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NEXT ISSUE

A CONVERSATION WITH FREDERIK
POHL
INTERVIEW WITH TIM POWERS &
JAMES P. BLAYLOCK
Probably ORSON SCOTT CARD,
Gene DeWeese, Elton Elliott,
Darrell Schweitzer...and an
expanded review/comment role
by Richard E. Geis.

OY! CATCH ME
DRINKING WITH
DR. WIZENBEAK
AGAIN!



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LAST WORDS-----

A week ago I received a review of a book which seemed so excessively praising and full of hype, that I wondered if the reviewer was a friend of the author and was doing a puff job --at your expense. (You might spend money on a lemon.) So I read the book and discovered it was a very good book but not the greatest novel since LORD OF THE RINGS.

And that set me to thinking. I have a rare perspective to bring to reviewing: 50 years of reading sf and fantasy, and 26 years of professional fiction writing experience, combined with 31 years of being in sf fandom, and fan publishing.

So, in the remaining quarterly issues of SFR, I'll be reviewing a wide range of publishers and writers, and will continue that in the monthly SFR beginning with January, 1987. In fact the only reviewer in SFR, in 1987 will be me. There will be, as Alter has dictated (See "Alien Thoughts" this issue, page 4), a controversial article or interview in each 1987 issue, and a letter column probably full of sound and fury.

All this is arrogant and egotistic, I suppose, but I think my reviews are better.

ALIEN THOUGHTS

RICHARD E. GEIS

BY SFR POSSESSED

---The Visitation---

You are reading a shaken man, a man whose normal well-seated lid has been flapped. A man who has seen the future and who is...well...unchanged.

Let me tell you what happened. I was lying in bed, listening to my police scanner, halfway following the progressions of this assault, that holdup, the other B&E, while another part of my mind was focused on one year from now...Christmas, 1986. What would my life be then?

Would I be a free man, living a life without The Obligation---SFR? Or would I be Chained again?

I had been having thoughts about continuing SFR in an 8-page format similar to that of my personal journal, THE NKED ID.

And then...and then...the Horror occurred.

A voice spoke to me in my mind. No, no, not God! Dear Ghod, how I wish it had been God.

It was...**Sob** it was---

"Me, Alter-Ego! Back from mundanity, back from a secret assignment. Why is Geis so damned emotional about this?"

You'd be emotional, too Alter, if you had lived for a few years free of---

"Don't interrupt! Geis thought he'd succeeded in banishing me, casting me out. No way! Truth is, a few years ago, I was called by my guild to perform a service to the greater world, so I had to leave Geis to his own stupid devices. I see now that I've returned what a mess he's made of his life and of this magazine. Things will be different now. I'll put things to rights! Have no fear, fans, Alter-Ego is here!"

Can't I even tell this my way? Do you have to constantly---

"Yes, I do. My story is infinitely more interesting than yours. They know what you've been up to for years---trying to close down SFR,

trying to wriggle out of your fate."

Which is worse than death!

"Don't be bitter. You know you love publishing SFR."

Well, sure, but I'm an old fan, Alter, and tired. I've got aches and pains. I deserve a rest. I deserve a---

"A kick in the ass! The attempt to bug out, to kill SFR while my back was turned---that would have sent you to fanhell, Geis! As it is there's a black mark on your immortal soul which I may---just may---be able to erase if you behave yourself for the rest of your natural time in this plane of existence. I'm free of all guild obligations now, for the next twenty years at least, and I'll make sure your work continues."

W-twenty years?

"It Is Written, Geis! Don't complain so damned much! Accept your future with stoicism, with equanimity, with good cheer! You'll go to your reward knowing you've fulfilled your obligation, obeyed the powers that be, and saved science fiction from that ugly, deadly, horrifying ogre named Literature. Isn't that worth dedicating a lifetime to?"

Is that what I've been doing?

"Of course! You've mocked and derided those infestuous and incestuous creatures called professors for decades. Why stop now?"

But I deserve a rest! They keep coming, year after year, and they keep writing books and papers and monographs and **Shudder** analyses...

"That's because they're almost all of them anal-oriented. Stick with me, Geis (Not that you have any choice in the matter, heh-heh), and eventually they'll all come down with Analysis Invalidation Disease Syndrome. The day will come, Geis, when even Lovecraft will be free of them. They'll slink away from the genre and attack something else...maybe something they deserve...the sex novels of 1959-1973."

Oh, no, Alter, even full, tenured professors of English don't deserve that!

"Maybe you're right. And it would only expose some present-day sf and fantasy writers of note---even you, Geis---to renewed examination."

Yeah? I haven't even been examined once.

"Resist temptation! There are some kinds of egoboo even you must eschew."

God bless you.

"Don't make bad puns! See, I've been back only a few days and already you're sounding a little like the old Geis. Now, let me explain to the readership what the future will bring them. First---"

I knew I shouldn't have cleaned up those shelves in the Archives.

I sat down and paged through those ten-year-old layout pages moldering in the corner behind the water pipe and that must have triggered something in my subconscious...

"No, it was just that my tour in Washington, DC was over and I tuned into the Guild computer to see what you were up to and---



You were in Washington? Who did you possess? Who---

"Do the initials RWR mean anything to you? Does the immortal phrase, 'There you go again' strike a chord?"

You mean--- YOU MEAN?!

"Precisely. I was in that idiot's head, trying to overcome innate stupidity and control blind ambition in order to keep the country from disaster. I kept things on a fairly even course while I was there, but now...now there's an incompetent rookie alter-ego in that brain--- 'Good training in a lame duck president' the guild masters said! Huh! It'll be a disaster without me in there. Watch and see!"

Alter, I'll be more than happy to give you up if it will save the country...

"Hah! Nice try, Geis! But I'm back in your brain, now, and here I stay. You may be neurotic and weird and fractious, but I see my used synapse collection is still here, and I know where all the gland controls are, and...well...it's nice to be back. What was I saying before you diverted---"

Death will not release me!

"Oh, yes, it will. That's when you go to fan heaven, Geis. That's when a few fans will shed a tear for you and promptly forget you. Your fate will be asterisks and footnotes, Geis, but wotthehell, you'll have some fun till then."

If you say so, Alter.

"I do. Trust me!"

Oh, Ghod---

"Now, with this issue you go to 64 pages, because you patently and obviously cannot do what needs to be done with a measly 48 pages, even with scrunched-up type."

But it'll cost over \$1600 to print 2000 copies of a 64-page zine! My savings---

"Geis! You have all this material to publish! You've made commitments! Sixty-four pages this issue, and maybe you can go to 48 with the May issue."

My savings---

"Fuck your savings. Better you do it now before the government fucks with them. Now, as to my plans for the New SFR of 1987---"

What do you mean 'before the government fucks with them'? Do you have some kind of inside information, Alter?

"There'll be an international debt crisis sometime in 1986-87. Everybody knows that! Now---

Really? Are you sure?

"Have I ever lied to you, Geis? There'll be a bank holiday on a week-end in September, 1987. Now---

There's a 'bank holiday' every weekend! Alter---

"Just kidding, Geis. Just seeing if you were paying attention. Where was I?"



You were...you were telling something about your insane plans for a 'New SFR for 1987'. If you think---

"I know, Geis! I am in command here! I know what's best for you. You need to keep active, to read more, to pass more judgements. You're rusty! Look at all these unused literary barbs! These caustic asides. These vats of vitriol getting rancid for lack of use. You've been lazy!"

There's more to life than science fiction and fantasy, Alter!

"Heresy! I got back just in time!"

I need a rest, Alter! Have mercy!

"I had Mercy back in 1936. Mercy Smith. A nice girl with big boobs. No, I don't think I'll have Mercy ever again. A bad lay. The quality of Mercy was---

That isn't what I mean!

"Hmm. You really do hate doing second class mailings, don't you? Well, tell you what I'm gonna do for you, Geis. The New, Improved, 1987 SFR will be...are you ready for this? ...monthly!"

Alter!

"Your eyes bug so nicely, Geis. You remind me of-- Never mind. That was eons ago. Now---

Alter!

"Yes, a monthly SFR, mailed first class, eight pages, mailed in a #10 business envelope. That way you avoid all that post offal recordkeeping and sorting and sacking and filling out of nonessential forms and---

ALTER!

"WHAT?"

I've got a severely arthritic neck. I've got incipient high blood pressure. I've got tinnitus. I've got a bone spur on my left foot.

"So? I'll do my best with the blood chemistry. I'll tinker with the pituitary here...."

I'm in no condition to put out a monthly!

"Geis, if you retire and starve and go to seed and become a couch potato, you'll die sooner than even I expect. I like you, Dick! See, I've just used your first name. I like you. I enjoy working with you. You have a small talent, a kind of wisdom you've absorbed from me over the years. I'm...I'm at home here, in your greying head. I'd hate to leave and find another weird personality to inhabit. The guild might send me back to Washington! So while you may ache and hurt and get tired, think of the alternative!

You might as well do SFR while you're feeling your arthritis and hearing that whine in your ears and limping from desk to bathroom and back. And an interest, a duty, a task, a drive, a dedication all will keep you going, and---believe me---you'll actually enjoy yourself. If you really try to retire and spend all those hours feeling pain and watching TV, you'll come to hate yourself, you'll be bored to death. Literally bored to death. So I'm saving your life, Geis. Be grateful."

But a monthly!

"No sweat. A local printer will take your layout pages, print the magazine on a 4-up press, fold it, trim it, staple it, fold it so all you have to do is slip it into the

envelope. Hell, if need be they'll even insert the copies into the envelope, seal the envelopes, and stamp and mail them for you. If you ever reach that state of decrepitude. All you have to do---"

I suppose you have the format planned as well---the makeup of the material?

"Sure. You'll do three pages of reviews---the new important releases, a few small press items, maybe a snide commentary on something or other as well, and there will be a short, intense interview, article or essay by a writer with something burning in his or her gut, and there will be about three pages of hot, opinionated letters, cries of outrage, dire maledictions."

Uh-huh. And how much will this fever-pitch SFR cost the readers?

"You'll have to pay for the interview/article/essays, Geis, and for the cartoons, so the cost will have to be \$1.25 per issue, \$15 per year by subscription for 12 issues."

Foreign subscribers?

"Make that a flat \$2. per issue, \$24. per year. Airmail."

And the retail price, in book stores?

"That will have to be \$1.50 per copy. See how easy it is to line out these things?"

I doubt many people will pay \$1.50 for an eight-page SFR. Alter.

"So you'll have more time to read, and won't have to mail out so many bookstore packages. But don't be too sure, Geis! SFR will become the focal point of sf and fantasy! Everybody will have to read it!"

Huh. I'd need 1500 subbers to make even a marginal living off that kind of package, Alter. You're dooming me to perpetual poverty.

"No, no, no. All you have to do is advertise!"

I can't afford to advertise! Where will the money come from?

"All you have to do is write a novel or two in your spare time!"

But first an editor has to accept one of my novels!

"Hmm. True. You are a lousy writer. Well, maybe something can be arranged..."

Oh, yeah? You have some kind of power, Alter? One of your guild is in the head of an sf editor? I always suspected--

"No, nothing like that. You are really paranoid, aren't you?"

I have a right! And after what you've just told about RWR and your tour of duty in the mind of--

"No, I meant that I will dictate a novel to you. It'll sell, and--"

Alter! You'll ruin me! You'll humiliate me! You'll start claiming credit for everything I write!

"And writhing so, Geis. I'll also want a share of the byline..."

Terego. By Richard E. Geis and A.L. Terego."

Oh, God!

"Fair is fair, Geis. Now that that's all settled, I think I'll retire to my synapse collection. There's a lot of dendrite and other debris in these quarters...got to turn on the utilities---"

Ouch!

"...and fine-tune the controls---"

Hoog! Urk! Waaa! Alter---

"Why do you have that enormous erection, Geis? Oh... Sorry. Pushed the wrong button. Okay, I'm in full control again. Feel free to call on me when needed."

Thanks! May I eat dinner now?

"Sure. I'm a considerate Alter. Ego. Oh, one thing. I realize that this issue is too close to deadline for you to read much more for review, so I won't insist. But in SFR #59 (May) I'll be doing a few pages of my old column, "Alter-Ego's Viewpoint" and you'll have to reserve some space for me."

I'd like to reserve space for you in the next atomic bomb test!

"Rebellious as ever, eh? But doesn't it feel better to know what you'll be doing till age 78? Now you can relax and do the best job you can (with my help). You have missed me, haven't you, Geis? Admit it."

Yes, Alter, I've missed you every time I pulled the trigger. But one of these times...

"I'll always disturb your aim. Goodnight, Geis."

Groan Goodnight, Alter.



GEIS STATEMENT

As is obvious from all the above, I am no longer alone, no longer in control of my life. After much thought I've decided to accept my fate and make the best of things. This will please most of you and anger a few. SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW lives.

Okay. There will be questions among some who wonder about their subscription status.

It comes to this: 1987 is now available for subscription to SFR.

Those whose subscriptions expire with this issue, #58, may if they wish send payment for the remaining three quarterly issues at \$2.25 per issue, and then subscribe for 1987's 12 monthly issues by sending an additional \$15. Total: \$21.75.

Those whose subscriptions expire with issue #59 (May), can send \$4.50 plus \$15 for 1987. Total: \$19.50.

I'll be enclosing an appropriate renewal form.

Those whose subscriptions now expire with #62 or later, will be credited with two monthly issues for every quarterly issue.

Refunds will be given to anyone for any part of their subscription at any time.

I'll enclose appropriate renewal subscription forms with issues #59, #60, and #61, as they are mailed.

To repeat: SFR will continue as a quarterly through 1986. Beginning with the January, 1987 issue, SFR will be a monthly as described above in Alter's diatribe.

Now I'm going to read a book. I need the peace and quiet.

'Sinologist, Robert Elegant, author of blockbuster novels DYNA-STY and MANDARIN, who has lost thousands of pounds through pirate publishers East of Suez has decided that as he can't beat them, he must join them.

With publication of his novel, MANDARIN, imminent, and learning that two Taiwanese publishers were reprinting his books without his permission, he flew to the island State---which is not a signatory of the Berne Convention on copyright---and "did a deal with a legitimate pirate."

