.

'P.S. Mr. Geis, I will be sorry to permanently lose your excellent TAC-SFR, the amassed knowledge, good judgment, experience... Are you really gaffing? Perhaps Silverberg's '80 million year rule' is getting to you -- the feeling that whatever we do or are, it won't matter in the slightest, eighty million years from now? We do not know what things and forces are in what kind of balance, on what sorts of crossroads -- so, just perhaps, it might matter vastly what we do and are. For instance, if...

'If you really are folding THE ALIEN CRITIC -- SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW, shall I have to subscribe to some naive, gosh-wow, wide-eyed short-living fanzine, or read just this serious LOGOS and nothing else?'

((Hardly a day goes by that I don't conjure up scenarios, formats, options, for the continuation of SFR after #62. It is said a man needs an obsession in his life to keep him going, to keep his juices flowing, to give him a reason to go on living. And yet...I resent the schedules, the bookkeeping, the mailings, the letters to write...))

((Daily, I swerve from wanting to continue SFR and to do it full-time along with THE NAKED ID. And not have to write novels for the extra \$\$ needed....to a wanting to be free of SFR and only do TNI as I write best-selling novels.

((And the life of pure sloth comes to mind---throw out all the typers, the addressing machine, and just play chess and cards and watch TV and eat ice cream.... You see the problems I face? Could I live for long in pure sloth? Do I merely need a nice, long vacation? Do I want to take on all those publishing obligations again? All those deadlines? And how will the economy be in two years? How will my health be?

((I'm thinking, I'm thinking! I'll let you all know. I'm gathering information. Right now I feel like Resting for a year. But...))



# LETTER FROM ALAN DEAN FOSTER  
4001 Pleasant Valley Drive  
Prescott, AZ 86301  
May 6, 1985

'For his "amazement" in re my humorous comment on the Doles being the Republican candidates for President and Vice-President in 1988, Elton Elliott is hereby sentenced to an evening of listening to Mark Russell records and reading Art Buchwald. Perhaps I should have included a reference to them as the true candidates of the pineapple party, but I thought the reference as I made it was perilously near delivering the comment with a bludgeon as it was.

'Mon, Elton. Speaking of grass-roots politics, you ought to try taking them seriously when you live in the same town as ex-cowboy actor Ty Hardin and his "Arizona Patriots." Hardin and his bunch like to plan the assassination of judges and so forth. The wild west is

not dead. It's just gone from semi-to full-automatic.

'I will miss SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW and heartily second Orson Card's comments. Why not try raising your price before you give it up? Or send out a questionnaire with the next issue or so and see how much your present subscribers would be willing to pay for a quarterly fix? Remember, SFR will get you through times of no controversy better than controversy will get you through times of no SFR -- to paraphrase Shel-ton.'

# CARD FROM ROBERT BLOCH  
211 Sunset Crest Dr.  
Los Angeles, CA 90046  
May 12, 1985

'I flew over you two days ago while returning from France. Why the airline chooses a course which does a right-angle at Seattle and then comes down the coast via the Rockies seems incomprehensible, but I suppose foreign craft get diverted from more direct routes.

'All of which has nothing to do with SFR #55---except to let you know that although it took me two solid hours just to open the waiting mail, I zeroed-in on your latest issue and, as usual, was not disappointed. For some time now I've found that your reviews are better than most of the books and films they cover. My thanks to you, and a happy Mother's Day!'

((You remembered!))

# LETTER FROM FORRY ACKERMAN  
2495 Glendower Avenue  
Hollywood, CA 90027  
June, 1985

'AN AMERICAN TRAGEDY

'On the occasion of my 50th birthday, in front of a couple hundred bankers, the late Henry Eichner stood up and declared that upon his demise his (not inconsiderable) collection was to go to me. He also put it in writing, with witnessing signatures. But he died not too long afterward and left a widow within 3 weeks of being destitute. I didn't have the heart to take books off her shelves, bread out of her mouth.

'For years I gave the late Sir Alvin Gernershausen the privilege of raiding my Garage Mahal and helping himself to any duplicate books he wanted for his (fantastic) collection. The understanding was that if he died first, I would have first dibs from his library. He may have had an intimation of death, because a few months before he passed away he called me over one day and had me pick out what I would eventually want. It was less than 100 books (out of well over, I should imagine, 10,000 hardcovers) and a few jackets. I'll never know why he didn't have me take them then and there; instead, he set them aside for me. When he died, before I could collect them, a book dealer had made off with them.

'Four days before he died, Walt Liebscher reiterated in front of two witnesses that a dozen people had heard him say repeatedly for years that he wanted me to have his collection. (It took 4 days to empty it out of his apartment.) But in the end, only a 25-year-old will could be found. We had been friends since 1940 and it was my intention to incorporate his collection within my own (as I have done with Arthur Louis Joaquin II's fabled Atlanteana) with a photo of Walt and a writeup about his accomplishments, as a memorial. Instead, the recipient auctioned it off to the highest bidder (a local dealer), having no interest but a monetary one in Walt's life-time accumulation. Recently had the pleasure of sitting in my office listening to a dealer from back East, using my phone, quote prices to a well-known LA SF pro (he despises the term sci-fi) as to what he should expect to have to pay for Walt's Finlay, Cartier and -- his pride and joy -- Powers' painting (\$2000, if I recall correctly). God, stroke-victim 66-year-old Liebscher could have used the money himself had he chosen to sell his collection rather than will it to Posterity via me. What a tragedy.

'I hope someone out there feels sorry for me, a triple loser. And especially for Walt.'

((Yes, Forry, building the world's greatest collection of sf, fantasy and horror books and memorabilia is an often difficult, disappointing, frustrating, tragic, messy job--- but somebody's got to do it!))

# LETTER FROM TED WHITE  
1014 N. Tuckahoe St.  
Falls Church, VA 20406  
Feb. 15, 1985

'What sparked me to write this letter was Forry's. It's sad to see a man whom I admire, and whose achievements I've admired since I first became a fan thirty-four years ago, so proprietorially hung up on that ugly coinage, "Sci-Fi." I wonder if Forry ever realized how the term read to non-SF people, what a term of derision it was and still is? You're quite right in your response: "Sci-Fi" was always used by the mundane press to put SF down, either covertly or overtly, and for obvious reasons: it contains an implicit sneer. Can Forry truly be ignorant of the way in which "Hi-Fi" lent itself to a variety of sneering adaptations by the press in the fifties? The other variations are long gone. "Sci-Fi" means as much to us as a visible sign of the contempt in which SF was for so long held. Even today the literati of the mass media hold SF in disdain: We are still being laughed at, if less openly (money success breeds some respect, but not a lot; no one thinks STAR WARS ranks with CITIZEN KANE); SF is still regarded as a toss-off. (And, sadly, that's what it usually is, too...)

'The only way I can figure it is that Forry was too close to the trees to see the forest (no pun intended there): a man who for much of his life wrote in neologisms and simplified spellings (and

thought of himself as a punster although his puns lacked much wit) simply saw his latest coinage as an inspired bit and never looked beyond that to notice either the effect it had within the field or outside. And when people tried to bring it to his attention that "Sci-Fi" had cheap connotations, when people tried to tell him how it was being used, he became -- and is still -- defensive about it. And that's a shame.

'I sympathize a lot more with his unhappiness with LASFS's 50th Anniversary meeting. It's entirely too true that a lot of current-day fans have no sense of time-binding -- and this extends well beyond LASFS -- and couldn't care less about anything which occurred before their own advent in fandom.

'Human nature being what it is, I'm sure there were always some fans like this, but the proportion seems greater now. Perhaps it's due to the size of current-day fandom -- especially club- and con-fandom -- which has led to information breakdowns. It was a little strange to read the history of LASFS in the LACON II Program Book, with its odd omissions. Charles Burbee, although represented by a photo, was not mentioned in the text to give one notable example. I'm told he was in Fred Patten's original article, but was arbitrarily cut by editor John Hertz.

'John Hertz is another jerk -- I shared one program panel with him and called him to account when he delivered himself of an amazingly arrogant and erroneous characterization of me, whom he knew not at all -- but I can't help wondering if he even knows who Burbee is. To me, and to many other fans, Charles Burbee is the most important fanfann (as opposed to proish) talent ever to emerge from LASFS. But then again, if Patten's unflattering portrait of F. Towner Laney in that Program Book article is any guide, perhaps Hertz cut nothing important when he snipped Burbee out.

'I doubt Patten was a fan before Laney died (1958), but he compared Laney unfavorably with that great bag of wind, Walter J. Dougherty, surely an egregious fanhistorical error.

((You're going to have to learn to be more tolerant, Ted. WE know what SF means, but damn few others outside fandom know, so Sci-Fi does its job. A shame it is associated with schlock SF films, but maybe time will bring it respectability. Is Sci-Fi any worse than Stff?))



# LETTER FROM J.R. MADSEN  
POB #18610-A, Madison Station  
Baton Rouge, LA 70893  
May 11, 1985

'In his letter of 30 January in SFR #55, Darrell Schweitzer "sympathized with Forry" (Sherman and Buzz Dixon in their complaints of how fandom has changed and how current fans have no sense of the past." And, how most fans today discover SF through the paperbacks, are casual readers, are familiar with only what is currently in print. Even if they discover clubs and conventions, they remain only casual readers with little sense of history and community.

'There are also those fans who do not even bother to read science fiction, they watch it on the movie screen or on the television tube. In one sense, I do not think we can exclude these "media fans" from the ranks of total fandom because, to some small extent, they too share the "sense of wonder" we fans have in common with each other.

'The "sense of wonder" is the common thread which binds fandoms however loosely. Of course, some have more of this "sense of wonder" than others and, as a result, the level of fan activity can vary widely from individual to individual. Also, one should consider how much time these various levels of activity can require on the part of the participant. A fellow who puts one issue of his twenty-five page zine a year as his total contribution to fandom may not work as hard as some convention chairmen. In regards to con chairs, they have to deal with mundanes more than do fan pubbers and that may result in more severe cases of burnout.

'I do not think there are any less "fans" in fandom today than back in the thirties. And, by "fans," I mean those folks Darrell considers to be trufans: letterhackers, zine pubbers, fan artists, columnists, etc. I.E., fanzine fans. Their numbers are about the same as they have always been; they are just buried within a larger number of fringe fans: con fans, media fans, casual readers.