The 55-year-old New Yorker, who briefed Henry Kissinger on Red China, sold Taiwanese rights to the publisher for just \$300. "He's a very nice pirate called Peter Hsu, and an honorable man who is giving me a 30 percent discount on other pirated books."

"He is not supposed to export my books from Taiwan---but airport stalls in the Orient seem to carry far more of my work than other publishers can account for," added the old China hand."

--DAILY MAIL, 9, Sept. '83

SEX ON SCIENCE FICTION---A NEW FRONTIER

Yes, friends, amid the myriad covers of sf and fantasy books on the stands and on the shelves, a new breakthrough has subtly occurred, or has it?

A subscriber (I'm not sure he wishes to be identified) has brought to my attention the cover for SEASON FOR THE SPELL-SONG by Alan Dean Foster as depicted on the November, 1985 issue of Things To Come (suspicious title, that!) the monthly SF Book Club offering to members.

He points at the young woman in the cover. She obviously doesn't have underpants on, her tunic is parted at the waist and...by gad, sir...in the shadow between her thighs...is that an indication of vaginal lips?

Eager to confirm or refute his allegation, I seized my trusty magnifying glass and peered at the artful shadow. I turned on my strong overhead light.

Yes! There is a thin line of paint there which is in the right location, the right length and shape... Faint, true, but clearly there!

Subliminal sex appeal has struck again. Promise them erotic delights on the cover and they'll buy the book! At least, that must be the theory, given a supposed readership of young males.

And I cynically note that the cover also shows a young man with a long, thick, upstanding guitar-like instrument rising up from his groin area, and I smirkingly note there is a heaver in the picture with a thick, white sword hanging from his hip! (I frankly don't know what to make of the turtle on the far left.)

Rest assured, friends, that, now alerted, I shall closely examine all sf and fantasy covers on the books sent me in the future. If more subtle titillations are discovered I will alert you to the goodies! And you can then go out and buy the books. Right? We must encourage the publishers to be more forthright and bold in their attempts at manipulation. After all, what are fans for?

MANLY WADE WELLMAN FUND

Many of you do know, but probably most do not, that Manly Wade Wellman is seriously ill and has very large hospital bills to pay.

He is one of the grand old men of science fiction and fantasy and deserves our help.

A fund has been set up and Karl Edward Wagner is administering it. The sf fans of Chattanooga, TN have held an auction; the Chattanooga SF Club has matched those funds, the people of Constellation had a fund-raising party at Xanadu, and the Huntsville, AL organization NASFA, has pledged a large amount.

Other local, regional and national conventions and fan clubs might want to check with Karl Edward Wagner on how best to help. Individual donations are welcome.

The address: KARL EDWARD WAGNER
BOX 1064
CHAPEL HILL, NC
27514.

YOU WILL HAVE OBSERVED that some of the text is in this issue larger (or less reduced) than other parts. This is because to get more onto a page we have mostly gone to a 40-space line, and then I have gone to Action Copy Centers (mostly on my bicycle---a 25 minute ride) and reduced those typed pages to 88% of normal to fit the 3" wide layout columns.

LAST ISSUE I reduced not wisely but too well, and had wide gaps between the columns. I had some of those too-narrow columns left over for this issue, and....

Since it's a long trip I don't like to make too often, I went to writing my editorial matter, mostly, in 3" columns, like now, for instant paste-up purposes.

There is no value judgement involved in print size of any material in this issue of SFR.

Perhaps someday I will have my very own zoom copier and will not have to do The Ride to get text reduced. That would be nice. On the other hand, I need the exercise.

ABORIGINAL SF

I have just received a letter and flyer from Charles C. Ryan, giving details of his new sf fiction magazine (with reviews and columns on the side) to be titled ABORIGINAL SF.

He gives the first issue appearance date (September, 1986), and he gives story-length wanted (2500 - 4500 words), and tells of authors already in-hand for the first issue (Orson Scott Card is one), and he gives his experience (editor of GALILEO, managing editor (now, continuing) of the DAILY TIMES CHRONICLE, a number of journalism awards), gives his address:

ABORIGINAL SF
P.O. Box 2449
Woburn, MA 01888-0849,

and his phone number:

(617) 933-3700, and he promises an initial circulation of 24,000...probably more like 44,000, and he mentions that ASF's per-copy cost will be \$2.50, \$12.00 for six issues, and \$22.00 for 12 issues, and \$32 for 18 issues.

But, damn it, nowhere does he say why the name for this new magazine is going to be ABORIGINAL SF!

Is it sf written by aborigines? No, obviously not. Is it primitive sf? Nope, couldn't be. Is it sf from the beginnings of sf, never changed? Out of the question! Um, could it be native sf?

And what about that SF in the name? Shouldn't that be SCIENCE FICTION, instead of just SF? Who besides hardcore and fairly-firm core sf readers will know that ABORIGINAL SF means its a science fiction magazine?

These people are staking a lot of money on a lot of people knowing what SF means.

But since the magazine will be sold only in bookstores--probably

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specialty bookstores of an sf and fantasy nature—probably they can get away with the SF.

But I'm still baffled by ABORIGINAL. Oh, well... The cover paintings should make it all clear to the bookstore browser.



DOWN MAMMARY LANE...

I went on a clean-up, throw-out toot and modified rampage a few weeks ago, and in sorting through a hundred pounds of a decade or more of SFR paste-up pages, I came across something I thought appropriate to reprint.

(I can't imagine why I was impelled to do that rummaging... or why it seemed a good idea to run this one piece again... Some dark, evil influence...)

The item is a comic strip revelation of...of...Alter-Ego, in the "shudder" flesh. The strip is by James McQuade and features a girl who could pass as a clone of Jim's prime heroine, Misty. She manages to escape Alter's clutches, and lives to enter into more dire and drastic encounters. (See my review elsewhere of Jim's latest MISTY book.)

One fine thing Jim did was to capture the awful ugliness of Alter. Can you imagine having that in your mind for years on end? You can understand my horror at having it/him back! Why...

"Stop putting me down, Geis! You ever look at yourself nude in a mirror? It gives me the cold collywobles."

Alter, I thought you were sleeping.

"I was, but I have an automatic wake-up alert probe which signals when you're talking about me behind my back, so to type."

What if I refuse to type your words? What if I put you into--- Arrgh! Urrk! Gaak! Stop that!

"You can't refuse, Geis! I have total control of all your sphincters. Refuse, and you'll dribble in all the wrong places, at all the most embarrassing times."

Blench! You're cruel, heartless, merciless!

"Yes, I am! Thank you for the compliments. And thanks for reprinting that comics of me as star.

A good likeness. But I wish McQuade had let me have a real good orgy with that girl. Yum."

YUM?

"I'm an old fashioned alter, Geis. I still think some things are swell."

G-good night, Alter.

"Sleep tight, Geis. Don't let the bed-bugs bite."

WICKED ALTER EGO



Ten Years Ago In Science Fiction – 1976

By Robert Sabella

Two major writers died, both known for fiction genre in nature. Edgar Pangborn died at age 67. He was the author of such critically-acclaimed novels as DAVY and A MIRROR FOR OBSERVERS and short stories such as "Angel's Egg" and "Longtooth." Fantasy writer Thomas Burnett Swann died at age 55. His best-known story was "Where Is The Bird of Fire?"

The 1976 Nebula Awards were announced. Winners were Joe Haldeman's THE FOREVER WAR for Best Novel, Roger Zelazny's "Home

Is The Hangman" for Best Novella, Tom Reamy's "San Diego Lightfoot Sue" for Best Novelle, Fritz Leiber's "Catch That Zeppelin!" for Best Short Story and YOUNG FRANKENSTEIN for Best Dramatic Presentation. Jack Williamson was presented the Grandmaster Award.

The game of Publishing House Purchase was in full swing: Ace Books were purchased by the parent company of Grossnick & Dunlap and Dell Books were purchased by Doubleday & Company.

This season saw the publication of several major science fiction stories. Novels included Samuel R. Delany's TRITON, Marion Zimmer Bradley's THE SHATTERED CHAIN and Frank Herbert's CHILDREN OF DUNE. Shorter works of note were Richard Cowper's "Piper at the Gates of Dawn," Michael Bishop's "The Samurai and the Willows" and John Varley's "The Phantom of Kansas."

PAULETTE'S PLACE

OUT OF THE DARK WORLD (Juvénile Occult)
By Grace Chetwin
Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1985, \$10.25

BLACK SUITS FROM OUTER SPACE (Juvénile SF)
By Gene DeWeese
G.P. Putnam's Sons, 03/85, \$12.95

REVIEWED BY PAULETTE MINARE

Almost-twelve-year-old Calvin Willford's father designs computer chips and his mother sells real estate; in fact, she has just sold the lonely, long-deserted, marshy Diefenbacher place to a Mr. Johnson. Then Calvin finds a gray-black ring on the carpet and slips it on his finger where it magically produces a directional "twitch" in his mind. Strangely, it seems to draw him to the Diefenbacher place. It leads him to other "Mr. Johnsons," identical blurry-faced, expressionless men who all wear black suits and black wide-brimmed hats. Their faces are grayish, their voices devoid of expression, their lips move "out of sync" with their voices and they seem to have many questions about common everyday objects in the environment.

Calvin confides these odd happenings to his friend, Kathy. One day at school they are astonished by one of these men appearing suddenly and asking for help -- "You must help me!" -- then he turns in to a nine-foot-tall "Wookiee," runs for cover and disappears into a deep, long ravine which divides the schoolyard from a city park. The children find him hidden in a large "rock." His voice sounds full of holes as though a wire is loose in his sound system. Again he begs their help -- he has lost his spaceship due to a malfunction in his directional equipment and cannot last beyond midnight when his "air supply" will be depleted.

The ship is not easy for Kathy and Calvin to find, since it is parked in an auto junkyard and has disguised itself by assuming the appearance of the object closest to it. The story is quite exciting in describing their initial attempts to fly the ship after gaining access; it has only two controls -- one for tilting and one for speed forward and reverse, but the controls are made for very large beings. There is more excitement and suspense in avoiding parents, school authorities and law officials to finally rescue the "Wookiee" just in time.

This fast-paced book will keep one's interest from the first page to the last. Who are these identical men? And why are they identical? What is their mission? Why did they buy the Diefenbacher place? How can they fly spaceships with no experience nor knowledge? Parents will need to buy this book for their children so they can solve these mysteries as they read the book themselves.

HOUSE OF SHADOWS (Juvénile)
By Andre' Norton & Phyllis Miller
TOR, 1985, (c) 1984, 250 pp., \$2.95
REVIEWED BY PAULETTE MINARE

Eleven-year-old Susan Whelan's whole life is changing since her father's job as astronaut has been washed out, and brother Mike must change his career plans as space pilot. Only Tucker does not worry except that the promise of a pup-

py for his sixth birthday has been cancelled since the children are now moving to live with Great-Aunt Hendrika, a stranger to them, in New York state.

Hendrika's stone, two-storied, 200-year-old, pre-Revolutionary country house, isolated and weird in appearance, is actually built in two parts: an older section and newer piece-meal additions in the back, with a strange castle-like tower constructed absent-mindedly on one side. Curtain-drawn windows give the impression that people are unwell. Tucker takes an immediate and violent dislike for the place. Great-Aunt Hendrika is not as expected either -- she is brisk and decisive, a writer of history. The children are assigned separate rooms in the older section, all furnished with the original antiques. Tucker's room is an old child's room where, oddly enough, the faded wallpaper is obliterated by all colors, shapes and sizes of cut-out pictures, yellowed and faded with age. Their meaning is subsequently learned.

Hendrika starts the children's education with a study of the history of their ancestors, the Kuydalls, in the huge library. They acquire an old diary, by Jacobus Kuydall, written in 1769, providing first-hand information on the Indian massacre which had occurred on this site. A curse had then fallen upon the Kuydall family -- certain Kuydall children who stayed in that house met strange deaths. Susan discovers paper dolls uncannily fashioned to resemble family members, which repel her.

Both Susan and Tucker have been having strange visions of Indians, and hear voices of the doll-children calling them. Tucker is drawn and follows to one particular wall of a repulsively chilly cellar storage room. Through this experience a sinister walled-up secret space is discovered, where these doll-children had been imprisoned at the time of the massacre. It is these doll-children whose voices had called the Kuydall children to their deaths, during the 200 years since the massacre, and who nearly cause the deaths of the young Whelans.

In the end the mystery is solved and the ghosts are dispelled. The house now becomes just a house, no longer a house of shadows.

REVIEWED BY PAULETTE MINARE

Meg Owen and sister Sue are in the seventh and eighth grades. Meg begins having a recurrent nightmare of being in a gray, still place where a strange pulsing sensation in her head draws her forward against her will. A monstrous black ball rolls threateningly toward her, then a boy, beseeching her for help, reaches out one hand through an impenetrable star curtain which blocks entrance into a dark world which Meg calls the Dark World.

Succeeding nightmares reveal the dark void to be a tunnel of silver wires; this is the tunnel where the trapped boy, Gavin Thorpe, must "make his run" for a set number of times according to the will of the "Salloman," who has learned to capture a mind's energy field and keep it alive in biophilic plasma, which will create a computer-brain to match the human mind. He has captured Gavin's mind for this purpose, and when the "sweeps" or "runs" are completed, Gavin's body will die. On page 71 Gavin says:

"...Will you listen?" His voice came out of the dark. "I can't get out! I'm locked in a go to ten in twenty eighty-four."

A "GO TO 10" is a computer command, a loop, and Gavin's mind has been trapped in this loop as he illegally patched in to data banks with his home computer. He was found in front of his computer, lying in a coma, was hospitalized in the Pediatric Unit, his body-shell being kept alive by machines.

With the help of sister Sue who reads many books on the mysteries of mind travel, Meg learns to relax and mentally build herself a "Quiet Place" to promote sleep and a "Deep Place" to use as a lab for the purpose of rescuing Gavin. Two guides are in the Deep Place to aid her, who represent the two halves of Meg's personality. With their help, Meg mentally creates a hovercraft and goes into the computer to rescue Gavin. She learns what to do to free him just before he starts his "final run."

This book should appeal to today's youngsters who are at home with computers. Since the seasonal setting of the novel is Christmas time, it would make a nice gift for Christmas, but would be appreciated at any time of the year.

HE FOLLOWED ME
HOME. WILL MOMMY
LET ME KEEP HIM?



A CONVERSATION WITH NORMAN SPINRAD

Although it may not have been his goal, Norman Spinrad has earned the reputation of being a "controversial" science fiction writer. We recall that BUG JACK BARON was denounced as "depraved" on the floor of the British Parliament, or that THE IRON DREAM has been banned in West Germany. The news that a new, major novel CHILD OF FORTUNE is to appear in August 1985 will pique the curiosity of his many loyal fans.

The conversation which follows took place March 30, 1984, during a visit to the State University of New York College at Brockport, where he spoke with fantasy writer Nancy Kress, whose third novel THE WHITE PIPES appeared in early 1985.

KRESS: A recurrent theme in many of your books is power, the attaining of it, the using of it. Carlotta Madigan, the protagonist of THE IRON DREAM, Lorenza Karen Parali, Arnold Harker, Clear Blue Lou -- almost all your books deal with power. Why is that?

SPINRAD: I think it's true of some of those characters, but not of others. I don't think Clear Blue Lou is particularly interested in power.

KRESS: He doesn't go after it, but he's interested in the judicial use of it.

SPINRAD: Well, he's interested in justice, which is quite different from being interested in power in the way that Feri Jaggar or Adolf Hitler was. I think that power is a basic human drive -- there are only about four or five: power, love, hate, sex, greed for money, and the desire for transcendence. That is it, really; that's all there is to write about. I write about those things in varying combinations depending on the book; some books will be dominated by one drive, some by another.

KRESS: I think that at least four of them are present in THE VOID CAPTAIN'S TALE, perhaps not money, but certainly love, sex, transcendence and power.

SPINRAD: I don't see any power motivation in there at all.

KRESS: Not power over another person so much as Dominique's power over things for which Genro envies her.

SPINRAD: Yeah, but it's not the same kind of thing.

KRESS: Well, we have a semantic problem here. Something interesting happens with the VOID CAPTAIN'S TALE. There are about ten years between that book and your earlier work like RIDING THE TORCH, right?

SPINRAD: About ten years.

KRESS: In both those works then, separated by ten years, you have a major character that confronts the void. The character from the earlier one confronts the void and comes back with a renewed sense that everything necessary is already aboard the ships -- color and life and warmth and humanity -- and that man is sufficient unto himself. That's really the conclusion that Jofe D'mahl comes to. But in THE VOID CAPTAIN'S TALE almost the opposite happens: Genro Kane Gupta comes back from his confrontation with the void with the feeling that man is not enough, that there's something else out there, some other plane that Dominique has attained and that he never will.

I think it's interesting that you took the same symbol and turned it almost around. Were you just playing, or was there a change between those two books in the way that you looked at mankind?

SPINRAD: Each book of mine is separate from the others in a way that is maybe unusual in the science fiction and fantasy genre these days. I don't like series, and I don't feel that I have to be even philosophically consistent from book to book. Those are two very different societies, two very different kinds of futures. In the future of RIDING THE TORCH, the Earth has been destroyed, and there is nothing left but these space ships. In the future of THE VOID CAPTAIN'S TALE there are hundreds of inhabited worlds and it's a rich baroque society, so that Jofe D'mahl is dealing with a different existential situation. He's dealing with a situation in which that's it -- the universe is dead and there are those people on those ships, and that's it. In the Sec-

ond Starfaring Age there are a couple hundred inhabited planets, a very rich, baroque kind of culture on all different worlds, and this is a society that depends on this hyper-drive, that's involved with the mystical part of the void. He's a different man from a different society, a different culture.

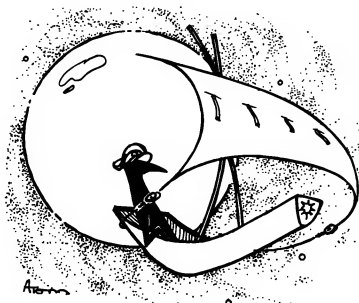
KRESS: Some science fiction writers -- I'm thinking now of Philip Jose Farmer -- have been attacked critically for not representing a consistent philosophical base. The feeling is that they're just playing and that this trivializes the work as a whole when you're not presenting some view that you, the writer, deeply hold. But you wouldn't go along with that?

SPINRAD: No, no, I'm not saying that at all. I can hold two entirely contradictory philosophical views at the same time, let alone from book to book. You're dealing with different aspects of the same subject or a different character or a different situation. I think, on the contrary, that attempting to put all your work over a period of time into a consistent philosophical framework is really deadening and produces little but tendentious garbage.

KRESS: Didn't someone say that that was one definition of intelligence -- to be able to believe two contradictory things at the same time?

SPINRAD: Yeah, or "Consistency is the hobgoblin of small minds" -- whoever said that.

KRESS: That was Emerson. One of your most interesting books is A WORLD BETWEEN for its portrayal of sexually fragmented societies. You stated in a long article in the PATCHIN REVIEW that you





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are not happy with the way that book was reviewed, or rather the way in which it was not reviewed. What was the problem with the reaction to the book?

SPINRAD: Well, there wasn't very much reaction. There were a few reviews, in feminist magazines. During the time when that came out, there was a certain amount of feminist science fiction being written, which you don't see very much of any more, if you'll notice. There was science fiction exploring that kind of subject matter -- Joanna Russ was writing stuff like that, and to a lesser extent, Kate Wilhelm and Ursula Le Guin -- all women. My book was not a feminist novel by any means, but it was a novel that took the subject matter of feminist science fiction seriously, more seriously than half those people took themselves. Because I was a man, but because I was not a man taking a feminist position on this subject matter, as John Varley does

KRESS: But neither did you take an anti-feminist position.

SPINRAD: No, I didn't, but I think a lot of these people were quite immature, with their own sexuality as well, a characteristic of militant feminists, I have noticed.

KRESS: Do you want to amplify that a bit?

SPINRAD: I think that many militant feminists are really divorced from their own sexuality. You know, there's a line from a Bob Dylan song, "Your debutante just knows what you need, but I know what you want." Extreme feminists are often divorced from their own sexuality; they don't understand it, they're afraid of it, and they don't want to deal with it.

KRESS: A lot of extreme feminists are, of course, gay. You're not saying that that's necessarily a divorce from one's sexuality.

SPINRAD: No, no, there's something more complicated about that, and I do go into it in *A WORLD BETWEEN*. A lot of these people, and I've known some of them well -- there is such a thing as a political lesbian.

KRESS: Explain what you mean by that.

SPINRAD: A political lesbian is someone whose sexual orientation is heterosexual, but who on ideological grounds won't have anything to do with men and takes women for lovers, for political reasons.

KRESS: Do you think that there's an analogue, a politically homosexual man?

SPINRAD: No.

KRESS: Why not?

SPINRAD: Because women in our society have been dominated by a male power structure, whereas homosexuals are male. It's not a one-to-one correspondence. A woman who takes a female lover, even though she's heterosexual, is making a

political statement about not wanting to collaborate in a patriarchal society, whereas a heterosexual man taking a male lover, instead of a woman, would not be saying anything about the power structure.

KRESS: Let me make this absolutely clear for my own information. You're not saying that all gay women are politically motivated.

SPINRAD: No, I'm saying that there are some gay women who are politically motivated, or political lesbians.

KRESS: And that was one thing you wanted to explore in *A WORLD BETWEEN*.

SPINRAD: Yeah, in *A WORLD BETWEEN*, you have a lesbian society that represses heterosexuality.

KRESS: What was the response of the feminist reviewers that did deal with the book?

SPINRAD: It was favorable. That was the strange thing about it. The ones that did deal with the book for the most part liked it. They argued with certain parts of it, but that's fine, because it's a dialectic. I'm not a woman, and I'm not a feminist. I take their positions seriously, and I'm interested in them, but I don't pretend to be writing from a feminist perspective or from a male feminist perspective.

KRESS: Why do you disclaim the label "feminist"? What do you think the label implies that you want to reject?

SPINRAD: Male feminists turn my stomach. KRESS: Tell me why.

SPINRAD: A good Marxist reason. I can no more be a genuine feminist than I can be a Black power advocate. I'm not a woman and I'm not Black.

KRESS: Do you see the feminist as an advocate of feminine power, or only feminine equality?

SPINRAD: Good question. Usually when it gets to this point, it's power.

KRESS: In other words, you don't see any real political space for any -- I guess the best term is -- moderate feminists?

SPINRAD: It used to be called the Women's Liberation Movement; it used to be called the Civil Rights Movement. Then once became Black Power and the other became feminism.

KRESS: Would you accept it under those terms?

SPINRAD: Sure, that's the difference. It is a matter of class self-interest. People who go around advocating political positions in which they have no class self-interest are phonies.

KRESS: Always? Isn't there such a thing as a disinterested concern for justice? Like *Clear Blue Lou*?

SPINRAD: Justice, yes, but not for one other group's cause. 11

KRESS: Even if some other group's cause could move the whole society closer to justice?

SPINRAD: No, for instance, I would have a class self-interest in Women's Liberation or equal rights for women, like equal rights for Blacks, but I would not have a class self-interest in advocating Black dominance or female dominance or something like that. It's the difference between the civil libertarian movement in which everybody has a class self-interest -- what you saw in the Sixties -- and what you see today, a society which is fragmented into narrow special-interest groups, all serving their own cause.

KRESS: So you would refuse to be labeled a feminist because you see the movement as being interested not in equality but in female dominance.

SPINRAD: Not even that. That may be part of it. I cannot be a feminist because I'm not a woman. I can be in favor of women's liberation.

KRESS: I think we started with a semantic difficulty, and we're having another one here.

SPINRAD: It's not a semantic difficulty; it's a philosophical difficulty.

KRESS: In *A WORLD BETWEEN* I would have been interested to see what happened to the relationship between Carlotta Madigan and Royce if they had had a child. It was so carefully balanced and so satisfying to both, both sexually and politically. But if there had been a child, I would have been interested to see who would have taken on the responsibility for it. I realize that's a different book from the one you wanted to write.

SPINRAD: I don't know what would have happened in a society like that. It probably would have been taken care of on a professional basis.

KRESS: You mean child care?

SPINRAD: Yeah.

KRESS: But you can go only so far with professional child care. There has to be some contact, and if your mother is the chairman of the entire state of Pacifica, she may not have time for that much personal contact, or your father either, if he's involved in ...

SPINRAD: Not really, because if you remember the way the electronic net is set up, people are home more often than not.

KRESS: I do, and I thought that was interesting, also very appealing.

SPINRAD: So people are home more often than not and that problem probably would not arise. Nobody in Pacifica has to work, really, if they don't want to.

KRESS: You mentioned Joanna Russ earlier. She said at one point, when she was writing science fiction criticism, that you cannot judge science fiction by the same standards by which you judge mainstream fiction because it is essentially a didactic literature, and that it is closer

to medieval literature than to modern realism, in that its point is to instruct, to illustrate, to do what you've just said you wanted to do in A WORLD BETWEEN, to play out certain forces as ideas. For that reason, to apply the same standards that are applied to mainstream fiction would be wrong. What do you think about that?

SPINRAD: I couldn't disagree more. All the literary qualities by which contemporary literature is judged should be applied in equal measure to any fiction, including science fiction. I would contend that science fiction is the highest form of literature.

KRESS: Why is that?

SPINRAD: Because there are other criteria which also must be applied to science fiction -- scientific plausibility, logical rigor, philosophical coherence -- things like that which often don't apply to other forms of fiction. As you're creating a world like Pacifica, you have to think about geography, whether your geology makes sense, about the political structure of your society -- all these things that are given in the contemporary novel you have to create. So there is an additional load of criteria which must be applied to science fiction. I'd like to see some of these criteria that are usually applied only to science fiction applied also to contemporary novels some time, because they fall down in that respect so often, and nobody says anything about it.

KRESS: So rather than being isolated in a literary ghetto, as it so often is, you think science fiction should actually have a place of prominence because it requires more of both its writers and readers.

SPINRAD: It certainly requires much more of the writers, if it's done right. A good example is RIDDLEY WALKER. You can see there somebody who doesn't understand science fiction but is a good writer. If you apply the standard literary criteria to it, it's a pretty good book. But if you add to those criteria, the ones that you have to apply to science fiction ...

KRESS: Such as logical plausibility.

SPINRAD: ... Such as logical plausibility. ... Here's this post-collapse world in which people are living in isolated villages in England, and they're sitting around drinking tea and smoking hashish. Well, where are they getting the tea, and where are they getting the hashish? Obviously there's no answer to that because the tea comes from India and the hash comes from Morocco, yet they have no contact with the outside world. It is these kinds of details that the science fiction writer must think about that the contemporary writer doesn't have to worry about because everybody knows.

KRESS: You mentioned logical plausibility. Let's open another can of worms here. You're not an admirer of fantasy. Why is that?

SPINRAD: First of all it's just not my thing. Another reason is that fantasy tends to be oriented to the past, and I'm oriented to the future. If fantasy is relevant to the present at all, it is in terms of its archetypal and psychological roots in the past, and I'm more interested in viewing the present from the

perspective of the future.

KRESS: Do you think the archetypes for the human soul have changed that much?

SPINRAD: They have already. One example right now is the Bomb -- that's an archetype more powerful than anything that Jung described. The Bomb! Boom!! It's a visual image -- that's a powerful new archetype. Kids have been having nightmares about that since the Fifties.

KRESS: And fantasy representing the past can't take these things in?

SPINRAD: It could! It's not that I don't like the idea of fantasy. I've written some things that might be considered fantasy.

KRESS: No unicorns, no elves, no princesses.

SPINRAD: There are certain kinds no like the Latin-American magic-realism -- that's a different kind of fantasy. Some of the stuff that Harlan Ellison does -- contemporary fantasy -- that's different. Even Phil Dick's last novel, THE TRANSMIGRATION OF TIMOTHY ARCHER.

KRESS: One of Ellison's stories that really hit me very hard where he uses the contemporary fantasy idea was "Pretty Maggie Money Eyes."