'Here in Baton Rouge, I started a club back in 1979. A nice bunch of people but who mostly fall into the casual reader category. We have attended a few conventions together including some Worlds. We publish a small, bi-monthly newsletter. Some of the members even read a few of the fanzines we get in trade for the newsletter. But, beyond myself and one other member who have actually written locs to some of the zines and contributed articles, the rest of the membership is really not interested in fanzines.

'Personally, I stumbled into fandom in 1976 through the WorldCon in Kansas City (where everything is up to date) via the event calendar in ANADOC. Fanzines came along slowly later. Somehow, I discovered more and more about fandom and was very intrigued with the various histories of fandom by Sam Moskowitz, Harry Warner, etc. Reading these re-counts of fandom's earliest days, I often felt cheated for being born too late. But apparently, I am alone in this interest for a radius of several hundred miles.

'I don't know if it will make Darrell feel any better but I, a latecomer to fandom, have a copy of the Willisish of WARHON. I know who Mark Clifton is and

David H. Keller. I've met John Brunner though I think his politics rather strange at times. And, I read the old and new Brian Aldiss. (I thought at one club meeting, I talked about Brunner and Aldiss books and no one had ever heard of them.)

'And then there is Garth Spencer up in British Columbia who has begun his climb in the ranks of fanzine production. Marty Cantor did not get involved with fandom until 1975-6. Heck, even Mike Glyer ain't that ancient! There is hope for fanzine fans as there has always been. We will just have to adjust to the changing situation regarding fandom as a whole. Fanzine fans started fandom after all. We were just too nice about it and it got out of control along the way.'

((I felt like a Johnny come lately, too---in 1953 or so. The Great Days of SF fandom seemed past. Yet there was Willis, Grennell, Nydall, Hoffman, Sneary, Boggs, others, others, including Silverberg and Ellison... I can't remember them all. There was even Geis in that era. That was a Golden Age. This period will be considered a Golden Age someday, I'll bet. ))

# LETTER FROM JOEL ROSENBERG  
1477 Chapel St. #8-4  
N. Haven, CT 06511  
May 14, 1985

'Orson Scott Card: (P. 23) "Silly Season" is a C.M. Kornbluth story; it's not one of his better ones. Heinlein's term is "The Crazy Years." A silly season passes quickly, as the slow-news end of summer, if I remember correctly; the Crazy Years don't.

'Speaking of Kornbluth, I'm curious as to why you haven't speculated that the lack of reprints of "Two Dooms" -- both one hell of a good story and a powerful statement that dropping the bomb on Hiroshima was the right thing to do, as a way of making damn sure that nobody would have any question about who won the war (yeah, I know -- but part of the reason that WW II happened was that Germany surrendered too early in WW I, before there was enough destruction on German soil; a version of Sherman's March would have been good for the German soil) -- is the result of some sort of conspiracy.

"Two Dooms" is at least as powerful as "The Mindworm" which I've seen reprinted over and over, although not quite as powerful as "The Little Black Bag." The trouble with "Two Dooms" is that while it can be accurately accused of being almost rabidly anti-Imperial Nippon and pre-VE day Deutschland, and the various and sundry sins Kornbluth accuses Imperial Japanese and the society are understated, historically (The sins of the Germans are well known; for a few words on pre-1945 Japanese foreign policy, try asking any Chinese, Korean or Filipino -- doesn't matter what age; we in the U.S. are about the only nation with no sense of history.)

'But that Truman was right to drop the bomb on Hiroshima is not exactly a

popular opinion these days. Which explains it, I guess.

'Then again, the simple explanation that "Two Dooms" is a novella, and that novella space in anthos is in short supply night work, too.

'As to Kim Smith's feeling that "any wordprocessing system will be obsolete in a year, if it isn't already"... well, if by "obsolete" she means "not new as powerful as what's available to anyone with a checkbook" then of course, she is right; progress marches on.

'On the other hand, I can't see that as an argument against buying a word processor or getting by with a toy system forever; I've got too much to write before the Last Trump. Computer prices will continue to drop by at least 10% per year -- but every year you wait to buy one is a year you spend back in the Stone Age with your chisel and whetstone or Smith-Corona and Liquid Paper or Correc-tiletric or whatever.

'Shudder.

'Even if the new Atari will be "outperforming the Apple Macintosh for 1/3 the money," that doesn't impress me; when you add in the cost of the software and the second disk drive, the Mac is overpriced by a factor of about four. Steve Jobs' desire to save on chips by having the same one both crunch the numbers and handle the pretty video display was fundamentally flawed, as was the idea of building an expensive system with closed architecture (which means that you "upgrade" by buying a new system, not by unplugging an old board and plugging in a new one).

'This may work out well for Apple, but not likely for Apple buyers. The Mac, the prettiest Etch-a-Sketch I've ever seen, though. Right now, the biggest bang for the buck is in CPM-80 systems.

'My friend Darrell doesn't know when he's well off. Damn, the increase of the population of both SF fandom and SF readership is good for everyone involved. Many people who love the field and who would have expressed that, in the olden days, by writing endless letters to fanzines or writing stories and books instead, to the betterment of us all.

'Darrell's nostalgia reminds me of Sholom Aleichem rhapsodizing about shtetl life.

'Elton Elliott ought to learn that it's lightning that causes the thunder, not the other way around.

'It's hard to break into TV and movies because producing either a television episode or a movie costs a lot of money, and producers don't like risking serious money on people of unknown and unproven ability.

'The reason that there are powerful and effective writers' unions in TV is that there's a lot of serious money floating around TV, and it pays the writers to band together and get their share. While -- in theory -- the deal in Hollywood is a closed shop arrangement, nobody has to hire a present member of the MWAF or ask anybody's permission to hire anybody. The deal -- entered into by adult parties on both sides -- is, roughly, that producers are free

to buy from whoever they want, as long as whoever it is, if they're a newcomer, joins the Guild promptly.

'Anyone can join the Guild; all you have to do is sell your first script. Expensive? Sure -- but look at how much even a treatment pays. The word I've gotten is that if you go to Hollywood with a trunk full of good professional spec scripts and the ability to write more, you're going to, albeit after much effort, find yourself rich.

'This is doom!'

((Okay, I've been Thinking Seriously about buying a computer which would:

- a) be a great word processor
- b) allow me to keep small business records and such
- c) keep an updated mailing list or lists
- d) let me do layouts and headings and such for SFR, THE NAKED ID
- e) allow me to keep reams and reams of notes, stories, novels, etc.. And especially (using a text scanner -- are those good enough to "read" newspapers and book pages?) files of special interest categories of information.

And I'd need a printer to do all of the above. So I'm throwing myself onto the Readership for advice: WHICH ONE??)

IS PRINTING MY BAG?  
IT'S MY BOG!

AN APA TOO  
FAR, EH?



# LETTER FROM ELLEN DAWLOW  
OMNI Fiction Editor  
OMNI Publications International Ltd.  
1965 Broadway, New York, NY 10023  
May 8, 1985 5965

'Orson Scott Card has the mistaken impression (SFR #55) that there is some kind of fiction committee at OMNI through which I have to submit stories I want to buy. This is completely untrue. I am the only one at OMNI who buys and edits the fiction (in fact, I'm the only one to see it aside from an assistant, until I'm being prepared for an issue) and I accept full responsibility for every piece of fiction I've bought since I took over as Fiction Editor. I suggest that next time Card writes a non-fiction article, he check his facts before publishing it.'

# LETTER FROM PRUCE D. ARTHURS  
3421 W. Poinsettia  
Phoenix, AZ 85029-3227  
May 5, 1985

'Orson Scott Card's "On Sycamore Hill" was for the most part interesting, informative and amusing, but there was one passage that just gave me the heebie jeebies. That's the bit on page 9 where he's describing his discomfort with the other people in the Sycamore group, and says, in part, "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."

"I'm aware that the Mormons tend to be insular, that Mormon families tend to have almost all, or more, of their time filled with church and church-related and church-sponsored and church-affiliated and church-approved activities, but are Mormons really so different (with the implication of "better") than a cross-section of Americans in general? Are they (or perhaps we) really so alien?"

"A round of applause to Card, again, for the effort and work expended on the overview of "Asap" 123 short stories in "You Got No Friends in the World." Unfortunately, since I've read less than a handful of them, I merely skimmed his lengthy article. What I did garner from it, though, was a desire to start trying to catch up on what's being published in the short fiction markets again.

"I thought at first that Darrell Schweitzer's "Creating Frivolous Literary Theories" was going to be the yet another of his boring attacks on the New Wave and its successors. Glad I kept on reading it anyway, chuckling most of the way. One genuine FLT I recall was that Robert Chan Gilman (author of THE REBEL OF RHADA) was actually a pseudonym for Arthur C. Clarke. Hey, and here's one that just came to me: How can one really account for the drastic improvement in Heinlein's last several books over the ones for years before that? My FLT is that FRIDAY and JOB were actually written by Mrs. Heinlein! Take the ball from there, Darrell.

"Enjoyed the interview with Vardeman even though I buy his books more from friendship than because they're such great literature. They're fast-paced adventures, frequently inventive, but his characters just don't come to life for me.

"Vardeman once coined a lovely phrase, during a conversation about creative writing classes: "It's not creative unless it sells." I later wrote that on the blackboard of a CN class I was in, just before the instructor came in. "Who wrote THAT crap?" he asked. It was the most interesting session that class had all semester.

"(Anyone turned in a review of SWORD AND SORCERESS II yet? I'm anxious to see what outsiders think of the story I have in there. When I sent it in, I thought it was really swell; visions of Hugos, World Fantasy Awards, groupies, danced through my head. Now that I've seen it in print though, I find I can see too many bad choices of words, poor pacing and limp characterization to really be apesht about it. Is this a common letdown for writers?)"

((As for me, I'm always astonished that my stuff reads so well in pub-

lished form. I think it's often shit in ms, and would like to redo most of it. But even in ms. there are sections, scenes, bits and pieces that I think are really fine. I congratulate you in being able to see flaws in your work after it's seen print. I don't remember if anyone has reviewed SWORD AND SORCERESS II, and I'm too tired now to bother to look.))