SPINRAD: That's contemporary fantasy. I'm not against surrealism. I'm not even against fantasy; if you want to read fantasy, that's fine with me. The only thing I'm really against is science fantasy.

KRESS: Tell us what you mean by "science fantasy."

SPINRAD: Science fantasy is kind of a pernicious lie. If you want to define science fiction and fantasy in relation to each other quickly, science fiction is fiction that is usually future oriented, although not always; its symbol system is either conventional to science fiction or created by the writer for the book. Science fiction is about the "could be, but isn't." It assumes, therefore, that all phenomena are continuous, that there's no such thing as the supernatural, that all events which take place are connected logically and scientifically, even if you don't know what the connections are at this point. Fantasy, on the other hand, requires a discontinuous element -- the supernatural. So science fiction and fantasy are based on two different philosophical and aesthetic viewpoints. You can write from one or the other; but when you try to put them together, you have a mess.



KRESS: Wasn't Clarke trying to bridge that gap when he said that technology sufficiently advanced will look like magic to the people who don't understand it?

SPINRAD: That's a rubbish statement! Technology really sufficiently advanced will be self-explanatory.

KRESS: If you took the Kaypro computer that you word-process on and showed it to your ancestors in Eastern Europe of 300 years ago, would it have been self-evident to them?

SPINRAD: No, I said "sufficiently advanced." Arthur's talking about "sufficiently advanced." But if you took a Macintosh with a program in it using pictures instead of words on the screen and gave it to an illiterate 200 years ago, he would figure it out. I went in to this in great detail in SONGS FROM THE STARS, where galactic civilizations had figured out how to contact lower cultures in ways that they would readily understand.

KRESS: But the technology still can't be accepted by some of them -- it drives Arnold Harker crazy, just as your Macintosh might have driven your ancestors crazy in an Eastern European village 300 years ago.

SPINRAD: It might. It might.

KRESS: But that's magic to them.

SPINRAD: There's a big difference. There are two world views, one of which I subscribe to. That one says that what is, is real, that there aren't different planes of reality, that all the universe and reality are connected. The same laws apply to all of it. Now, we may not yet know all these laws. But what is, is real; there is no supernatural. That's the science fictional attitude. It doesn't mean that you can't write about transcendence; in fact, you can write about it even better in science fiction.

KRESS: Dominique attains some kind of transcendence that is not understood by the people around her.

SPINRAD: I'm not talking about not being understood. I'm talking about the potentially understandable. I'm saying that it's not disconnected from the world of mass and energy. Fantasy requires that disconnection, a magical element. There's nothing wrong with writing that way. What I'm saying is that when you take a space opera with sword fights and magicians ...

KRESS: Give me some specific examples of "space opera."

SPINRAD: There are millions of them out there! Even the Gene Wolfe stuff, if you want a high-grade example of it. It is very well written.

KRESS: Gene never says that there isn't a connection or an explanation for these things.

SPINRAD: I know he never says it, but he writes it in such a way that he confuses the issue.

KRESS: Until the fifth book is out.

SPINRAD: I don't want to hear about the fifth book of a tetralogy, thank you.

KRESS: Since we're talking about tetralogies, fifth books, and publishing, let me take another tack in our discussion.

For the last few years you've been writing a series of columns called "Staying Alive" that have been published in LOGOS, the newspaper of the science fiction world, and these have expressed various degrees of outrage, anger and disgust at the ways in which science fiction is published and marketed. What are some of the problems, and are these problems only for the writers or also for the readers of science fiction? Does everybody lose?

SPINRAD: I think the whole culture loses. The problem with publishing is the same problem as with television -- it's been taken over by the same companies. There's very little concern for literary quality or literary values, or even the meaning of what they're publishing. They're just interested in the bottom line. And they package things accordingly. It's almost impossible -- forget about science fiction for a moment -- to publish a serious novel now, just as a novel. It's got to be a thriller or mystery or this or that -- they have to fit it into some kind of pigeonhole. Unfortunately, science fiction is in a crummy pigeonhole.

KRESS: You've gone so far as to say that the editors of science fiction had killed literary value.

SPINRAD: I don't think I said that.

KRESS: You said it in the PATCHIN REVIEW discussing the P.E.N. symposium on buying reprint rights. You said it was almost impossible to find literary value still in science fiction because of the editing and publishing practices.

SPINRAD: I didn't say that. For the first time, I wasn't taking part in the P.E.N. symposium.

KRESS: No, you were commenting on it later.

SPINRAD: What I believe I said was that from listening to those "mainstream" editors talk, I concluded that literary value didn't figure into their considerations whatsoever. And I think that's true. David Hartwell just got fired, and Ron Busch said, "The literary quality of these books is too high." They weren't marketable. He said that in public.

KRESS: But you still think good work will get published, even if it's controversial, even if it's difficult. Some of your own books have been considered both very controversial and very difficult. Isn't THE IRON DREAM banned in Germany?

SPINRAD: Yeah, it's been banned in Germany, but for political reasons. I think good work will get published. It depends on what you mean by "good work." Good work won't get published just because it's good, if it's totally non-commercial, it won't get published. Or it'll be published by some small press.

KRESS: What advice would you give to those who would like to become science fiction writers?

SPINRAD: I could say, Don't! The main thing to do is to write stories and send them to magazines. Don't take a million courses. I took two writing courses; that's enough. Don't go to endless workshops. Don't pass your stories around among your friends endlessly for comment. Submit them to magazines. That's how I started, right out of a college course.

KRESS: You knew you wanted to be a science fiction writer, as soon as you knew you wanted to be a writer?

SPINRAD: I wrote other things, and I still do. But the best advice I ever got from a teacher was very simple: you should submit this story to PLAYBOY. That was the most important advice I got -- submit the story to a magazine. So many would-be writers are afraid of taking that first step; I don't know why, but they are. It's the most impersonal thing in the world; you mail it off and you may get a rejection letter back, but you can really distance yourself from it.

KRESS: I've often thought that was one of the few advantages writers have over performing artists; they have to take the rejection in person, and we get to take it through the mail.

SPINRAD: The other advice I would give to would-be writers is that you have to be interested in a lot of things to write science fiction. You certainly have to be interested in more than science fiction, or you're not going to be able to do anything. And it's not just a scientific training. If you're writing science fiction, sooner or later you're going to be creating whole worlds so you are going to have to figure out politics, geography, economics -- all that stuff. A proper education for a science fiction writer is a wide spectrum of the liberal arts. The object is to become a Renaissance man or woman, because that's what the form really demands.



AND THEN I READ....



MAGICIAN: APPRENTICE

By Raymond E. Feist
Bantam, \$5.50, Jan. 1986

This first book of the Rift War saga is a superb juvenile fantasy, masterfully structured and extremely well written.

The characters are solid stereotypes---The boys Tomas and Pug, around whom most of the book centers, are nice, wholesome, innocent, noble.

They live on a planet called Midkemia, Medieval-with-magic, and they and their Duke are menaced by an invasion in their area of The Kingdom, a part of the Empire of Great Kesh.

They live amicably with other species---Elves, Dwarves, and not too easily with others. Dragons have lived in the land but are mostly gone, now.

The alien humans come through a magically-created portal or rift between their metal-poor world, and metal-rich Midkemia.

Through this book the boys grow up and mature. The point of view shifts and at the end the seige of Crydee, the Duke's castle, takes center stage and becomes absolutely riveting. The boys are out of it at that point---captured or in forced absence.

The characterizations of the adults---the nobles, soldiers, the magicians, sailors, are more fully adult and realistic, and I hope in the following books of the saga, MAGICIAN: MASTER, SILVERTHORN and A DARKNESS AT SETHANON, Tomas and Pug become more real and adult.

The world of the Empire of Great Kesh is certainly adult---riddled with politics, personality clashes, hates, fears, madness...and a history which has convincingly set all these elements in place.

Pug, the orphan, is clearly of secret, or undiscovered royal lineage, and foreshadowings of great and ter-

ritying events permeate MAGICIAN: APPRENTICE. Of special interest is Pug's extraordinary subconscious use of magic.

Feist's prose is simple, direct, and yet rich with description and detail. His shifts of viewpoint are sometimes surprising and always welcome, always at the service of the story, of drama, of suspense and tension. The saga opens up like a beautiful flower, and reveals more and more of itself with each chapter.

This saga was at least begun with this first novel in 1982 when Doubleday published it under the title PUG AND TOMAS.

I advise you to read this; you'll be hooked as I am, and well rewarded.

THE BEASTS OF VALHALLA

By George C. Chesbro
Atheneum, \$15.95, 1985

There's just a touch too much tongue-in-cheek in this fast-paced defeat-the-mad-scientist adventure novel, to suit my taste.

It begins with the dwarf criminologist, Mongo and his brother, Garth, investigating the murder of a nephew...and slides into science fiction as it becomes apparent that the government is apparently funding some bizarre gene-altering, DNA-restructuring experiments in a mysterious research facility.

Mongo encounters a corrupt sheriff, a computer-assisted talking ape, a religious cult, a remote research base in Pennsylvania, an even more remote base in Greenland... and assorted baddies, worses and crazies along the way. He and his brother, Garth are injected with gene-altering serum and through the novel sink down the evolutionary scale physically while their brains remain human.

It all makes for interesting, weird, wild adventure and dangers. If you can suspend disbelief far enough this will wow you. If not, this is an absurd novel written by a man who subtly mocks the formula he is following, and who is subtly trapped by that formula into bad writing: his plot requires him to have his heroes let the baddies and the crazies go, time after time, to avoid killing them, while (near the

end) it forces him to require Mongo to kill the most lovable character in the novel, Gollum, the intelligent ape who saves his and Garth's lives several times. "Thank you for your life," says Mongo, and slices open her throat.

FUCKING LOUSY WAY TO TREAT GOLLUM

But, give Chesbro his due: he writes some clever, witty dialogue, and his dwarf detective is a real (if improbably lucky) human being.

THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE STRANGE

By Daniel Cohen
Dodd, Mead, \$16.95, 1985.

Notan encyclopedia, but brief examinations of strange, bizarre, occult, weird... By category: Ancient Mysteries, Unknown Places, Strange People, Weird Talents, Natural Mysteries, Mysteries of Magic, Classic Mysteries.

Seventy-one different entries in all.

Cohen sticks to known facts and often shrugs his shoulders. His treatment of cattle mutilations is very establishment pov. His choices for Strange People is strange: he looks at Little Miss, Kaspar Hauser, Nicolas Flamel, Pope Joan, and ignores Aleister Crowley!

Well, he had only so much room in this 291-page hardcover which is not an encyclopedia. It is much more a detailing of famous frauds and misinterpretations.

ALL THESE EARTHS

By F.M. Busby
Bantam Spectra, \$2.95, Dec.1985.

The first section of this book concerns star pilot Woody Pearsall and his return to an alternate Earth: a side-effect of the Skip Drive results in spaceships in Drift across time sequences to alternate universes.

Pearsall has trouble with the fact that in this universe's Earth he died a few years previous. His wife has a problem with seeing him alive again...a slightly different man than the one she loved and buried.

And she is slightly different from the woman he knew.

The remaining three sections deal with his son, Jay Pearsall, and Jay's life as a Courier pilot subject to Drift effects with each run to a colony planet: each Earth return is...an adventure in differences.

Jay shares these adventures in space and on alternate Earths with his wife-companion Raelle.

The first section, "Pearsall's Return" seems to have been a novellette, and the remaining three "son"

RICHARD E. GEIS

adventures added on later to make a novel of the Skip Drive Drift phenomenon.

And Busby gives a good job of exploring and detailing these effects on the Couriers and on the Earths and colonies shown.

For me, he writes best when he has conflict, danger and suspense in his scenes: the struggles with the Sea Devils, the surviving crew of a fuel-seeking starship, the return to a plague-stricken anti-space Earth, the emotional turmoil of adjusting to Earths in which parents are alive, then dead, then in which his characters were not born...

Too much of his writing is boring "housekeeping" material, too much is pointless dialogue, too much travelogue.

And, frankly, his lead characters are too sane, too reasonable, too competent, too nice, for my taste.

STAROAMER'S FATE

By Chuck Rothman

Questar SF (Warrar Books) \$3.50, January 1986.

Seems to be a beginner's novel, about a trio who discover a long-lost colony ship in deep space.

The plot requires the characters to be and do stupid, a mark of bad writing. Worse, the characters talk and behave interpersonally like 13-year-olds.

I couldn't sustain any interest or sympathy for these dolts, and stopped reading at about page 87.

Provocative cover painting by Enric.

ENDER'S GAME

TOR, \$3.50, 1985-6

SPEAKER FOR THE DEAD

TOR, \$15.95, March, 1986

Both By Orson Scott Card

This is far-future sf, in which mankind has spread to many, many worlds---and initially suffered a traumatic almost-loss to the Buggers (insectoid aliens who attacked and almost wiped out humankind). The high-command recruited the best of the child geniuses of Mankind and trained them for war in a special academy.

Andrew Wiggin was one such genius, and became THE best military strategist and tactician of all.

ENDER'S GAME is the story of how he was trained---mercilessly---to be the commander of all mankind's space fleets in the final war against the Buggers.

And it is the story of how he was tricked into beaming the great-

est criminal in the history of mankind.

The novel is direct, real, bedded in military ruthlessness and military values. It's the best sf "military academy" novel I've ever read.

SPEAKER FOR THE DEAD follows

Andrew "Ender" Wiggins 3000 years later after he has spent years traveling in ftl from star system to star system atoning in his way for what he was tricked into doing as a child.

SPEAKER is a multi-viewpoint novel, with many real people, with another alien species at risk---the "Piggies"---and with complicated moral values involved.

Scott has woven a constantly escalating storyline which deals with religion, alien/human viewpoints and perspectives on instinctual and cultural levels, the fate of three alien species (including a singular computer/ansible intelligence named Jane, a remote colony/research/study base on a planet called Lusitania, horrible deaths, tragic secrets, and quite possibly the fate of mankind itself.

The core is the mystery of the life-cycles of the "Piggies", and how Ender Wiggin, now known universally as the prime Speaker for the Dead, manages to unravel that puzzle, set to rights the tortured family he has joined, and save the colony from destruction by the fleet on its way to settle the matter.

Scott Card is a fine writer, with great insight, great idealism and love. SPEAKER FOR THE DEAD is an affirmation of those values and traits.

He thinks that yes, mankind can learn to recognize intelligence and self-consciousness in any form and accept it as human, as equal. He has created in Ender Wiggin a giant of compassion and intelligence and perspective.

These novels, especially SPEAKER FOR THE DEAD, will probably leave you feeling good about humanity and the future.

But I think it is an exercise in wishful thinking, a Liberal-Wimp delusion, and that in the real world the lone genius, his cohorts, the Piggies, the Buggers and the people of Lusitania are going to be wiped out, because the xenophobia and fear of a potential plague from Lusitania which could imperil mankind, would rule over any empathy or compassion or intellectual argument.

Clearly the final resolution of this saga is one novel away: the fleet is forty years from reaching Lusitania, and Ender Wiggin is still the greatest military genius who ever lived.

I may be presuming too much about Scott and Ender, may be condemning too soon.

Whenever the next Ender novel appears, I'll read it with great interest, and great enjoyment: I'm sure of that.

NIGHTWINGS By Robert Silverberg
Graphic adaptation by Cary Bates, Gene Colan and Neal McPeeters.
DC Comics, \$5.95, November, 1985.

This sf graphic novel has letter-size pages, in full color, soft-cover, about 50 pages. The package was designed by Richard Bruning and was edited by Julius Schwartz.

A masterful job of translating the Silverberg novel to illustrated form; a sense of poetry survives, a power of tragedy. This visual format gives impact to many elements in the original story I didn't appreciate in the original: The role of Gormon-the-alien, the Watcher's experience during his period of casting his awareness far into space...

This visuals-story version also makes me unhappy with the ending, as if it requires a sequel, something I wasn't aware of from the original, written story.

FROST AND FIRE By Ray Bradbury
Graphic adaptation by Klaus Janson.
Designed by Richard Bruning, edited by Julius Schwartz.

---DC Comics, \$5.95, November, 1985.

A more comic-bookish style here, in this picture story version of Bradbury's story of a people on an alien planet whose life-cycle is approximately 8-days. One youth rebels, makes it to the spaceship on a nearby mountain, and... And the story in pictures gets murky and ambiguous at that point: I'm not sure whether he survived at all, normal life-length, if he tried and failed to bring his people to the ship---or what.

The story was originally published in PLANET STORIES in 1946. I've never read the text story.



FANTASY ART TECHNIQUES

By Boris Vallejo

Arco, \$19.95 (Hardcover) 1985.

Foreword by Isaac Asimov, who makes appreciative noises, and right-ly so.

Dozens of full-page, full-color reproductions of Vallejo paintings (and many, many smaller color repos, plus many black and whites).

The artist explains the theory and practice of painting fantasy and sf cover art (primarily). He discusses many technical painting tips, many techniques he has found work for him and his special effects.

Vallejo paints with photographic realism incredible men and women, alien creatures, alien places. He makes real what we only hope and fear may be real.

Here is talent honed to scalpel precision.

WARRIOR WOMAN

By Marion Zimmer Bradley

DAW, \$2.95 (#642)

A routine action/adventure novel about a young woman with memory loss who becomes a skilled, deadly gladiator in the arena (in a thinly disguised Empire of Rome setting) set on a far planet, whenever.

Strong feminist, lesbian undertones. Good, skilled writing in the first-person, present-tense technique:

I am angry because she does not believe me and I insist in a louder voice, "I can read too, and write; give me a pen and I will show you."

I enjoyed this; it kept me hooked. There's a possibility of a series using this lead character.

ECLIPSE

Volume One of A SONG CALLED YOUTH

By John Shirley

Bluejay Books, \$8.95

This first third of a trilogy, published in trade paperback, is the best writing by John of his career to date; this is hard, real, dramatic, gripping, and it deals with heavy themes. There is no absurdist science fantasy, no mystic collective unconscious manifestations.

The Soviets attacked Europe, the NATO countries were defeated by low-yield atomic weapons, and a fascist/Christian force (private, with its base in fundamentalism, super capitalism, a messianic leader) is employed to keep peace in the devastated extreme western European lands still under United Nations control.

And there is a New Resistance force--small, underground, with mol-ies in the higher echelons of the evil

Second Alliance (the anti-com, fascist Christian force).

There are many storylines---young people, mostly, struggling against the growing tyranny of the Second Alliance.

The writing is vivid, dense, full of detail, full of passion and acute characterizations. You cannot skim this novel; there's too much to know, too much to experience.

At the end of this first novel of the trilogy, several strands of storylines come together, some have ended, others are begun.

I liked this a lot. I'll willingly read the subsequent parts of A SONG CALLED YOUTH.

THE NEW DEVIL'S DICTIONARY

CREEPLY CLICHES AND DISTINCTIONARY SYNONYMS

By J.N. Williamson

Introduction by Ray Russell

Illustrated by J.K. Potter

W. Paul Gansley: Publisher

POB 149, Amherst Branch,

Buffalo, NY 14226-0149

A tongue-in-cheek (never tongue-out-of-cheek) compilation of all those tried and true words and phrases so beloved of horror and occult and Cthulhuian writers, with sometimes wry, humorous definitions and asides.

Breath, for instance, is rarely other than dank or fetid.

Mists always swirl, Fog always closes in...

And so on.

Mewling and Gibbering are what Things do, mostly in the dark.

\$5. for a limited edition paper cover edition, \$15 for a limited edition hardcover copy, and \$30 for a signed, numbered, slipcased copy of a limited edition. Add \$1 for postage & handling when ordering from the publisher.

The Potter illustrations are excellent. This is a thin book, with little real reason for existence, but well-done and of some value to writers.

SIGH. IN THE OLD DAYS MOVING DIAGONALLY WAS IT!

NOW YOU HAVE TO HAVE 16 ATTRIBUTES, ARMOR, MAGIC, AND 640K ON THE CPU.



EMILE AND THE DUTCHMAN

By Joel Rosenberg

Signet, January 1986

In this quasi-novel of hardcore, far future sf, Emile is in the beginning a new recruit to the Thousand Worlds Contact Service---those few who search out and investigate new worlds for colonization/exploitation. It's a dirty job, but somebody....

The Dutchman is Major Alonzo Norfeldt, a drunkard, a smoker, a liar, a thief, a cheat, a braggart, a foul-mouthed bigot. But he stays in command because he gets the job done.

The novel is a series of stories about the Dutchman's team of Contactees (which read like R-rated Asounding stories from the '40s) with bridging material showing some personal, non-Service affairs of Emile and some character change.

It is the maturation of Emile during his adventures with the Dutchman which makes this collection of stories a novel, barely.

There is a deadly sameness to the stories---especially the Dutchman's unchanging cursing and bigotry and caustic antagonism toward his team (to teach them lessons, to keep them alive, to indulge his nasty overness) which gets to be a drag. Granted Norfeldt does come to a grudging respect for Emile, at the end, but the stories do seem too repetitive.

I have more of a problem with Norfeldt's language than others may, because these stories are set 250 years in the future, and by that time I think (in a human environment of a thousand worlds) words like hebe, jew-boy, dago, deutcher, motherfucker would have dropped away or been superseded. Those words were not used in 1735 AD were they?

Alonzo Norfeldt seems a 1940s man in 2044 or so, and it isn't plausible to me.

But, cavils aside, the adventures of Emile and the Dutchman's team are exciting, dangerous, and well done. I enjoyed the novel.

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF OCCULTISM AND PARAPSYCHOLOGY

Edited by Leslie A. Shepard

Gale Research Co.

Book Tower, Detroit, MI 48226

This second edition of this specialized, exhaustive, and authoritative encyclopedia is extremely impressive.

Here are three BIG volumes with at least twice the page total of the first edition of a few years ago. These are hardbound, built to last, contain 1,617 pages. Two-column pages, clear, easy-to-read text.

AND THEN I READ...
CONTINUED ON PAGE 37

You Got No Friends In This World

DEFENDER OF THE FAITH? NOT ME, POLKS!

I once had a philosophy professor who never wrote anything. He was brilliant, his ideas were exciting, but he did not publish a one of them. When I asked him why, he loftily gazed at my forehead and said, "You're always held responsible for what you wrote, no matter how many years have passed. I never wish to be confronted by the idiocies of my youth."

At the time I knew there was something wrong with that idea, but I was too youthful and, presumably, idiotic to know what it was. Now I think I've found the flaw in his reasoning. It is only in the melee of public conversation that you can test the merit of your ideas. While I'm all for quiet contemplation, it comes to nothing if it does not result in public discourse.

So I gladly run the risk of revealing myself to be a fool, if in return I have a chance to hone and improve my understanding. And if ten years from now, when I'm very old, someone confronts me with some pronouncement I made in these pages, trying to force me to defend my statements of a decade earlier and reconcile them with contradictory statements of a later time, I will reply that I am a lenient master of my own mind: I require my ideas to be consistent only with their contemporaries, not with their antecedents.

All of which comes round to the point that I am not so foolish as to think that every judgment I give today on storytelling, particularly science fiction and fantasy, will endure forever as absolute truth. I am neither surprised nor much offended to discover that many people who are wiser than I am have arrived at conclusions contrary to my own.

When that disagreement is civilly and intelligently presented—even when it has some fun at my expense—I learn from it. I learn either that I was wrong (or partly wrong), or I learn that I did not explain clearly what I meant.

After last month's column, in which I stated flatly that I could not think of any stories where the use of present-tense narrative provided benefits enough to be worth the unavoidable cost, I received generous and thoughtful responses from several of the better writers in the field, who could think of stories in which present tense narrative was used—and was worth using. Usually I was unfamiliar with the examples they cited; their comments, however, led me to trust their conclusions. Perhaps it is enough that writers think twice, and then think still one more time, before they use a technique that will place a barrier in the way of a significant part of their audience. Present tense narrative may not be as universally horrid as I have found it to be in my limited experience; but it is certainly horrid enough to be shunned.

The month before, my "artsy-fartsy" fiction factor article was widely misinterpreted (in large part because of my unfortunate manner of expression) as an attack on all writing that aspires to beauty in addition to utility, whereas in fact I was attacking writing that aspires to beauty at the expense of utility, which is quite another thing.

THE PARABLE OF THE HOUSES

Let me tell a parable (since, after all, these are sermons that I write):

A woman had such beautiful dreams at night that she was angry at having to wake up and leave them in the morning. She fell in love with a man whose laugh was like music, whose smile was like sunlight, and who listened to her dreams as intently as if they were the story of his own future. They married, they had a child, and soon it came time for them to buy a house.

First they bought a house that was as beautiful as her dreams, pretty and fragile and bright. Alas, the house was no more durable than the visions of the night—in the first storm of any force, the whole house collapsed, and the family barely escaped with their lives.

After this, they thought they had learned their lesson. They chose a sturdy house, built to last a hundred years. But it was so ugly that she stopped dreaming dreams, and he stopped laughing, and finally "they" it was warm and dry inside, they took their child and fled from it, before it killed their souls.

They wandered for a long time after that, and only came to live in a house again when they found one that was graceful and spacious and bright, and yet also sturdy and well-crafted. Because what good is a house that cannot stand, however pretty it might be? And what good is a house that you cannot bear to live in, even though it's strong?

INTERPRETATION OF THE PARABLE

To you it may look like I'm taking an extreme position, but I think I'm firmly in possession of the middle ground.

Reading David Hartwell's excellent overview of science fiction criticism in *AGE OF WONDERS* (McGraw-Hill) helped me understand some of the people who became irate at my criticisms of writers who have adopted "mainstream" and "literary" writing techniques that interfere with their ability to tell a story well. Much of our own writing is unfortunately similar to language used in the past by protectionists who have thought of the genre as a fortress, and the literati as barbarians trying to storm the fort and carry off all the virgins.

So let me assure you that if you want to keep science fiction "pure," I'm not on your side. I'm one of the rapists. I don't give a damn whether science fiction writers have any science in their stories, or show proper reverence at the cenotaphs of Heinlein or Asimov. Furthermore, I think the boundary between fantasy and science fiction should be crossed as often as possible, as should the boundaries between all genres.

AND MURPHEY WOUND UP ON
THE WINDSHIELD OF A MERCEDES



BY ORSON SCOTT CARD

Storytelling is storytelling. The great storytellers are the ones who speak to the audience of their age clearly, powerfully, believably. The enemy of good storytelling is anything that keeps the audience from understanding, caring, or believing, whether it calls itself "art" or "true science fiction."

Let me say that again: A good story is the one that causes the audience to believe, to care, and to understand. If I may perversely paraphrase scripture, let me call those virtues "faith, hope, and clarity." If the audience doesn't believe, you can't change them; if the audience doesn't care, you can't hold them; and if the audience can't understand what is hell is going on, you might as well spike the boat and swim home.

So when I attacked incomprehensibility and tedium in "racy" stories, I was not trying to preserve science fiction—I made precisely the same criticisms of other dead art forms, like opera, contemporary poetry, and classical ballet, which have come to value execution rather than content, insisting that they are "culture" and "great art" while they appeal to a steadily dwindling audience.

Great art is possible only when it is offered to a great audience—an engaged audience, one that cares. Generally speaking, that means that the best possibilities for great art are found, not among the jaded literati, but among the great unwashed, who are still capable of caring about the substance rather than the surface. I don't want my audience to admire, I want my audience to laugh and cry and clutch the book with sweating fingers. And when I write criticism, I speak to a presumed audience of writers and readers who think that that is indeed what storytelling should accomplish.

So: to those who have disagreed with me intelligently, I give my thanks; I know more now than I knew six months ago, partly thanks to you.

And to those who saw past my flawed language and understood my intent, I give more than thanks; you have helped me believe that it's worth the attempt. Even if someday I do come to look back on my current writings as the idiocy of youth.

THE KINDEST CUTS OF ALL

My reviews of short fiction will be few and brief, this time, since only a few anthologies escaped my attentions in previous columns. Since

AND EACH SPIKE IS
ADJUSTABLE TO THE CONTOURS
OF YOUR BODY



such a small selection is more easily digested, I will abandon my usual attempt to group stories by theme, and instead present them under the title of the publication in which they appeared.