# LETTER FROM ORSON SCOTT CARD  
546 Lindley Rd  
Greensboro, NC 27410  
May 22, 1985

"I was not surprised when you told me that "On Sycamore Hill" had brought some negative response from people who believe that it is somehow morally wrong to feel uncomfortable among societies where you are a stranger. What they fail to recognize is that their negative response only reconfirms the ancient legend that when we Mormons venture forth into American society we invariably meet with misunderstanding, rejection, hostility, ridicule and contempt. In fact, we would be disappointed if people fully accepted us, since the foundation of our community epic is the story of how our forebears were persecuted, driven from their homes, raped and massacred at the hands of freedom-loving Americans.

"I look forward to reading the criticisms of "On Sycamore Hill" and I relish the hope that they might be truly vicious, unfair and abusive; such comments would only rebound to my credit in my own community, where my relative success as a "worldly" writer is viewed with suspicion; and if they are cruel enough I may even taste something of the rapture of the martyrs. Publish them all, Dick! -- or at least the most thick-headed and bigoted of them. We fanatics only grow stronger under the lash!"



# LETTER FROM KERRY E. DAVIS  
250 NE Tomahawk Isl. Dr.  
Portland, OR 97217  
May 5, 1985

"It all comes down to what people want to do. Truth has nothing to do with it, and never has. People use religion to make themselves feel good, and to justify persecuting, torturing and warring with others. Bertrand Russell said it best, particularly from several angles, in "An Outline of Intellectual Rubbish: A Hilarious Catalog of Organized and Individual Stupidity:"

"Every advance in civilization has been denounced as unnatural while it was recent."

"As soon as we abandon our own reason, and are content to rely upon authority, there is no end to our troubles. Whose authority? The Old Testament? The New Testament? The Koran? In practice people choose the book considered sacred by the community in which they are born, and out of that book they choose the parts they like, ignoring the others ... And so, even when we have a sacred book, we still choose as truth whatever suits our prejudices."

"Plato, in his REPUBLIC, laid it down that cheerful views of the next world must be enforced by the state, not because they were true, but to make soldiers more willing to die in battle."

"Many a man will have the courage to die gallantly, but will not have the courage to say, or even to think, that the cause for which he is asked to die is an unworthy one. Obloquy is, to most men, more painful than death; that is why, in times of collective excitement, so few men venture to dissent from the prevailing opinion ("Death" being a nebulous concept.)

"But probably 2,000 years hence many beliefs of the wise of our day will have come to seem equally foolish. Man is a credulous animal, and must believe something; in the absence of good grounds for belief, he will be satisfied with bad ones." (emph. in original.)

((Hmmm. Let's see. I believe in orgasms, ice cream and self-knowledge. I believe in winning, feeling superior and "knowing the score." I believe having the use of lots of money is good. I believe there is no God. I believe there is no Devil. I believe I can find the ideal fanzine format (for me). And I believe there will be another Great Depression...Real Soon Now.))

# LETTER FROM IAN COVELL  
2 Gosgrove Close, Berwick Hills  
Middlesbrough, Cleveland TS3 7BT  
England  
April 13, 1985

"I have read three L. Neil Smith books and ... well, basically, didn't react to them in a positive way. I keep being criticized for 'not liking' things so I'm rephrasing myself) ... If this interview proves anything, it proves that my brain neglects all but the most rabid political stances; I can stand the wolvish Heinlein, I can't stand Pournelle; Smith's work seemed to teeter on the edge of the right wing, but this interview proves I didn't take the note I should have. I like the way Neil Wilgus laced into him; I've grown a trifle tired of apathetic questions to even more apathetic responses; nice to see someone stand up and say 'Now, watch it there, mister.' When exorcising an amazingly solid position. Like Wilgus, I'm puzzled by Smith's belief that violence is demagogic; if anything, the avenger-hero has become the norm again (don't you now have a prime time series based on DIRTY HARRY?) and in essence he never left (in my opinion); having the opportunity of recent to directly confront someone who is offended by the depiction of sex ("...it's embarrassing to

see them acting out something I think is a pure state pleasure. ... But excusing the excesses of Hushy and Starch unless they really humiliate or cause pain to people ... I'm now prepared to state definitely that people get off on violence, and are upset by sex because it arouses feelings they don't like showing (desire, tenderness, vulnerability). It would be easy to lace into Smith for what I feel are sentiments specifically designed to promote fear in others; maintaining social stability (in his eyes) by the threat of reprisal for transgression "amed ... (and so) non-violent"; I presume this means he carries a gun and he never he goes, because of course, you can't stop a fight in a bar by threatening to go outside for your gun. Of course, that a man permanently carries a weapon does raise the question of when he reveals possession to damp down a possibly violent situation. I think, looking at the first parts of ... 12 ... that his books failed -- and I'm sure they did -- because they don't have sustained opposite views; Smith is so sure which side the "right side" is that he never gave his "bad people" a justifiable stance; they are simply opposite to his heroes. All in all, an excellent interview that will probably make a cool relationship between the two speakers for a long long while.

((No, sex is a problem for people because it reminds them of their own inadequacies or unmet sexual needs, their own sexual hang-ups, gulits, sexual rage. Sex-in-the-media constantly torments these types because it is a carrot they cannot have, because it arouses envy, lusts-they-dare-not-admit, and fears and shames they don't want to remember.))

'Re Alan Dean Foster: I will read a future for you, the future of British satellite dishes. Before they can become widespread, this government will ban them, license them or make them prohibitively expensive via tax -- maybe it will even demand they get certificates from a department it will establish in about a decade. Our government in its treatment of CB radio (legal only to a range of about one hundred yards because "it might interfere with important transmissions") of Cable TV (all adult channels banned by its charter, all channels to conform to the standards of our two national networks), and so on ... Satellite dishes are too good to be allowed ... watch.

'Dean R. Lambe: While I do think Orwell is didactic, I'm also sure that his lesson in 1984 is correct: a government that keeps its people on a readiness-for-war footing (in this case by constantly emphasizing the dangers of the past; celebrating forty-year-old victories, hinting that our "opponents" today would do the same thing given a chance) can control behavior and social change to their own advantage (i.e. the status quo). Everything in recent court cases has emphasized the dangers of national security," even in those instances when revealing military knowledge (say, about the General Belgrano) is considered still harmful, not because our (then) enemies don't know precisely what happened (it was their ship, being monitored by Russian satellites), but because revealing what really happened might be too much of a shock to the political sys-

tem... So, we are constantly reminded of the threat of foreign invasion from our juvenile comic books through to remakes of remakes of war films...

'Interesting to compare Schweitzer's review of STARS IN MY POCKET with yours. I gave up on Delany after TRITON when I totally failed to understand a single sentence in the Afterword, and fared only marginally better with the so-called fiction. My problem with Delany has always been that I always thought his mention of homosexuality was the side-issue of a liberal; it isn't, it's Delany's real way of how life should be lived ... and not agreeing with that has meant I drew further and further away from emotional involvement while not being sure why I was doing so.

'Agree totally about Bob Shaw's FIRE PATTERN. I really do not know why he leaves the real story behind and launches into a redundant space opera ... but perhaps it might be explained if it turns out the book was being written while Shaw was revising GROUND ZERO MAN into his new book. GZM failed -- I am told -- because its publishers knew it wasn't SF-y enough, and didn't push it; could it be that Bob has realized that the more SF-y something is, the better it sells? (Sadly, ORBITSVILLE DEPARTURE is another odd mess, sad sequel to a great book; a friend of mine, a Shaw fan for years, says he hasn't read a good Shaw book since about 1976; I wouldn't like to argue the point.) Shame, because Shaw is one of the finest writers around, he just seems to have lost track of what made the early books great: emotional depth.

'I reviewed DRAGONROUGE for another magazine. It's a sendup (as it says in the notes at the end) and it's "bad" to the extent that only adults will understand all the jokes and references; children will only get some; one person reacts to the princess's nakedness. What the book is, is a fairy tale for adults, a gentle rollicking tender expression of Carter's knowledge about fantasy worlds and fantasy writing. I liked it but I can see why you didn't. (My objection to recent DAW books is the immensely increased type size, and hence page length, and hence price; all the recent ones I've got should have been about 20% reduced...)

((I prefer large type, since my eyes are shifting from near-sightedness to far-sightedness, and I seem unable to get used to bifocals. And when my eyes are tired they lose a degree of focus. One hour my glasses are okay, the next they are too fuzzy...))

# LETTER FROM LARRY NIVEN  
3901 Vanalden Ave, Tarzana, CA 91356  
June 2, 1985

'Your review of FOOTFALL was highly flattering, yet I suffer from the impulse to talk back. So:

'If you were the President of the U.S.A., and a giant alien spacecraft appeared in the sky, who would you call on for help? The Air Force would put you in touch with me or Joe Haldeman or

Dean Ing or David Brin, some of the SF writers who participated in a long-term planning session some weeks ago.

'As President you've been hearing from the Citizens' Advisory Council for a National Space Policy for some years. That's my house, and Jerry to do the yelling, and 30 - 40 people involved somehow in the space industries. You call Jerry Pournelle.

'Based on sales, anyone in the military -- particularly the Navy -- would send you to Robert Heinlein, or Jerry.

'Any reasonable avenue gets you the Dreamer Fifth. And who else do you ask about aliens? Politicians? The U.S.A. embassy in Moscow? We think the Threat Team is very reasonable. (And self-indulgent RNI!)

'You say we coped with Footfall too easily. Remember: the foot was smaller than Lucifer's Hammer. The fifth have to move it. You're stomping territory they want for themselves; and they have the option of doing it again and again. You still don't cope with Footfall too easily if you're standing in India, or Iran, or Perth, or any South African city. Why didn't we deal with these in the book? Because obliterated places contributed nothing to the theme of war; and because we'd already written similar scenes for HAMMER.

'The survivalists: We wanted them, and they do contribute. Make your own list of what we'd lose, or have to shove in some other way.'