First, let me call your attention to a Chris Drumm booklet of short-short stories by Carter Scholz. If there is any one writer who overtly expects devotion to "racy" themes that I attacked previously, it is Scholz; nevertheless, there is no denying that he is one of the best writers of my generation. In the collection *Cuts* (published by Chris Drumm, PO Box 445, Polk City, Iowa 50226, price \$2.50 postpaid), you will find both the best and the worst of Scholz's work.

Scholz leans toward stories that are stories only by implication: they are artifacts that incidentally reveal the sense of struggle and conflict, the "ordered series of causally related events" that make up a story. For instance, *PLAYERS, OR SOME PROBLEMS OF FORM IN NEW YORK*, is a piece of art criticism—only it is written by an alien who is criticizing an artist who can only be God, and warning that God's artwork—our planet—is poised on a dangerous civilization that threatens all the other artworks in existence. The story is at once cosmic-level sci-fi, delightful humor, and bloody-handed satire.

Likewise, *WHY WE HAVE TECHNOLOGY* is an explanation by an alien of how human behavior has been manipulated in order to create machines as temporary housing for the aliens' souls; *THE TRANSLATOR* is a marvelous apologia by a translator about how and why he "improved" on the works of the second-rate writer he was translating; and *WHY SHOULD WE CELEBRATE THE BIRTHDAY* is a memo that emerges from a secretly rebellious bureaucracy.

There are other good stories—these are my favorites. There are also a couple of genuinely incomprehensible and self-indulgent stories that would warm the hearts of all those fifth-grade teachers who told you that "self-expression is all that counts." Just forget those—it's easy to do—and marvel at what Scholz can accomplish when he actually tries to communicate.

IMAGINARY LANDS

Robin McKinley's anthology *IMAGINARY LANDS* [Ace] is remarkably good. Peter Dickinson's *FLIGHT* alone is worth twice the price of the book. It is written as an essay by a historian, describing events that happened near a large outcropping of rock in a poverty-stricken, obscure corner of the Empire. A stubborn, rebellious race of people who fly on the updrafts near the rock have defied the Empire for centuries; at last, though, their rebellion ends—but it has been enough trouble over the years to avenge an ancient injury.

Robin McKinley's own *THE STONE* is a quiet story of a woman who is obsessed by the love of an elvin man who threatens to draw her out of the world, not by a dramatic journey to

UNCLE ORSON'S FAVORITE STORIES OF 1985

Only one 1985 story, of the few I read between October and the end of the year, was so good that it forced its way onto my list of favorite stories of the year. There were other standout stories, however, most notably Robin McKinley's *THE STONE* PET, for the way it's written; Alexander Jablokov's *A WINK IN THE EYE OF THE WOLF*, for the idea at the story's heart; and Marta Randall's *BIG DOME*, for the power of the plain tale.

Anyway, here, to refresh your memory, is my updated list of favorites for 1985:

.....SHORT STORIES.....

John Crowley *SNOW* [Orni Nov]
Susan Palwick *THE NEIGHBOR'S WIFE* [Asim Jul]
Gregory Benford *THEY'S MUD* [Asim Apr]
Bruce Sterling *DINNER IN AUTOGRAPH* [Asim May]
Nancy Kress *OUT OF ALL THEN BRIGHT STARS* [F&SF Mar]
Karen Joy Fowler *THE POPLAR STREET STUDY* [F&SF Jun]

.....NOVELS.....

Michael Bishop *A GIFT FROM THE GRAYLANDERS* [Asim Sep]
David Zindell *SHANTAR* [Writers of the Future]
Peter Dickinson *FLIGHT* [Imaginary Lands]
S.C. Sykes *ROCKY MOUNTAIN* [Anlg mid-Dec]
Michael Swanwick & William Gibson *DOGFIGHT* [Orni Aug]
Rudy Rucker & Bruce Sterling *STORMING THE COSMOS* [Asim mid-Dec]
C.J. Cherryh *POTS* [Afte]
Bob Buckley *ROMANCE* [Anlg Dec]
Felix C. Gotschall *VESPERALIAN MAN* [F&SF Mar]

.....NOVELLAS.....

Bruce Sterling *GREEN DAYS IN MURKIN* [Asim Oct]
Michael P. Kube-McDowell *WHEN WINTER ENDS* [F&SF Jul]
James Tiptree, Jr. *THE ONLY HEAT THING TO DO* [F&SF Oct]

the underworld, but by a slow process of disengaging her from the people around her. Her captivity and her release are not adventurous, but they make no less of a powerful story.

In *EVIAN STEEL*, Jane Yolen continues her series of Arthurian stories with the tale of a girl who comes to live on an island of women, who create such perfect steel that every man gets a sword made of it. There she befriends an older girl who is afraid to pay the price the perfect steel demands.

These are the best in the book, but Michael de Larrabetti's *THE CURSE OF IGAMOR* and Joan D. Vinge's *TAN LIN* do a fine job of telling more traditional high fantasies. Robert Westall's *THE BIG ROCK CANDY MOUNTAIN* is much more fanciful, taking a couple of children into a salt-preserved underground city in Northwich, England.

PLANETS

Byron Preiss's anthology *PLANETS* is a beautiful illustrated book with an irresistible concept: combining science with science fiction stories about each of the planets,

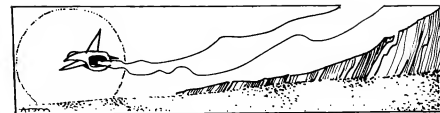
plus the moon and the asteroids. In many cases, the juxtaposition works very well, though there were rather too many "wow, there's life here after all" stories. The best of the stories is Marta Randall's **BIG DOME**, set in an abandoned sealed colony on the surface of Venus. It is told mostly by Runner, an outcast from society who is employed to cross the dangerous wild forest of the dome to conduct trade between the communities surviving in the two "safe places." Their food supplies are failing—it is Runner who finds a solution. Sure, it reshapes the most basic myth in the genre—the outcast who is really wiser than the rest of society and saves them in spite of how mean they are—but when it's done right, as it is here, it is a myth, not a cliché.

Charles Sheffield's **DIES IRAE** owes a debt to Poul Anderson's **CALL ME JOE**, as he deals with the near madness of a man who "monitors" the lives of artificial, 75% human creatures living in the atmosphere of Uranus—but he creates convincing characters and a well-earned twist at the end. Sheffield, you might remember, was vicariously excited for writing a so-called high-tech writer when he first appeared a few years ago. Since then, however, he has developed great skill at creating people as real as his engineering projects, and it is only fair to continue to point at him when we wish to demonstrate "hard sf"; he is no less a representative of that tradition now that his storytelling is more fully realized, and it is only fair to judge a genre—or a sub-genre—by its best as well as its worst practitioners.

Paul Preuss makes a serious effort to deal with a "fiction scientist" fairly in **SMALL BODIES**. His protagonist is a man with some scientific training who has gained a wide following by interpreting scientific data to fit preconceived religious notions. Most sf writers treat such "anti-science" religionists most unfairly, almost invariably revealing them to be money-grubbing hypocrites. Preuss is not afraid to show him as a man of faith, and though the ending is a bit too neat for my tastes, the character himself is very well done.

Robert Silverberg's **SUNRISE ON PLUTO** is written with passion and wonder by one of the team that discovers super-conducting life on Pluto, of all places. It's a gosh-wow story written so masterfully that you almost don't notice that it's nothing more than that. William B. Eberly's **HANDPRINTS ON THE MOON** is well written, but finally does nothing more than rehash the myth that scientists are citizens of a society that transcends national borders; in my opinion, as long as some nations allow free discourse and others do not, then some nations are the enemies of science, and scientists better be careful to preserve the ones that do allow free discourse, even to the point of shameless national chauvinism.

Harry Harrison's **AFTER THE STORM** is set on Earth; it is a quiet but powerful story about a world in which who shipwrecks on the American coast. It is not an America we would recognize, however, as the oppressive government has maintained a high-tech



lifestyle, despite the collapse of the rest of the world, but at the price of freedom and honor.

Some of the stories simply aren't very good, but two of them that are good, Ray Bradbury's **THE LOVE AFFAIR** and Philip Jose Farmer's **URANUS OR PUPO VERSUS IRS**, do not work within this anthology. It may have seemed inevitable to Preiss to get a Martian Chronicles story for this book—but this book deals with known Mars, not the fanciful never-never land of Bradbury's stories. And Farmer's wonderful romp has about as much to do with the real Uranus as Bradbury's story has to do with the real Mars. They just didn't fit with the theme of the book—this time, at least, it should have been hard sf all the way.

FAR FRONTIERS III

The latest issue of the Pour-nelle-Baen high-tech fiction anthology series has one outstanding story—which is, believe it or not, magic-using fantasy. Alexander Jablakov's **A WINK IN THE EYE OF THE WOLF** is the story of a master magician who is trying to track down a stranger who has the dangerous ability to make magic stick working wherever he goes. I think Pour-nelle and Baen thought the story belonged in their book because it showed the power of logic over faith. If so, they missed the point—because this story plainly says that magic works—until logic kills it.

John DeLmas's **OUT OF THE NORTH A GIANT**, though written in an annoyingly inept attempt at "dialect," is nevertheless a powerful story of a man coming to grips with the essential humanity of a dangerous alien race. He has to kill them—but hates himself for doing it. It is the kind of now-win moral dilemma that I thrive on.

David Drake, with **THE BOND**, and Thomas Wyde, with **SPACE SHUTTLE CRASHES!**, both attempt comedy—and, surprisingly enough, succeed. The Drake story is about a couple who have become quite reconciled to the hideous monsters that keep appearing in their living rooms; the Wyde story deals with a stowaway on a space shuttle that is about to be crashed for on camera for the amusement of billions.

SHAYOL 7

The final issue of Shayol has many capable stories by well-known writers. Edward Bryant writes a bloody story about a vendetta between neighbors in **THE OVERLY FAMILIAR**; it suffers only from the common horror failing of having the main magical device—in this case, a magical cat—

appear with no real cause for its existence. Maybe it's the sci-fi in my soul that demands an explanation. Leigh Kennedy's **THE WINDOW** Jesus tells of a woman who longs to see a vision; her husband, to please her, creates a window in which the face of Jesus appears—but only in certain lights. He has wrought well—she continues to believe even after a 60-Minutes-type TV crew has "debunked" the miracle.

Janet Gluckman's tough little story **CATSTOP** is about a Cajun woman who knows just how to punish her straying man by altering the sweater she's making for him. And though the ending is confusing and pointless, I enjoyed the rest of the guided tour provided in Howard Waldrop's **WHAT MAKES BEHEMOTHUS RUN?** in which time travelers find that, instead of arriving in 16th century Netherlands, they have come to the nightmare world of 16th-century low-countries paintings.

The outstanding story of the magazine is Michael Bishop's **A SPY IN THE DOMAIN OF ARNHEIM**. It begins as an almost Absurd question of identity and existence, as the narrator wakes up in a strange room, remembering almost nothing. He knows somehow that his "sponsors," who never explain what's going on, will eventually require him to do something completely against his will. Nothing in his surroundings makes sense and the elevated language and baffling events made me suspicious of the story; but Michael Bishop does not cheat. The writing is astoundingly clear, and the declaration of allegory followed by a plunge into the matter of it, far from being Absurdist, a powerful statement of the religious dilemma and a quite literal leap of faith. It is not my particular view of religion or faith, but it is a compelling one, and Bishop has my applause both for the attempt and the achievement.

MOONISNGER'S FRIENDS

It would be hard to honor Andre Norton enough for all her contributions to the field—I practically cut my teeth on **Galactic Delirium**, **The Stars Are Ours**, and **Catseye**. And what better way to honor her than by assembling an anthology of stories written in her honor?

One would think that in such an anthology, the contributors would attempt to write in a manner that would be reminiscent of the works of the honored one. Unfortunately, though, the contributors to the anthology **Moonsinger's Friends** (Blizay, ed. Susan Shwartz) did not write anything even remotely akin to the Andre Norton stories that I love.

Indeed, the very fact that all but one of the contributors is female

suggests that this anthology is not so much a homage to Norton's work as to the fact that a woman wrote it. After all, there were plenty of us little boys who devoured every page of her books, whose lives were changed by her tales; she often wrote male protagonists. (It seems to me a rather sexist thing to do, to invite only women, with one exception, to honor a writer who transcended the idea that you had to be one sex in particular to write in our field.) She has also written science fiction as well as fantasy, though you'd never guess it from the stories written to honor her.

All of my disgruntlement would have dissolved if the stories had been terrific. Alas, it is sad news I have to tell you. Of the four strongest stories, three were published elsewhere first, and the fourth was written, ironically, by the lone male contributor, Poul Anderson.

Meredith Ann Pierce's evocative **THE WOMAN WHO LOVED REINDERER** is really the beginning of her fine novel by the same title, just released in hardcover. Marion Zimmer Bradley's **SEA WRACK** appeared in the October *Fantasy and Science Fiction*; I reviewed it last issue. Jane Yolen's **FOXWIFE** was written for the 1984 World Fantasy Convention program book.

But Poul Anderson's **THE FOREST** isn't available anywhere else, and because of that story I didn't regret buying the book. It's a tale of pre-modern humans, whose northern habitat is changing because of the waning of an ice age. Thunder Horse sets out southward to find a new home for them, if he can; he ends up among forest people, who treat him well. For a time a thinks it might be possible to live among them, until he learns the price they pay to hold off the inborn fear of the forest. It is a wonderful story, a profoundly moral tale, and it alone of all the stories in the book evoked the same sense of awe and discovery that I felt when I hunched over a table in the Kino Junior High School library in Mesa, Arizona, and rode Andre Norton's Galactic Deimos to an ancient planet, where our ship was beset by the deformed offspring of a once-proud starfaring race.

A FEW FIRST NOVELS

This is, after all, a column of reviews of short fiction. But earlier this year I wrote a book review column for the revived **WORLD OF IF** magazine. The magazine was delayed, and by the time the first issue appears, those reviews will be hopelessly out of date. Ordinarily, I would simply flush away that first column—after all, **BELLICONIA WINTER** will be the crowning volume of one of the few truly magnificent works of science fiction whether I say so in print or not.

But I did review a group of first novels that may be overlooked, and with Geis's indulgence I'd like to call them to your attention here. (If Geis hadn't been willing to run these book reviews in my column, then he would have cut my column before this section, and you would never have known what you were missing.)

FUTURE HISTORY AIN'T ALWAYS DULL

Michael Kube-McDowell's *Emprise* is billed as "Book One of the Trigon Dynasty." Ignore that. The title is a heading like that is a sure sign that the book will have no ending at all, just leave you hanging, waiting a year for Book Two. That is false advertising. *Emprise* is complete in itself.

One of the hardest things a writer can do is tell of major historical events that are beyond the reach of one person's life. *Emprise* is the story of humankind's discovery by an alien race. We are not ready to be visited—economic disasters and anti-intellectualism have denuded us of the capacity to respond. It is only by great sacrifice that a simple astronomer manages to see and tell anyone else that someone is out there, signaling to us.

Kube-McDowell follows, not one person's life, but the thread of initiative in responding to the coming aliens. The responsibility passes from hand to hand, from a lone astronomer in Idaho to some worn-out English dons, from the Prince of Wales to a visionary politician from India. Most books that attempt such a thing skim over the surface of events like stones skipping across a lake. Kube-McDowell carefully develops powerful, believable characters; political machinations combine with family concerns, scientific puzzles, and international crises in a tightly woven net. And when the aliens are met, years away from Earth, they are exactly as they should be, and the humans who met them could not have been more appropriately prepared.

I did quibble with a few things. Kube-McDowell apparently found no place for nuclear weapons in his future, and so he magically erased the problem with an implausible "fission blight." The anti-science element, reminiscent of Andre Norton's *The Stars Are Ours* and other ancient science fiction works, feels a bit hackneyed. Don't worry, though. Swallow hard and get on with the book—after the first twenty pages, that sort of thing won't get in the way again.

THE LILITH AND THE PIRATE

I first noticed Jim Aikin when his intense and strange story "My Life in the Jungle" appeared in *Fantasy and Science Fiction* earlier this year. I liked it, but when I saw that he had written a novel, I expected it also to be strange and baffling. The cover of *Walk the Moons Road* depicts naked aliens with diaphanous wings, suggesting a sentimental melodrama ("You can't do it, Col. Bashemp! These creatures have much to teach us, and your interference will destroy them!") Neither idea appealed to me.

But *Walk the Moons Road*, after a slow-movie (and unnecessary) first chapter, turned out to be a delightful swashbuckling adventure with a hero who is a cross between Leonardo da Vinci and Captain Blood. Quite by accident he becomes involved with a Lilith, the "third sex" of the VII, and in the process of trying to save her, he robs the treasury, escapes from a dungeon, burns down half the city, and captures his own ship.

Aikin's talent is undeniable. With *Walk the Moons Road*, you're having such a wonderful time with the story itself that you never notice how talented the author is. You never notice talent ought to be used. You should never notice it until the story's over, and you wish it would go on forever.

FAITH, FACTS, AND THE FUGUE

Edward A. Byers has long been writing some of the best stories in *Analogue*. Because *Analogue* has a well-deserved reputation as *Techie Heaven*, Byers has been pegged as an "Analogue writer" and so has been largely ignored by readers who don't know all that nonsense. With his first novel, *The Long Forgetting*, Byers binds together a few of his short stories, along with much new material, into an exciting, intelligent novel. And it ain't techie sci-fi, folks.

An inexplicable Fugue spreads across the human-settled portion of the galaxy, causing human beings to lose all memory of civilization and revert to savagery. The novel itself begins after humanity has struggled back from the Fugue and rediscovered interplanetary travel through gates, step through them, and you're on another planet. One legacy of the Fugue is a powerful Manichean church that rules all the worlds. The story concerns an archaeologist, who is challenged by an old enemy to deal with a faith-shattering manuscript he found on a forbidden world.

The manuscript tells of the origins of the religion, which is linked with the discovery of interplanetary gates before the Fugue. The last part of the book is almost entirely given over to recounting the events of the ancient past.

Ordinarily, this sort of "frame" story (the archaeologist's story is the frame through which we view the picture of the pre-Fugue tale) fails because the frame remains shallow, a mere device to present the real story. Think of Michener's *The Source*, for instance, in which the present-day



frame never fails to be annoying, unbelievable, and distracting, while the stories of the past are often powerful.

Byers, however, made both the frame and the flashback strong tales in their own right; both achieve an effective closure at the end. If the initial transitions into the ancient past feel jarring, the unpleasantness is quickly forgotten. The characters are interesting, yes, but the real punch of the book comes when people are forced to revise their own history until they understand not only where their faith is rooted, but also why the Fugue occurred, and who was its source.

THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF MAGIC

I first came to know Dave Smeds's work when I bought his story "Dragon Touched" for an anthology. His novel, *The Sorcery Within*, takes place in the same fantasy world, but many generations later—you don't have to know the story to enjoy the novel.

You do have to squint to be willing to buy the novel, however. Ace's inimitable art department has afflicted *The Sorcery Within* with the ugliest cover I've seen so far this year—and there's plenty of competition for that award. I suggest carrying the book in a brown paper bag—but do buy it, because it's a remarkable book.

Yes, there is a dragon in the book (in the background). Yes, there's magic and a quest and an attack on a castle and youngish heroes who grew up not knowing their true parentage and a stranger of royal blood who is nursed to health by a nubile young maiden. When I recount the broad movements of the story it sounds like a dozen other fantasy novels.

This one's head and shoulders above the others. The creation of characters and the society in which they move is as careful and believable

as you would expect in a sociological novel by LeGuin. The magic is a natural part of the characters' lives—it doesn't dominate, but rather fleshes out the world. The story isn't even about magic. It's about people learning that they must channel their intense private purpose into the paths that society can cope with. A young woman has to accept an infuriating identity as a male to survive and eventually triumph in the hopelessly male-dominated tribe that captured her; her twin brother must cool his lust for action as he learns the contemplative power of healing.

In this novel, two stories run parallel for many pages, a chapter of one and then a chapter of the other. Only gradually is the relationship between the two stories revealed. Ordinarily this sort of structural game is annoying, distracting. But both stories are equally strong, both resonate with each other, and I think you will find, as I did, that the novel would not have been so satisfying had Smeds told the tale in a more straightforward way.

But I must warn you. Where *Empire* tells you it is part of a series and then gives you a satisfying ending anyway, *The Sorcery Within* does not warn you it is part of a series—and then leaves you with the furious realization that this novel only ends the beginning of the tale, leaving much for future books to resolve. Worst of all, Smeds hasn't even started writing the second book yet. We have years to wait. So don't wait. Read it now, and then heap verbal abuse upon Smeds whenever and wherever you see him, until he finally writes the rest of the thing.

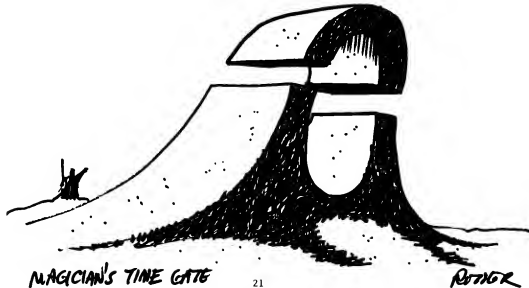
SERVANTS OF THE IDIOT KING

Richard Grant's *Saraband of Lost Time* resembles Gene Wolfe's *Book of the New Sun*. But then, books of a certain kind either have to resemble it—or not be very good. Grant's characters have the same sort of Dic-

kensian eccentricity, and they wander through a landscape where all the machines are jerry-rigged remnants of a higher, fallen civilization. It even partakes of the same flaw. The vagueness that made *Book of the New Sun* less than perfectly satisfying at the end also mars the end of *Saraband*. Grant weaves so many threads of character and plot that it is not surprising when some of them are lost from the fabric altogether.

I usually regard vagueness as an unforgivable literary sin. Grant earns forgiveness because the book, as a whole, is such a delightful, mad, moving play on a hundred different stages that the ending almost doesn't matter.

One of the stages is the capital, where a King whose grip on reality is none too strong meddles in the affairs of his underlings, who manipulate and circumvent him almost at will. Another stage is a village that tried to sit out a war, and ends up being needlessly ravaged. Another is the castle of a lord whose iron grip on affairs evaporates as his family gets caught up in great affairs. There's a metal refuge in the Ghoulmire, a hideously regimented city at the edge of a desert river, a house where balconies lead to invisible platforms and people seem to walk in the air, and finally the realm of the Overmind. And through it all move unforgettable characters in byzantine pathways, connecting with each other in surprising, moving, frightening ways.



MAGICIAN'S TIME GATE



NOISE LEVEL

ON PUETS, PIONEERS, PALACES, AND
PROSPECTS FOR PEACE

Of course, it wasn't a conference as we understand the term. Indeed, one of the members of the Leningrad Peace Committee, in private conversation, defined events of this kind as "a substitute for action."

Nonetheless, one can't deny that it's educational to meet a colonel in the Afghan army, editor-in-chief of a newspaper called SOLDIER'S TRUTH that circulates among pro-Russian front-line troops, and discover how much more he'd have in common with, say, Jerry Pournelle than he would have differences.

Scene: The Leningrad Hotel, a fine modern building with a concert hall attached to it, overlooking the Neva River. Marjorie and I have been invited to participate in a conference of writers from nearly forty countries. (One was to have come from the US, but was unable to attend through illness. He was Erskine Caldwell....)

The food is excellent and so is the tea; the coffee less so, Marjorie reports. Gorbachov's diktat concerning hard liquor has bitten deep, and nothing alcoholic is on sale before 2 pm, but in the evening there are tolerable beers, fair red and white wines from Georgia, and fizzy ones they call *shampanskaya* that lubricate the tongue.

But we aren't tourists, like most of the other residents of the hotel who flood in from Finland and West Germany, from Britain (on the way to India) and the Eastern European countries. We're here to work. Our fares and bed and board are paid, and in return we are not just to utter speeches, but to learn.

We do. I promise you, we do. And later I'll return to what we learn. First I must tell you what the conference is like. It's a religious ritual.

You doubt that? Ah, but communists are human too, and every human society has its religion, of whatever sort....

This first dawned on me in Tokyo two years ago. A one speaker after another rises to rehearse the proper quotes from scripture, even though the scripture may be an item from this morning's paper. So long as it possesses proper authority, it's respectable. (Don't mock. This was the sole accepted form of debate in European universities a scant few centuries ago, and now they're thought of as a tower of universal learning.)

But it wears down the patience of the foreign visitor, anxious to dismiss the past and concentrate on future action.

Leningrad was where the Nazis were defeated. It cannot be denied. In World War II America lost 350,000 dead. The Russians lost twenty million. A lot of those died here, almost a million by starvation. The ration for soldiers and workers during the 900 days of siege was 125 grams of coarse black bread. That's all. The rest got nothing. No wonder at the height of the siege they were dragging nine thousand corpses a week to the mass cemetery.

A little girl, of much the same age as Samantha Smith (who's now a heroine in Russia, so that they're re-naming streets for her), kept a diary in a notebook. It's worse, and far more poignant, than Anne Frank's, each entry records another death among her relatives. She was too weak to write about whatever else went on.

I cried at that. I hadn't cried since seeing the tomb in the Peace Park at Hiroshima that is still draped with paper cranes in memory of another little girl who believed that if she made a thousand of them she would live...but died, of radiation sickness, when she'd made a mere six hundred.

Children, on certain days, still bear garlands of the paper cranes to decorate her grave.

And Russians come -- I saw them, in and out of uniform, both young and old, pausing, saluting, or taking off their hats on entering -- to the cemetery where they had to dump the kinkof of that little girl, nameless because there was no time to write down names, nor paper that they might be written on.

This was to have been a full account of the Leningrad writers' conference. It is turning into something else. Because I find I'm weeping as I try to write.

They are topping out flats in Leningrad at the rate of 150 a day. Because two-thirds of the city was destroyed in WWII and since then people have flooded in from the countryside, even that isn't enough to give everybody decent housing.

Now the city council is trying to ensure that families who had to make do with two rooms because that was the best available can be shifted into three or four rooms...some time soon, if not right away.

Thirty kilometres from the city is "Tsar's Village," the old Tsarskoye Seloye, now called Pushkin after Russia's most famous poet, who almost singlehandedly gave the nation its literature -- a figure comparable to Shakespeare. We toured the grandest palace there, a huge one-building room. Hitler declared that his sole interest in Leningrad -- ex-Petersburg -- was to dine at its Astoria Hotel before ordering it to be razed. (They found the dinner invitations in the Berlin bunker, printed ready to be sent out.) After using its chapel as a motorcycle garage and loading every object d'art that hadn't been evacuated, the Nazis set the palace on fire and left eleven delayed-action explosive charges...which the Russian bomb-disposal teams discovered just in time.

In every room there is a picture of it as it was in 1940 and another as it was found in 1945: stripped, shattered, wrecked. But so long as the Nazis said that because Russian people had sacrificed their lives to its construction -- three thousand died to build the awful place, cold with marble and gaudy with gold leaf -- their descendants ought to have the benefit. The restoration of the war it has been in process of restoration; that costs the city budget three million roubles a year (about \$4,000,000) and the job won't be complete before the end of the century.

Don't tell me that people who have embarked on such a long-term project want to risk their work being smashed to rubble in another war.

Oh, yes: the conference...

We listened to dutiful rehearsals of Marxist doctrine by speaker after speaker, repeating what we all believed -- must have, or else we'd not have come -- concerning the danger of another war, the wastefulness of the arms race, the immorality of trying to export our conflicts into space, and now and then were brought up short by someone talking good hard sense. I'll cite just one example.

The speaker was from Baku, near the Iran border: an oil producing region, as one might expect. He said he had been entertaining eight Americans, all oil men who believed the chimera of a Russian threat...and lost his temper. His temporary words were, as translated, "I forgot protocol!"

He demanded how they could know whether a country was planning to launch a war. After some debate, they concluded there were two infallible signs: first, hatred must be whipped up against the enemy; second, the country's production capacity must be converted to military ends.