# LETTER FROM DARRELL SCHWEITZER  
113 Deepdale Road  
Stratford, PA 19087  
May 3, 1985

'Nothen, you are quite correct when you say that SFR's typography stimulates me to write letters. There are, again, serious errors. "Creating Frivolous Literary Theories" has suffered a transposition error, three lines from column two on page 27 having drifted into column 3. Now I'm not going to pull a Harlan Ellison act and insist you report it and pay me twice, but I would like it known that the last two sentences of paragraph 3, column 2, page 27 should read:

"They came to a patriotic, if Freudian end during World War I, when they tried to spirit away a top secret German cannon known as 'Big Bertha.' The German crew had left the safety off."

'The paragraph breaks off in mid-sentence as it now stands, the missing lines being at the end of the following paragraph.

'And, in the same affected paragraph (middle, column 2), I think it should read "Maybe a pneumatic drill" rather than "many a pneumatic drill," which would be a bit much, even for a Victorian petticoat.

'Further, someone, either you or me, screwed up the correction line about the

Saxon grandmother from the review of the *Parkie Godwin* book. It should read (Let's get it right this time --): "Including, even especially, a cranky old Saxon grandmother."

"If anything of mine is ever reprinted from SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW (and actually something has been; the article on archaic language in fantasy is in my book *EXPLORING FANTASY WORLDS*) it will need heavily copyedited. I don't know if it's just me, but sometimes my SFR texts seem to be sailing under a curse.

"As for the Donning affair, I am no longer an insider, and so have little more information than most people have. I know, certainly, that Donning has continued to publish books. A new *ELFQUEST* and a new *MYTH* book have appeared although the Asprin doesn't seem to be in stores. I have known people who've had to ask their friends to pick it up for them at conventions, since it can't be had anywhere else. However, the day has not yet come when Donning has had anything like a coherent publication schedule, and books have appeared in the right month. Rarely in the right year. This of course wreaks havoc with orders. When I had Donning books in print, I would often ask bookstore owners why they didn't stock Donning titles. (Inevitably, they didn't.) The answer usually was that it was too much of a fight to get them, and they could more easily sell something else. Sometimes I was told that the bookseller didn't really believe Donning was going to publish what they announced, since he was the rule, not the exception. (In my own case, *WE ARE ALL LEGENDS* was about a year late, *THE SHATTERED GODDESS* about 8 months late, and none of the other announced books were ever published.) While the recent rumors have no doubt been harmful, this is a company which has had credibility problems for a long time.

"My own impression of them is that they are well-meaning incompetents, who couldn't screw writers even if they tried. They're not that well organized. Checks and royalty statements were usually late. (I got the last half of the advance on *GODDESS* six months after publication. But the royalty statements were mdel, until the end, when the size of the print run got mysteriously down-scaled.) All I could count on would be that if I was told something would be done by a certain date, it almost certainly wouldn't. Donning has never operated in the same time-frame as the rest of the universe.

"I used to order my books by the crate, charged against royalties, and then I sold them at conventions. This used to be a happy arrangement, because I not only made the money, but the advances that way, but I assured the books some distribution, at least in East Coast fandom. Where they might have sold a dozen copies, I pushed several hundred. I will say this: Donning puts out a great package. The books really sell, if anyone can find them.

"When I was being published by Donning, for all the aggravation, I always felt in good company. I was not a mainlined in good company, along with Lafferty, Ray Nelson, Sprague de Camp, and Marion Zimmer Bradley. These books were all canned because the company couldn't make money with them. This is something any publisher has the option of doing. But don't you really wonder about a publisher who publically admits

being unable to make money with two Marion Zimmer Bradley fantasies, at the same time that *THE MISTS OF AVALON* is on the *NY TIMES* bestseller list? There's something very wrong there, and I don't think it's Marion's fault.

"I do know that most of the Starblaze/Donning SF titles have been remastered. I know this because I saw them all listed in a remainder wholesale catalogue at a bare-a-copy (with a minimum order of \$100.00). In fact, here is the address, for the benefit of the authors, fan dealers, etc.: Book Sales Inc., 110 Enterprise Avenue, Secaucus NJ, 07094. It would be best to query first, to make sure the books you want are still available. But that's where they went.

"Actually, I have no hard feelings toward Donning. I wish them well, but at the same time I think they have a great deal to learn about the basics of publishing.

"By the way, I should mention that I am still peddling copies of both my Donning titles, *WE ARE ALL LEGENDS* and *THE SHATTERED GODDESS*. They are \$5.95 each, plus \$1.00 postage & handling. Some of the bare, unsigned copies are available...

"Some further thoughts on the subject of Whithering Fandom.... It is true that very few people who go to conventions would have been considered fans by the standards of fifteen years ago, but to some extent this is merely because SF has become an accepted part of the general culture (except in some academic and New York literary circles, which are now too isolated to matter), so that, in order to have a lively interest in some form of SF ten years ago, you no longer have to be special. Maybe SF in general and fandom in particular have become the equivalent of the little restaurant that is "discovered" and suddenly doesn't seem so unique anymore.

"But I have a better analogy. Old Fandom will probably die out within a generation, unmoored by thousands of convention attendees and hundreds of thousands of readers who never suspected its existence. Perhaps there will be no participatory fanzines left because there aren't any special people left to want them or have any use for them. Ted White will probably write the obituary for our sub-culture. He seems to be the chief defender of the Trufanish faith these days, for all he is preaching to convention audiences which understand him less and less.

"I wonder if the surviving Old Fans (that is, those who remember or are still a part of traditional fandom; I suspect the youngest ones are around thirty) aren't like the early Christians who survived all the persecutions and were able to come out in the open, but found themselves secretly longing for the catcombs, because in the old days everyone was a strong, true believer, forged in the fires of the faith, devoting their lives entirely to the cause. But when the cult became legal, why, anybody could become a Christian. It was no longer special. The people in it were no longer special. Some of them didn't care a whole lot.

"So it is with fandom today. We've come out of the catcombs. SF is no longer ridiculed. But it is also no longer the special property of the fervent few. There is much to be lost. The sense of history seems to be fading. Many of the old traditions have been gone. Fanzine fandom has declined to the status of a minor special-interest group, certainly smaller than game-playing fandom. But this is merely the logical outcome of decades of missionary output on the part of SF people. So we've converted everybody. Now what?

"Like everyone else, I'm hoping you will want to continue SFR when the Time draws nigh. The field would seem empty without it. I don't know that anyone else could really replace it. Certainly there is no other publication presently going which could take its place as general free-for-all think tank and show-place for ideas. If it's money you need, I bet the readers could start a missionary Save SFR campaign and make it profitable. Really, if a third of the readers sold ten copies of each issue, as I do, where would that leave you?"

((We apologize for the typing errors, the goofs, and etc. We'll do better. We are always rushed.

((If my memory serves, there are as many fanzines being published now as in the '50s, and there are probably as many or more hardcore fanzine fans. The special people now are those who read, write and draw for and publish fanzines. As in the fifties, sf is the usually unmentioned sun we orbit around. SFR is now the one great serconzine around in fandom. It might be called the pros' fanzine. I'm positive this inner core of Trufans will survive for as long as the prozines survive, including LOCUS.

JANRAE FRANK & HANK STINE

# LETTERS FROM JANRAE FRANK & HANK STINE  
8033 Sunset Blvd.,  
Los Angeles, CA 90046  
June 5, 1985

"One of the things that perished when my bio-parent destroyed Hank's and my stuff was our clippings file and copies of our published work. I would really appreciate it if anyone out there who has copies of our fiction, articles, reviews we have written or have been written about our work, published letters and small mentions, or knows where to find them would get in touch with us.

Many of this has been in very obscure sources, including *gryll* magazines. Although we've been trying to make a list, it is impossible to remember where and when each piece was published...especially Hank's work since he has 20 years of published work behind him. And many of the publications are no longer extant."

((Interesting description--"bio-parent"---and no doubt a sad, desperate story behind it. I'm sure the SFR readership will help all they can.))



# OTHER VOICES OTHER VOICES

NIGHT OF POWER  
By Spider Robinson  
Baen Books, May 1985, \$13.95

REVIEWED BY STEPHEN P. BROWN

Most bad novels are either the boring excursions of a know-nothing writer or the earnest efforts of a new and unskilled writer. Either way, they are not worth the expenditure of critical capital. But when a new novel, published in hardcover by a major SF house and written by a writer who has been awarded both the Hugo and the Nebula in the past, a writer who has been a well-known and infamous critic, and the book is as offensive and wretched as is NIGHT OF POWER, then several comments are called for.

The latest opus by perpetual gadfly and unreconstructed hippie Spider Robinson is not only a bad book, it is a book so stunningly awful that it is a morbidly fascinating read. For those (like myself) who have a taste for the Truly Terrible, there hasn't been a new SF novel this deliciously bad since Tom Monteleone's immortal SEEDS OF CHANGE. Robinson's book is much worse.

Years of exposure to Robinson's pen tells me that he is not really a bigot, nor does he harbor the active hatred toward women that this novel implies. Apparently, it is a combination of an incredible naivete with an overblown ego that led him to write this bit of filth for all the right reasons. There was probably a moment, a year or two ago, when Robinson sat himself down and decided to write a tough, uncompromising book about racial tension, urbane decay and female adolescence (particularly that biological rite of passage, the onset of menstruation). With the fire of creativity in him, Robinson bravely decided to avoid shying from graphic scenes of sex and violence.

Those are all strong worthy themes. In the hands of a superior writer, an unsettling and powerful novel could result. But Spider Robinson has failed, miserably, embarrassingly, on all counts. RACIAL TENSION: The title refers to the central event in the novel -- the night in 1996 when all the blacks in New York rise as one, blow up the bridges and tunnels, and shut down the city. They impose a shoot-on-sight curfew on whites. Their demand: New York state and Pennsylvania to be set aside as a sovereign country for blacks, to be called Equity (as planned in discussing for New Jersey state later). This version of "send them all back to Africa" is presented as a viable solution to racial strife. The sheer ignorance of just what a black person is, and how he thinks is responsible for an idea this preposterously stupid. That ignorance is also at work in the book's portrayal of its black characters. There is a Big Daddy stereotype named Michael: spiritual and lit-

eral leader of the revolt, seven feet tall, bald, partial to floor-length red robes, and a hilarious penchant for knitting his brow in anguish whenever anything unpleasant occurs -- the author compares him to Lincoln. The rest of the book's blacks are divided into what can only be termed "jive-ass n-----" and paragons of saintliness who speak exclusively in Basic White English.

With the exception of the father, the daughter, and a few family members, all of the white characters are psychopaths. The father is a further embarrassment. He is a cipher named Russell whose function is to demonstrate White Guilt, which he does so with tiresome length that the reader waits in vain for the bullet with his cringing face painted on it.

URBAN DECAY: This novel is also a failure on the most basic of SF grounds. Although the calendar reads 1996, there is no sense of the future at all. In fact, there is little sense of the present. What we have here is an imaginary New York that feels like 1969 or 1970. Leaving aside the Night of Power itself, there are only slight cosmetic touches to indicate future. As such touch is the system by which the blacks involved in the uprising keep in contact. There are these video games, see, and they're really computer terminals. There are these keen red sunglasses, see, that enable the wearer to view what is really going on in the screen between tapping aliens. There are hundreds of these machines, in every arcade in the city, and no one knows about them except the blacks directly involved. So those neat sunglasses become like, this Heavy Symbol, and...oh, never mind!

I ran a line from the book (about happy blacks in Times Square "shucking and living and breakdancing in the streets") past a black friend. We decided that it has been at least forty years since any urban black actually "shucked" whatever that means. But first I had to convince my friend that the novel wasn't written by a potbellied Aryan Brotherhood fanatic, but by an adult liberal white male from Canada, a grown-up who still calls himself Spider.

FEMALE ADOLESCENCE: Jennifer, a thirteen-year-old repeatedly described as a "genius" (in truth, she vacillates between being merely smartass, and talking and acting like an adult white male), has her first period simultaneously with her first orgasm at the climactic moment of a rock concert (no other party was involved, she like, really got into the music, y'know?). Jennifer's maturation process, as she turns from girl into woman within eight brutal hours, is a travesty of epic proportions, particularly in her "relationship" with Jose, a stoic Puerto Rican bodyguard. I dare

any woman to read this book without throwing it into the trash compactor and leaning on the lever hard enough to whiten the knuckles. This novel could radicalize Phyllis Schlafly.

As a stylist, Robinson keeps the book typing along in his breezy, wide-eyed fashion. But he has two serious problems. He cannot restrain himself from interjecting bad puns into the narrative at every opportunity -- time and again what dramatic tension he is managed to build was thus drained away. His second problem is Robert Heinlein. Robinson, the most infamous of apologists for Heinlein's Seventies atrocities, has steeped himself so deep in the tattered drags of Heinlein's once-brilliant style, that he has made it his own. Many SF writers imitate Heinlein, only Robinson imitates Heinlein at his worst. Thus we have a grandfather speaking of his granddaughter as being "husband-high" and the like.

But the climactic scene, where Jennifer solves her contrived problems and becomes a woman complete, is the worst. This is the scene that propels this novel into the realms of the Great Bad Books. It is a scene that transcends awful into a whole other category that hasn't been named yet. Jennifer is captured by a couple of brutal (white, of course) New York cops, one of which takes her into a bedroom with Bad Intentions ("You don't understand: when I hurt you, that is when it's good for me"). What she does to this hapless sadist to free herself is so casually brutal, so graphically, appallingly described, that it was actually painful to read. By then, comic though Robinson probably intended some of the scene to be, even this lover of Terrible Fiction no longer found anything at all funny in this man's repellant words.

Please, don't buy the damn thing. Check it out of your local library and see for yourself. NIGHT OF POWER is already becoming a book where people at parties or conventions read passages aloud for the amusement of their friends. It is a novel destined to live in infamy and one that may well ruin Robinson's credibility as a writer for all time.

MEDEA: HARLAN'S WORLD  
Edited by Harlan Ellison  
Bantam, 1985, 532 pp., \$10.95

REVIEWED BY ANDREW ANDREWS

Once upon a time there was a Fletcher Pratt collection titled THE PETRIFIED PLANET. It was the editor's intention to create, by committee, a planet, and write stories within the defined structure of the planet.

Yet in MEDEA, editor Harlan Ellison has done brilliance far in excess of the Pratt collection.

Ellison explains how MEDEA was born: "A dream come true. For ten years I've tried to sell the idea of this evening to



the committees that program science fiction conventions. To build a world, to build a series of interrelated stories around that world, to build a book containing those stories, in front of a live audience, for better or worse ... to try and make an attempt at understanding what special creative linkages are formed in the very special minds of professional fantasists.

"For ten years I was told by convention committees that it was too difficult, too many problems, too logically fallible: couldn't be done. But tonight we are doing it!..."

"Tonight!" April 15, 1985. The place: Department of Humanities and Communications, Department of the Arts, UCLA Extension. The participants: Robert Silverberg, Frank Herbert, Thomas Disch, Theodore Sturgeon and many members of the large audience. Creating a World precis specifications were completed beforehand by authors Hal Clement, Poul Anderson, Larry Niven and Frederik Pohl. From then on, it was entirely up to the imagination, and the contributions of the crowd, to "dream up" stories set in the world of MEDEA.

What have they done?

Imagine what it is like to bear a child. A beautiful child. The birthing process: Exhausting, then serene, at once dignified. This is the effect mirrored with startling erudition and originality with the help of "straw-boss" Ellison. What began as a seminar has been transformed into a thing of beauty.

There are those that may review this book, with stories by Jack Williamson, Larry Niven, Harlan Ellison, Frederik Pohl, Hal Clement, Thomas M. Disch, Frank Herbert, Poul Anderson, Kate Wilhelm, Theodore Sturgeon and Robert Silverberg as an intellectual exercise, a historical curiosity. And there are those who will see a strange magic in what these forward-thinkers have wrought: An attempt to push your imagination to the limits, and further.

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#### SHADOWEYES

By Kathryn Ptacek  
TOR, 1984, 314 pp., \$3.50

REVIEWED BY CHARLES DE LINT

Over the years, the culture and character of the Native People of America's Southwest have played a strong role in various genre books. Some of the best examples have shown up in the Navajo of Tony Hillerman's mysteries and Roger Zelazny's EYE OF CAT, the Hopi in Martin Cruz Smith's horror/thriller NIGHTMING, and even the mythological background to Steve Englehart's OYOTE series from Epic Comics. When such material is integral to the story, it enhances the book with underlying resonances at the same time as it allows the non-Indian reader a glimpse into cultures as exotic as anything a good SF writer could dream up, with the added attraction of them being real.

In SHADOWEYES Kathryn Ptacek has chosen a disenchanting Chiricahua Apache as her principal protagonist. Unfortunately, the fact

that Chato Del-Klinne is an Apache neither enhances nor detracts from the story. Where it could have added the aforementioned depth and resonance to the book's supernatural element and Del-Klinne's character, it serves no real purpose beyond the fact that he was conveniently tutored by a shaman until his seventeenth year, thus allowing him to understand the menace and subsequently move against it.

That complaint aside, SHADOWEYES is still a quickly-moving, well-paced horror novel. The characters interact as real people, the menace is suitably horrific, and Ptacek shows a real strength in her handling of the various scenes involving the shadow creatures. Had she only given us more background on the Apache culture and legends from which the menace springs, this would have been an excellent book, standing well above the other offerings that have appeared so far this year. As it is, SHADOWEYES is still a very good book -- not so much flawed, as falling short of great.

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#### SCIENCE MADE STUPID

Written & illustrated by Tom Weller  
Houghton Mifflin, 1985, 78 pp., \$6.95

REVIEWED BY DEAN R. LAMBE

Sure to become a classic with THROUGH THE ALIMENTARY CANAL WITH GUN AND CAMERA and HOW TO BECOME EXTINCT, Weller's slick-magazine size gem will tickle the funnybone of anyone who knows that pi doesn't come with vanilla ice cream.

From the opening table of geological ages, wherein we find that the "Listerine epoch" of the "Cretinous" contained "animals who don't understand about tar pits" to the "backsplice" where we discover that the work "... is set in 12-point Monotype Bimbo, with chapter headings in Basketball Overextended," Weller sets science on its ear. Although a short book, the coverage is complete, from macro-cosmic to microscopic, with excellent illustrations drawn by a non-solver hand. Scientific puzzles are explained with a clarity unrivaled since Mr. McGoo first changed a light bulb. Fundamental concepts leap from the page with the insight of Newton's fondness for cookies made of figs. With justification, the Appendix is uncertain about Heisenberg's Principle.



High points include clear instructions on building your own backyard nuclear reactor and a gauge for detecting the probability of annihilation. The controversy between Special Creationists and Darwinists is laid to rest with only a little monkeying around.

Pester your local bookstore to stock SCIENCE MADE STUPID. Warning: Keep out of reach of children's school principals. They are already especially stupid about science, and are unlikely to find anything funny in this book.

#### THE ADVENTURES OF TERRA TARKINGTON

By Sharon Webb  
Bantam, 1985, 204 pp., \$2.95

REVIEWED BY BILL WINANS

This is a delightful romp through a galaxy strange and alluring as Terra Tarkington, interstellar nurse, travels to the farthest reaches of space to bring the best in medical care to all beings. In her travels she encounters many strange aliens, an interplanetary spy ring, stranger aliens, and the man of her dreams.

The book is great fun whenever the story centers on Terra. No matter what danger she encounters she finds a surprising solution that saves the day. The novel bogs down, however, when the spy ring takes center stage. Though played for fun, the spy ring plotline is overly complex, has too many characters and is difficult to follow. Worst of all, it takes the reader away from the delightful Terra! Portions of the book were previously published in ISAAC ASIMOV'S SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE. Overall it is a good fun read, and is recommended.

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#### THE WORLD ENDS IN HICKORY HOLLOW

By Aradath Mayhar  
Doubleday, 1985, 182 pp., \$11.95

REVIEWED BY STUART NAPIER

The question has been posed many times: What would you do if you woke up one morning and learned that the world-as-you-knew-it was over due to a nuclear war? Everyone's answer would be different but Mayhar's tale of what the Hardeman family -- recently moved back from the city to the east Texas scrubland -- did proves once again our unending fascination with stories of human survival.

The author seems to be echoing what singer Hank Williams, Jr. said a few years ago that "a country boy will survive." Only the briefest of narrative is used to explain what happened and even less to try and specifically justify the setting's fortuitous avoidance of any significant radiation. Instead, the reader is rapidly drawn into a family's struggle as they prepare for their first winter in this "after the bomb" world.

Perhaps too conveniently, the family is already somewhat prepared: wood stove, oil lamps, you name it, the whole back-to-the-earth catalog. And yet, as they soon learn, life will be permanently different.

The locale is strictly rural and not prone to suffer the problems of roving

scavengers turned barbarian which usually is a stock cliché of most post-bomb novels. So the author felt he had to invent some human predators. In this case, the thugs, a motley crew of hookers and female tramps living near the river in a little shanty town. Already warped from the constant inbreeding of the offspring of their profession, they are as unlikely a group of antagonists as I have ever encountered. If they were really as ignorant as Mayhew depicts them it's hard to see how they survived before the bomb, much less after.

Despite these flaws -- serious though they are -- the author has a good feel for language and clearly understands and is sympathetic to the rural tradition of self-sufficiency. The best prose and most moving scenes are ones that deal with the interaction of the family members as they learn they must let go of the past and live in the present. Not bad advice.

As a text on what to do and how to plan for the unthinkable this book makes good reading. However, you still have to figure out for yourself how to avoid radiation -- and don't count on luck.

#### GHOSTS AND GOBLINS

Selected & illus. by Tim Kirk  
Platt & Mank, hardcover, 1982, \$6.95

REVIEWED BY NEAL WILGUS

This is a very short review because the important thing can be quickly pointed out -- 45 pages of lush Tim Kirk paintings in full color. It's beautiful!

Incidentally, there are eight accompanying stories and poems by the likes of Charles Geoffrey LeLand, Andrew Lang, Margaret Widdemer and Joseph Jacobs, which Kirk selected to illustrate. They are typical ghost and goblin stories, great for kids and amusing for grownups too -- but they are only incidental.

If you've only seen Tim Kirk in black-and-white (as I had), you're in for a wonderful treat if you can track this 10 X 12 collection down. I picked up *GHOSTS AND GOBLINS* (and *KERMIT'S GARDEN OF VERSES*) remaindered at Safeway (!) at about 40% of the original price -- so they may be out of print soon (or already).

Limerick lovers alert -- the two "Limer-eks" by Ann McGovern are well turned and Kirk does them full justice. Great stuff.

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THE TWILIGHT ZONE: THE ORIGINAL STORIES  
ed. by Martin H. Greenberg, Richard  
Matheson and Charles C. Maugh.  
Avon, 1985, 550 pp., \$8.95

REVIEWED BY ANDREW ANDREWS

Leaving many of them to rust to antiquity, so many of the original "Twilight Zone" stories never made it to a short-story collection before, not to mention syndication. It is with delight that I got to re-experience such classics as Charles Beaumont's "The Howling Man" and Richard Matheson's "Steel". THE TWILIGHT ZONE: THE ORIGINAL STORIES make it happen.

While many view the short anthology a dying venture in publishing, you can only linger on a project such as this with joy: How can editors select from numerous classics and clinkers, and manage to put together stories that ring beautiful and true? Editors Greenberg, Matheson and Maugh should be commended for some fine efforts.

Carol Serling dubs this anthology "a tribute to the fine writers whose imaginative ideas and talent made TV a reality." From the introduction, Richard Matheson reminds all of us that what makes the long-syndicated and soon-to-be rejuvenated TV series so popular "are the stories. The STORIES ... which intrigue and excite and amuse and terrify and half a dozen other wonderful emotions." All that, because television was able to fulfill its promises.

For those of you who have forgotten, or for those fresh into this avenue, this 550-page anthology is worth your money.

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FRANK FRAZETTA BOOK FIVE  
Edited by Betty Ballantine  
Bantam, 1985, 95 pp., \$12.95

REVIEWED BY JOHN DIPRETE

BOOK FIVE has recently appeared in Betty Ballantine's hugely successful (over two million copies in print) Frank Frazetta art series.



Despite the fact too many brief, free-style black-and-white sketches pad out the volume, there's still enough in these ninety-five glossy-type pages to sate the massive hunger of lustful Frazetta hordes. Case in point: the nude on page 91. The artist's sensual, "soft focus" lighting dramatizes the physical effect. Here and elsewhere, Frazetta's handling of flesh-tones and yellow-dark shading exudes an extraordinary, larger-than-life quality.

No one can outdo the Master when it comes to showing a barbarian's "mighty thews." An average Frazetta-drawn vein bulges and crawls over arms and legs like a swollen, snake-vine. Indeed: if you were to scratch open the artery of a typical Frazetta hero, you'd probably let loose a mile-high geyser of...yeuch! Matter fact, something like this scene has occurred on page 53: this color or oil portrays a crucified, four-armed alien -- suspended from a double-beamed cross. (Oh, *Crimson Tide*!)

An overly-brief (especially in light of the artist's lucid self-expression) interview brings out an interesting

fact: Much of Frazetta's distinguished later works -- while appearing to form a "progression" in style -- were actually just more carefully-rendered pieces, owing to the fact that he took more time on them. (Some of the stuff he really labored on stands head-and-shoulders above his latter-day output.)

If you're a Frank Frazetta completist, then here's your latest edition. If you've never heard of Frazetta, then buy this book for a few old copies of *Creepy*, *Eerie*, or the *Howard* titles) to see what the craze is about. Much of modern fantasy art owes its present embodiment to his now-famed masterpieces.

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EASTMAN'S AND LAIRD'S TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES, \$1.50 + postage, Mirage Studios, POB #1218, Sharon, CT 06069.

REVIEWED BY JOEL ROSENBERG

"...We made a wrong turn somewhere. Now we're caught, our backs to the wall in this trash-strewn alley.. Barring the way out are fifteen members of the purple dragons, the toughest gang on the east side ...

"You're dead, freaks!! Nobody trespasses on purple dragon turf and gets away with it ... especially when they're wearing stupid turtle costumes ...

"He's wrong ...

"We're not wearing costumes."

And so it begins. *TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES* is, simultaneously, a cutting send-up of Marvel Comics in general -- particularly their preoccupation with three out of the four concepts in the title -- and a heartfelt tribute.

I don't know how they did it -- other than marvelously. The book should have been as preposterous as the title. It should have been ...

And yet ... the script, except for two or three slow moments, has punch and snap, reminiscent of the best hard-boiled Marvel characters -- Daredevil and Wolverine -- when scripted by someone who understands how to write violence so that it counts, for reader and protagonist. The artwork shows the influence of Jack Kirby and Frank Miller (to whom the comic is dedicated), and perhaps none more aptly than in the tough *Code*. While the human characters occasionally lack conviction, the turtles are just wonderful.

The plot, while typically Marvel-esque, accepts and then glosses over the absurdities: it seems that the same garbage can of radioactive wastes that, as it fell from the truck, cost Matt Murdock/Daredevil his sight and gave him his radar sense also slopped on four baby turtles and a rat named Splinter, giving them all extra size and intelligence ...

Yeah; I know.

But it works, dammit. And yes, I know that you're probably not going to mail off your head-earned to some POB in a dinky little town called Sharon, Connecticut for a comic book called *TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES*.

But let me tell you something: Someday, somehow you're going to bump into a copy of this comic, and you're going to

start to glance at it, and then your jaw is going to drop, and you're going to fight an internal war between savoring each page slowly and rapidfire turning ...

... and you're going to be bloody sorry you waited so damn long. You're not going to be able to resist four teen-age mutant ninja turtles named Leonardo, Donatello, Michaelangelo and Raphael -- who could?

Remember, I told you so.

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SCIENCE FICTION MOVIES  
By Gregory B. Richards  
1984, Gallery Bks, 80 pp., hardback

REVIEWED BY BILL WINANS

This 9 X 11" book, available for \$4 or so at some bargain book tables, is a good one for younger readers. It has over 110 photographs, many in full color, is indexed, has a filmography and brief bios of the major stars and directors. The book, however, is too brief, omitting a number of films and presenting only brief descriptions of most others.

Attractively packaged and with lots of information in its too brief text, I think many younger readers will value it.

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PANDORA'S GENES  
By Kathryn Lance  
Popular Library, 1985, 279 pp., \$2.95

REVIEWED BY DEAN R. LAMBE

Civilization has vanished with a whimper, and mutants are abroad in the land. In this familiar after-things-fell-apart territory, Lance points at the contemporary Luddite fears of recombinant DNA research (remember when it was "atomic mutants"), with her tale of rival factions and intertwined egos in the ruins of Washington, D.C.

For a novel of biological speculation the premises are a little shaky. Several generations back, a Petrophage gen-engineered to clean up oil spills went wild, and gobbled all the oil and petro-

## PAULETTE'S PLACE-----

### DOMAIN

By James Herbert  
Signet, March 1985, (c) 1984-85, \$3.50

REVIEWED BY PAULETTE MINARE'

Only partially destroyed by poison, large mutant rats have gone underground to breed among the sewers and other tunnels which honeycomb subterranean London, many of which provide access and ventilation to secret government bomb shelters.

When nuclear explosions in London begin thundering and rocking their kingdom, the monster rats believe their grotesque queen, The Mother Creature, is under attack -- for the main government underground shelter had been built above the Mother Creature's lair. In their racial memory is the lingering knowledge of the sweetness of soft human flesh with its fresh, warm running blood, so superior to cold food which does not struggle.

Only a fraction of London's humanity escape into the tunnels, avoiding the searing heat waves of the blasts, lethal flying debris, gas main explosions, vehicular crashes, slow suffocation beneath rubble and other related catastrophes. The ferocious, radiation-resistant vermin gain ready access to an ample supply of their preferred food, not only through the sewers and ventilation systems, but via the utility and maintenance tunnels which connect with the underground shelters.

While in the main shelter waiting out the disintegration of the fallout radiation, thirty survivors of the initial destruction must cope with their injuries and radiation sickness in addition to problems of human relations within this restricted space.

Six men and one girl emerge from the central shelter -- only three live through the many traumas and pitfalls to finally be rescued by helicopters: Steve Culver, a pilot, Alex Dealey, Ministry of Defense employee, and Kate Garmey.

The author, James Herbert, tells their story so graphically that the reader is torn between an urge to rush through succeeding pages to learn what new macabre sights and hair-raising perils they will encounter, and an eerie dread, a shrinking reluctance to experience further grueling events along with them, to feel their trauma, their horror, their pain.

Herbert's descriptive realism will lead you to feel this could well be happening to you, for he does not spare the unsavory details as you are there walking beside the survivors in their constant struggle for domain:

"The older man blanched when he saw the creatures eating into Kate's mangled hand. Even as he watched, a rat snipped off two fingers, retreating with its prize as another took its place. Blood flowed from the wound, covering the rats' heads, smear-

ing their evil yellow eyes, while Kate writhed, her screaming descending to shocked agonized moans...but the rat still clung. Culver realized the teeth were bound into the bones of the hand -- what was left of the hand -- and nothing would loosen that grip, possibly not even death...Kate was moaning repeatedly, her eyes closed in a half-faint, her head rolling from side to side. Her hand was in shreds, all the fingers gone now, but the rats still pulled, still tugged, still gnawed at the bloody remnants, crackling fragile bones..." (P. 332 and 333)

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### HELL HOUSE

By Richard Matheson  
Warner, June 1985, (c) 1971, \$2.95

REVIEWED BY PAULETTE MINARE'

Is the Belasco house, set in a fog-bound Maine valley, haunted by many ghosts of former residents now controlled by the former owner, Emric Belasco, or is it haunted only by the powerful, demonic Belasco himself, impersonating the other specters?

Lionel Barrett, physicist and parapsychologist, is engaged to go to Hell House and establish the facts on whether or not there is actually survival after death. His two assistants are Reverend Florence Tanner, a spiritualist medium and Benjamin Pische, the only survivor of a previous investigation. Barrett's wife, Edith, accompanies him.

Barrett's scientific approach which does not harbor belief in ghosts but contends that certain phenomena occur by means of the subliminal self and by the action of residual energy, is at odds with the religious approach of Rev. Florence Tanner, whose abilities as a medium include the production of teleplasm during the trance state.

Barrett intends to use his BMR machine (Electromagnetic Radiation Reverser) to reverse and dissipate the toxic power stored up in Hell House, therefore cleansing the house of its evil. If successful, this will prove there is no survival after death.

The twenty-seven former guests of Hell House, led by Belasco, were extremely sensual, engaging in all forms of debauchery, including drug addiction, necrophilia, mutilation and cannibalism. This sensual aura affects the four investigators in unexpected ways. Florence is killed in a most macabre way by the huge phallic crucifix in the chapel.

It appears that Richard Matheson has researched material for a great number of occult novels which could be written in more detail without quite as much emphasis on scientific explanation. If you like occult mysteries, you will be interested in reading the works of Richard Matheson.

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leum-based products. When the seals went on the containment labs, other "wild deenas" began to change the world. A particularly nasty molecular bit snagged the human X-chromosome for a Rhesus factor-like autoimmune sensitivity, and now most women die upon bearing a second female child. The sex ratio has shifted drastically, women have become property again, and polyandry is the social norm.

This post-disaster story alternates among the viewpoints of three people. Will, Principal of the District, has deposed the previous President, and struggles to rebuild with the aid of his brother, Zack. When Zack is sent to procure Evvy, a lovely peasant girl, for Will's personal misuse, Zack betrays his leader and conveys the frightened teenager to the distant Garden, a secret enclave of female scientists. Years later, still mourning the disappearance of his brother, the Principal forces the women of the Garden to re-locate in the face of barbarian attack from religious fanatics. Will suspects Evvy's true background, but the old Mistress of the feminist scientific order protects the girl's secret. As the anti-research Trader fanatics manuever Will's efforts toward a New Renaissance, however, fear, pride, and love in all three characters clash, and threaten the future of the entire species.

Despite ample opportunity, this first novel is refreshingly free of the sound of grinding axes; plot and people move along realistically; and a sequel would not be unwelcome. Popular Library's new Questar imprint is off to a good start.

#### HOMECOMING

By John Dalmis  
TOR, 1984, 247 pp., \$2.95  
Cover by James Gurney

REVIEWED BY STEVE MILLER

HOMECOMING, published in September, is a sequel to THE YNGLING, published by Tor in October. If this sounds a little strange you should know that Dalmis' YNGLING came out in the early seventies by another publisher and that HOMECOMING stands alone well enough to make it a worthwhile book without knowing the first book of the series.

Dalmis has combined several genres in this book. The basic idea is that the colonists of New Home have sent a ship back to Earth after a separation of some 700 years. Thus we have the savage-Earth, slowly building itself back after a plague, so slowly that most technology has been lost. This is combined with a "superhero" type of man born to the depopulated world: the Yngling of the earlier book. His talents include both physical feats and mental powers far beyond mortal "normal" men. Told in a legend, the Yngling has been shepherding his people from the north as they move away from a slowly eroding northern climate toward a gentler south.

The complications Dalmis manages to derive from this situation are enormous. To begin with it is the colonists returning to Earth

who are the real "innocents;" they have little concept of war, other than from extremely old record books, and they are unused to physical and political styles of pressure and violence. They come to study and in short order a number of their crew members are captured and held for ransom by clans in conflict with each other, all of whom see the outworld technology as a means of defeating the enemy and establishing their own particular empire.

The Yngling wanders into this situation walking alone as he frequently travels. The New Home colonists have force fields and some minor esper talents: the ESP talents of those on Earth have improved to the point that many of them have mind readers working for them; it doesn't take long before the Yngling is himself involved through his special talents.

An enjoyable, readable book, though not a good read for the faint of heart as the northern tribes tend to scalp their foes. The solutions to the problems caused by the complex situations are believable and the characters, if more than human at times, are interesting and worthy. If the out-of-body experiences are a bit too much "occult" for an occasional reader I'd refer them to the fine tradition of such things in Space Opera: I have a feeling that if Dalmis keeps on with this series we're eventually going to see the Yngling or his children traveling all over space.

The only real quibble I have with the book is the editorial decision which left several expository sections ostensibly lifted from other books in the same style and size type as the rest of the book. The result is confusing from time to time: You have no idea what or whom is being quoted, nor even the fact that some other source is being quoted unless you reach the end of that particular small chapter or excerpt.

HOMECOMING, as with I recall, THE YNGLING, are worth reading, in whatever order. If Dalmis can keep up this level of output his name will be gracing the cover of quite a few books in the years ahead.

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THE SCIENCE FICTION FANTASY WEIRD HERO MAGAZINE CHECKLIST by Ray Mysocki  
96 pp., \$6.00 Available from Ray Mysocki, 28895 Fall River Rd, Westlake OH, 44145

REVIEWED BY BILL WINANS

This is the most complete checklist I have seen, a complete list of all applicable magazines from 1919 to the present. That means there are over 7,300 separate issues of over 320 magazines listed here. Magazines are covered in alphabetical order, giving the date, volume and number of each issue, along with other pertinent information, including title changes, first and last issues, and more.

The checklist is the product of extensive research, much of it from the author's personal collection, and the quality of the research and quantity of information makes it well worth the price. Recommended.

\*\*\*\*\*



#### NIGHT'S DAUGHTER

By Marion Zimmer Bradley  
Del Rey/Ballantine, \$2.95, 245 pp.

REVIEWED BY PAUL MCGUIRE

Quick, what is the last MZB novel you can think of which had a male character who was not either a bozo, a homosexual, or a fiend? Along with the title character, the main character of NIGHT'S DAUGHTER is a likable and intelligent young man, and Ms. Bradley does a fine job portraying all four qualities. The young woman is just as engaging. Yet it is a ix. ish bird-man who almost steals the show.

Based on Mozart's THE MAGIC FLUTE, the novel has a deceptively simple plot. The son of the Emperor of the West journeys across a wasteland to undergo a series of ordeals in order to win the hand of a princess. The princess is the daughter of the King of Light and the Queen of Darkness. Her parents are enemies. Raised in seclusion, it is only recently that she has begun to learn the truth about her evil mother. Perhaps because the Emperor's son is the first young man she has ever seen, it is love at first sight for the princess. Perhaps because she is the most beautiful woman he has ever seen, ditto the Emperor's son. They can only be united if they both survive the ordeals of air, earth, fire and water. The true purpose of the ordeals is to bestow enlightenment. If your true purpose is to be entertained, this is a reasonably smart and stylish way to go about it.

\*\*\*\*\*

# AN ALIEN IN L.A.

JOHN SHIRLEY HAS JUST MOVED FROM NEW YORK TO LOS ANGELES, AND THINKS THAT IN A FEW DECADES HE MAY GET USED TO THE PLACE. BUT HE DOESN'T THINK HE'LL EVER FIT IN.

After the palm trees, the first things I noticed in Beverly Hills were the walls, and the warnings. The walls around the houses were about six feet tall; sometimes they're wood, sometimes they're hedges backed with a spike-topped black steel fence. They're there to discourage burglars (not because they would stop a burglar but because their presence implies that beyond the walls are further security measures) and for the sake of privacy. Privacy, because every so often a tour bus rolls by these houses, the tourists rubbernecking so assiduously you anticipate a bonanza for the chiropractors.

Often, the houses and grounds are much bigger than they seem from the front. There's usually a little apron of front-yard lawn visible through the iron gates, and on the lawn is, invariably, a little metal sign, about a third the size of a real estate for sale sign and shaped like a cop's badge. The signs say things like: WARNING: PREMISES PROTECTED BY IRONFIST SECURITY CO! Or WARNING: ELECTRONICALLY ARMED SECURITY. And the word in the bars on Sunset is: If you're a black guy in a beat-up looking car, you don't even drive through Beverly Hills. Because if you look like you don't belong, the real life Beverly Hills cops will pull you over and the chances are fifty-fifty as to whether you get your ass kicked or just ticketed for some imaginary infraction.

I'm in Beverly Hills a few months staying in the guest house owned by my girlfriend's parents. I know: I don't belong here. The guy who owns this place has a Platinum American Express card. Before I came here I never even heard of a Platinum American Express card. On these Electrolatched-over premises -- in a 7,500-square-foot main house and a large two-bedroom guest house -- is a fortune in jade and antiques, an enormous satellite TV dish, five expensive cars, solar-power-heated swimming pool, hot tubs, saunas, thoroughbred dogs, tennis courts, computers (gathering dust), electric massage tables, an arsenal of kitchen appliances, game room, four VCRs, a nautilus room with several arcane "fitness" devices that check your pulse and blood pressure as you exercise, various servants, sculptures, and one rather battered science fiction writer in a ripped Clash t-shirt

who looks vaguely apologetic for being alive as he wanders, hands awkwardly in the pockets of his jeans, through the landscaped grounds. The writer reflecting, as he wanders, that he may be in danger here, since he is in a part of L.A. that condones "Bum Bashing." Bum Bashing is a recreational pastime of well-to-do and, presumably, bored people who resent having to look at the homeless. So they get a few friends together and drive around in their BMWs and Porsches and terrorize homeless people who've wandered into affluent neighborhoods to beg or because there's a shelter nearby. Beat them up, threaten them. And this is real. This is L.A.

A few long, luxuriously verdant, immaculately clean blocks away are some of the costliest stores in the country; places on Rodeo Drive that'll cheerfully sell you a single tie for two hundred and fifty dollars. But Beverly Hills isn't the real L.A. man, no. This is the carnation in the buttonhole of its ratty suit.

Most of L.A. is cars, and things for cars to feed on, and park near, and a great big blue bowl for the cars to fill with poisonous fumes.

2.

In the Help Wanted section of the L.A. papers there are ads like:

SINGLE WOMEN!

(Age 23 to 30 only)  
Check out the LOVE CONNECTION!  
HIT TV SHOW ABOUT VIDEO DATING  
NEEDS YOU!

We send you on a date,  
You tell us (on TV)  
What happens on your date!!  
Call for interview...

and NEWLYWEDS WANTED FOR TV'S NEWLYMARRIED GAME... AND ARE YOUR KIDS TALENTED?  
FREE TV-COMMERCIAL SEMINAR AND EVALUATION (ages 4 and up)...

Look in the magazine ads for weight reduction you see:

FAT SUCTION!! IT REALLY WORKS!

The self-improvement section of the L.A. Weekly contains page after page of ads for cottage industry mysticism like "Feel like you're going nowhere? Go to the Oneness Celebration & Wholistic Self Improvement Center!" and "sexuality/spirituality" workshops and "Soul Travel Techniques" and "Radix Neo-Reichian Bodywork" and "Rolfing: restore body energy flow!" and "FLotation TANKS -- Altered States Float Center (Call for recorded message)" and "Caring/Attention -- emphasize your personal beauty as a human being." What a great idea: a vanity workshop. Claptrap like this in

profusion here. Roach motels for people with insouciant self-esteem for people who "Feel like you're going nowhere?" on the endless circuit of freeways and billboard-encrusted boulevards.

I went to a dinner party thrown (or maybe I should say "pitched") by a song-writer friend who's plagued by mystic revelations almost daily, poor chap. A number of his friends were there, all in the The Business in one end or another, and the subject of UFOs came up. EVERYONE there but me had seen a UFO and had communicated with them in some way. "Ooooo," one young woman cooed, "it was, like, soooo heav-e-ee, because I was driving late at night and -- like I was not stoned, hardly -- and these two lights rose up from the other side of the hill and came together and then split up again and flew in a pattern, you knowoooo?" I pointed that the lights could have been mirage refractions from carlights or any number of other atmospheric optical effects. She looked at me with amazement. Agghast. How could I even imagine? I mean, refractions?! What a Weeieeirdoo, you know? ... So then the subject of life after death came up and the book purporting to collect empirically consistent Afterlife experiences from people who'd died and returned and when I said such things could be hallucinations obtaining from sociological mindsets they all looked at me like Catholics who'd seen me throw a tomato at the Pope. Bullshit Trendy-Mysticism type is the religion in L.A.

But it's lazy religion: the real devotion goes into success, the more material the better. Same, yeah, as in New York, only here it's expressed in cars, houses on stilts in "the canyon," gold chains and the best drugs.

Appropos to sniffing out success I talked to a producer at the party about TV and film writing. The producer -- who shall remain nameless, and who runs a rock video show that'll remain nameless -- told me something about angels that made me think of the Japanese. Because I'd heard that the Japanese have a word that literally means "maybe" or "quite possibly" -- but when they use it, it may well mean "no" or "absolute-ly not." Or it might mean "it might be possible in certain circumstances" or "let's see how things pan out" or it might mean "Yes!" all depending on how they shade it, and in what context it's said. People working in the film and TV industry here, my producer friend informed me, "...are plagued with kneejerk positivism. So they're affirmative even when they don't mean to be. They say

# by john shirley

"Sounds great!" but you have to learn when that really means "Great!" and when it means "Maybe." "Maybe" is good for someone but not for us or, this really sucks, don't call us we'll call you." I mean, you'll have meetings with people who'll tell you yeah they'll commit five million dollars to a project and they shake your hand and the next day you call their office and the secretary won't put you through and they never return your calls and you never hear from them again. The insincerity here is a disease, and you come out here hating it but you find yourself acting the same way after a while..."

Gossip is rife in the constantly-shifting currents of network TV, and it exposes the ruthlessness behind the network's glossy, friendly "Hey Gang Look At Our Fall Season Line-up!" I heard from a number of well-placed people that a number of "young vasp types" at one network have a "a hard-on for" the country's most successful TV producer, Aaron Spelling. These young new executives are allegedly firing Spelling's supporters in an attempt to undermine him right out of the network "and to break the back of the Jewish Mafia" that supposedly controls Hollywood and TV.

The consensus on SF films among the Hollywood agents and writers I've spoken to is this: Despite the embarrassing financial failure of *DUNE*, disappointing showings on 2010, and *STARMAN* just breaking even, the success of *THE TERMINATOR* and *THE RETURN OF THE JEDI* demonstrate the field is still viable. "But big, arty productions are out, except for maybe a George Lucas production..." What we're looking at here," I was told, "is formula Sci-fi, and modest budgets."

There are a lot of theories as to what was really going on with the Writer's Guild strike. The video show producer, who also writes, told me: "A lot of it was boredom and frustration, since 75% of the writers in the WGA aren't working. It was a way of asserting their reality as writers. The grievance itself was the writer's percentage for video cassette rights. Lots of times what

happens is this: The producer sells the video cassette rights before the film distribution rights, and sometimes finds it's more lucrative not to sell theater distribution at all. Writers get their money from theater distribution; their cassette percentage is minuscule. So they struck for higher percentages on cassette rentals and sales, not so much for what they'll get now, but for a few years down the road when the cassette market is expected to be between five and ten times what it is now."

But I also talked to a movie producer. He produced one of 1984's major science fiction films. A good film and reasonably successful. His theory was, the studios had encouraged the strike in some underhanded way because it "enabled them to get rid of the deadwood around the studio." He explained that there are a lot of writers working under contracts to do projects the producers and studio heads have decided won't pan out. To avoid paying off the writers, the studios encouraged the strike so the writers would be in violation of their contracts, rendering the contracts void.

He also complained of having had to "fork over ten grand" in payola to "a guy in New York who takes care of these things." The "guy" evidently acts as a liaison between the studio's P.R. people and the "veejays" who play rock videos. One of the hassles of making a movie these days is having to extract material from it to use in a rock video to promote the film, which also means having to buy a lot of pop music for the soundtrack -- music you maybe wouldn't otherwise use if not for the new reliance on rock videos for movie publicity. Once the video is made you've got to persuade people to play it on the various stations and for a lot of them that means simply, out-right bribery. You give them cash or cocaine. "It's part of the budget for the promotional video," he said resignedly. Because payola is an integral part of the rock industry.

When it became obvious that this

producer's movie wasn't going to win any major Oscars I told him there was perhaps some small consolation in the fact that it might well win the Hugo award. He looked at me blankly. "Hugo?" I told him about the WorldCon and he said, "Oh, yeah, the Sci-Fi award." He shrugged. "Doesn't mean dick."

So much for the Hugo in Hollywood.

YOU SHOULD  
SEE THE HALL  
I'VE GOT ON  
ORDER!



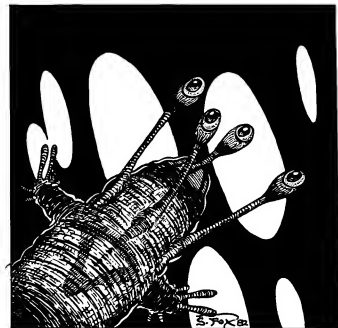
3.

A great many people in L.A. are just as their stereotypes would have them. The clichés are true. Everyone you meet has a screenplay going -- dishwashers, bagboys, priests, everyone -- or "a dynamic idea for a pilot." And, yeah, lots of people act like Californians. I've already been told to "mellow out" once; a friend advised me, "This isn't New York. Here you don't talk so aggressively. And you better cut back on those morbid jokes of yours. Talk positive." I met some producers from *Loreman*. They really do wear gold chains. People in Beverly Hills take their kids to Transcendental Meditation, self-expression groups, even Tae Kwon Do and Karate as early as four years old "for the spiritual discipline of it." I went with a friend to see his kid test for his purple belt. It's an eerie thing to see forty kids from four to seven years old, all wearing white karate outfits and moving through a series of incredibly complex and exacting maneuvers with superhuman precision. Afterwards we went out for Sushi and watched the Sushi master ritualistically cut and shape fish flesh...with superhuman precision.

Maybe the fads, the fascination with martial arts, health foods, bodybuilding (I mean simply EVERYONE belongs to a health club), mass market mysticism, pseudoreligions...Maybe it's all an attempt to infuse a sprawling, amorphous, narcissistic lifestyle with shape and substance. This is a city without a clear moral center, and it wallows in disorientation.

And in fact I'm disoriented myself, now. I had a clear sense of mission when I came here. But now, now with my eyes burning from the smog...My jaw muscles aching from trying to maintain an insincere smile...

Now I'm not at all sure why I've moved to Los Angeles.



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