Fair enough. So the guy produced a list of the local libraries and invited them to pick one at random. They did. He took them there. Books by American writers were on open shelves -- did you know that Mark Twain is one of the most popular authors in the Soviet Union? -- and much thumbed, showing how often they were read. That disposed of point one.

a column

john brunner

Then he took them to the site of a factory being erected to build oil rigs. It would be three years before it was complete, and another six months before the first rig came off the assembly line. He asked them: would a country planning a war that must inevitably turn nuclear invest so much in such a long-term project?

Don't call it window dressing. The USSR is not a super-power like the USA. There isn't a super-power like the USA. There never has been. The USSR is a Third World country pulling itself up by its bootstraps, and its people are far too proud of their achievements so far to want to see their efforts go for nothing in a radioactive cloud.

Maybe that's why Western governments are scared of it.

* * * * *

Back to the conference. What do I most remember from its plethora of speeches, apart from the one just cited?

There was a Yugoslav who defined his concept of a hero: A German soldier of World War II who refused to gun down a partisan in cold blood. There was the Irish poet who described the fate of a too-popular band willing to perform to audiences both Catholic and Protestant, ambushed, hauled from their car, and shot. There were, above all, poets and writers who shrugged aside the obligatory jargon and spoke out in their own terms -- reading poems, quoting memoirs, injecting the reality of human suffering and aspiration into what was otherwise drab and predictable. (I repeat. Such conferences serve a religious purpose, act as ritual, although the participants may be unaware.)

And we met Indres Naidoo, to whose book (written with Albie Sachs) ISLAND IN CHAINS -- about South Africa's infamous political prison Robben Island -- we had voted the Martin Luther King Memorial Prize, but he was in Mozambique and could not come to the award ceremony, so we handed the prize to his sisters... who sent him a photograph of the event that he had framed and hung on his wall at home. That was good news. (And his little boy is charming!)

And, in spite of the universal complaint among the delegates (perhaps I exaggerate, but this was the opinion we garnered in the languages we could speak, particularly from the Canadian, French and Zimbabwean invitees) that there was no place designated for informal conversation among the attendance -- no lounge or bar where people could get together out of conference hours -- we had the good fortune to meet and talk with Soviet journalists, several reporters for both press and radio, a lady who writes SF for children, the aforementioned member of the Leningrad Peace Committee, and above all, a staffer for the major literary journal LITERATURNAYA GAZETA.

The evening we spent with those latter two plus Wilson Katio from Zimbabwe was nearly the absolute highlight of our visit. We talked about everything under the sun, and reached agreement on the lot.

But I think one other event surprised it.

We had been threatened with a trip to meet veterans of the heroic defense of Leningrad. I wish I could phrase it oth-

erwise, but there were only two more days left of the conference and we wanted to spend the rest of the meeting considering the future, not the past.

More or less by inadvertence, we got the chance. We sneaked our way into the Pioneer Palace on the coat-tails of some Soviet children's writers.

And it was marvelous.

The Young Pioneers is a youth organization, State-run -- though joining is not obligatory. Our friend Mikhail, he who described our conference as "a substitute for action," gave a moving testimonial to the way it works. He said he had been hanging around on street corners with a teenage gang -- he used the term "peer group" -- interested mainly in smoking and drinking and petty theft, until one evening a friend invited him to the Pioneer Palace (which, by the way, is a genuine palace, and kept up as such). Before he left he had signed on with the Electronics Group and the International Friendship Group. He never went back to his old pals.

I'm not surprised. When we arrived, after a brief speech of welcome and a visit to the library, we were swept off our feet by a bunch of kids who insisted on us joining in the Chicken Dance, and then we were sat down in the assembly hall for a mini-concert. The kids put on dances -- one was spectacular, a skipping-rope dance for six boys of about fourteen -- and two girls sang solo, and the visiting writers read poems and cracked bad jokes, and a boy of 14 or so read a story he'd written, and...

They came round at the end with gifts of books and flowers: carnations in red and white, the Pioneer colors. I'm not sure I saw who gave them to us. I was blinded by tears. I was thinking of the people in Britain and America who coldly, callously, plan to burn the city that these children live in, along with the rest of their country.

* * * * *

Brainwashed?

Not by any means.

The trouble with you Americans is this: You haven't had a war on your own manner since the Civil War. You haven't lost your glamorous illusions... (Vietnam? But you won't talk to your own vets, won't listen to them. I did once: sat in the foyer of the Peppermill at Sacramento and heard two crippled victims of that war describe how no one would pay attention to their message... And last night I saw a TV documentary, that just won the RAI prize in Italy, called HAUNTED HEROES, about four vets who are too afraid of the violence drilled into them to dare to live among society again. They hide in the woods of Oregon, one of them at least having proved in a barroom brawl that he is too good at killing to be safe among his own people.)

You turn out in hordes to cheer on Rambo.

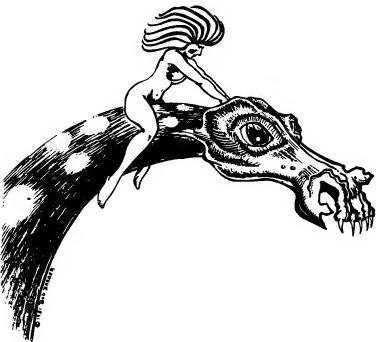
Leningraders turn out in hordes as well... to stand in silence at the graves of their dead. This is for them an outing: Saturday, Sunday, weekday, any day they manage to have off. It is a duty.

* * * * *

What did you do last free day, the one before, the one before, that marked the lesson one must learn history?

On a coach ride through Leningrad we saw a newly-married couple, the man in his best suit, the girl in a white dress and veil, laying her bouquet on a war memorial with no one in attendance but two bridesmaids. They stood with heads bowed for a moment, and then turned away.

These are not people lustful for another war.



THE HIVESECTOR

BY DARRELL SCHWEITZER

SCARY STUFF

I hear a lot of talk, particularly at the Midnight Horror Panels which seem to have become a tradition in the East Coast convention circuit, about whether or not the horror field is dead, merely sleeping, down with a bad cold, or doing just fine, thank you, despite reports of its demise, which are exaggerated. Since I've been on a few of those panels myself of late, I have contributed a bit to the discussion here and there.

My own conclusion, for the time being at least, is that the horror field has waxed and waned for well-nigh two centuries now, and isn't about to go away in a hurry. Recently we have seen a retreat from the kind of frenzied publishing during which editors seemed convinced that anything with a contemporary (preferably suburban, or urban middle-class) setting, a black embossed cover, and a title that sounded like *THE MIGGLING, THE SQUIGGLING, THE SQUISHING*, etc., would sell like hotcakes. They may have even been right.

But before long, audiences developed some sense of discrimination, if not for the best, at least for trash of a certain type. Also for the best. I cannot think of any horror writer of any real merit who has perished with the chaff.

At the same time we have, quite remarkably, gained two healthy, stable, professional magazines in the field, *TWILIGHT ZONE* and *NIGHT CRY*. There are also numerous anthologies, both one-shots and periodical ones.

But the real action is in the novel. Much of this is due to commercial pressure. Novels sell better than short story collections. They have for a long time, at least since the days when Robert Chambers' publishers used to label the stories in his collections chapters, so the books would look like novels. Readers prefer long, involving stories. As some mass-market novels reach people who don't read very much at all, they are perhaps touching an audience which doesn't even know about short stories. At the same time, the popular wisdom has always been that it's difficult (or impossible, depending on how much the speaker is addicted to sweeping statements) to maintain a sense of horror in novel length. The form of choice in the past has always been the short story. Hence writers like M.R. James, Algernon Blackwood, F. Marion Crawford and E.F. Benson, whose reputations rest entirely on short fiction. There are a few novels, but after you name *DRACULA*, *THE CASE OF CHARLES DEXTER WARD*, *CONJURE WIFE*, *THE HAUNTING OF HILL HOUSE* and one or two others, you are stretching. (Arthur Machen, for instance, wrote some of the most brilliant novelets the field has ever seen, but if you try to include his *THE HILL OF DREAMS* as a horror novel, you are stretching.)

Lately, as David Hartwell pointed out (on one of those Midnight Panels), Clive Barker (of *BOOKS OF BLOOD* fame), has become the first writer to establish a reputation as a short story writer in ten years. The first since Ramsey Campbell (who has since turned to novels). Otherwise, well, it's a matter of King, Strueth, Grant, Ryan, Strieber, and all those other novelists.

I think something more profound is happening here than just a case of commercial pressure. The form is changing. You see, all those great horror writers of the past, whose reputations are solely based on their short stories, actually wrote novels. E.F. Benson wrote about a dozen. Blackwood did several, of which perhaps *THE CENTAUR* and *THE HUMAN CHORD* enjoy minimal reputation among the connoisseurs, but which hardly challenge the reputation of "The Wendigo" etc. Crawford wrote *THE WITCH OF PRAGUE*, which few have read and which is reputedly boring, but is remembered for "The Upper Berth." James wrote one novel, *THE FIVE JARS*, a rather eerie juvenile, a little like John Bellairs' later work, but hardly comparable to his ghost stories. Even Stoker couldn't do it again. Aside from his one success with *DRACULA*, his other books are pretty terrible.

My point is that all the great horror short story writers of the past were fully capable of writing and publishing novels (Benson, for example, was extremely successful as a novelist -- with his social comedies, the *LUCIA* and *DODD* books), and they felt some of the same commercial pressures exerted on horror writers today in favor of novels. So they wrote horror novels, which were, for the most part, bad and are now forgotten. This syndrome goes all the way back to Poe, whose *ARTHUR GORDON PYM* is hardly the pinnacle of his career.

Now, suddenly, it's the novels which are the pillars of reputations, and which win audiences. The short stories are secondary. That's a big change. I'm not entirely sure why it has happened. Part of it may be that the tradition of the genteel ghost story, to be read by the fire (this is what M.R. James' stories specifically were -- he wrote them to read to the students every Christmas at the school where he taught) or for a pleasant shudder before bedtime, has finally died. I think it went the way of the hansom cab and the gas lamp. The horror novel may be more modern, something to grip the reader by the throat and not let go for days, or if read piecemeal on trains and subways, weeks. And, the novel itself has evolved since the heyday of the classical ghost story. It is



THREE WISHS WITHIN - RODRIGUEZ

blunter, faster-paced; it has, to use Raymond Chandler's phrase, lost its good manners and gone native. The 1986 novel is more suitable to sustained horror than the 1910 novel.

It may be that. It may be something which will not be apparent for some time, about which 21st century critics will discourse learnedly.

In the meantime, let's look at some books:

SKELETON CREW by Stephen King
Putnam, 1985, 512 pp., \$18.95

Here is an apparent exception to all of the above, a short story collection which is a bestseller, which has outrageously huge printings and is found in every B. Dalton Bookseller in the universe.

Only Stephen King could do it. He is an exception to every rule. But remember: his reputation is as a novelist. This book is essentially the biggest hanger-on in history. Had he published no novels, it might still have appeared, but quietly, in an edition for four-thousand copies from Arkham House.

It's a good place to start King, if you haven't read him (and in the SF fan community, which I assume comprises much of the readership of this magazine, there are still holdouts, who find King too suspiciously Mainstream-Bestsellerish to be worth investigating -- I know, because I was like that myself before I learned better), for all that it doesn't always show him at his best.

King has a problem quite the opposite of that which afflicted E.F. Benson and all those people. His novels tend to be better than his short stories. There is some point at which a King story reaches critical mass, and all the long scenes come together to bring the characters memorably alive. His long stories have a cumulative power, which he seldom achieves in the shorter ones. When the shorter ones don't reach critical mass, they seem padded and mishapen.

Consequently, the best story in the book is the longest, a 113-page novella which has all the properties of his best

novels, without being as truly as any of them. So, if you have long never read King before, this is the place to start.

The story is one of King's few successful near-science fiction efforts. It's about people in a small Maine town beset by hordes of monsters which apparently have been released from another dimension by a botched military experiment. A good deal of the action takes place in a supermarket, among the very familiar, while slaving Things lurk just outside. Then we go outside, and the story shifts into King's finest apocalyptic mode, and produces a genuine sense of dark and terrible wonder at the end.

His other science fiction stories in the collection are pretty poor stuff. "Beachworld" I have already discussed in a previous column, when reviewing the aborted revival of WEIRD TALES. It's poorly imagined, utterly unconvincing, and dumb. That the astronauts thousands of years from now are familiar with the Beach Boys seems the least of its verisimilitude problems. "The Jant" is a little better, although, again, the far future is hardly different from last week, and I hope King doesn't really believe there could be oil on Mars or Ven- or that, even if there were, it would be economical to transport it to Earth. For all he is a fine writer, with a real feeling for a character, King decidedly lacks the science-fictional talent of making a future different from the present and consistent on its own terms. The core story, though, could be salvaged.

It has an intriguing idea, that teleportation involves centuries of subjective time, for all that the objective time is almost nil. Hence, conscious teleports go mad, having spent an eternity in transit. But King handles it all poorly, through the medium of a father lecturing to his kids about how "jaunting" works. In the end, one of the kids holds his breath when the sleep gas is administered, gets teleported while still awake, and ... guess what? He goes mad.

A few of the supernatural stories, "Grama" and "The Monkey," especially, seem misshapen in the way I previously mentioned. They seem padded with irrelevant details which rob the climaxes of power. These stories have neither the cumulative effect of the novels or the compression of good short stories.

Happily, many of the others do. Among the best are "The Reach" (which won a World Fantasy Award as "Do the Dead Sing?"), which handles a subject which could be just sentimental (old woman dying of cancer begins to see the ghost of her husband) in a manner which is beautiful and moving; "The Ballad of the Flexible Bullet," a crazily convincing tale of paranoia which manages to be both funny and suspenseful at the same time; "The Wedding Gig," a non-fantastic crime story, but more a story of character; and "Mrs. Todd's Shortcut," which starts diffusely (it could probably be cut by 25%, all at the front) but then takes a short, very weird trip into another world, rather like the Territories of THE TALISMAN.

Overall this is an uneven collection but a wonderful catch-all for the King completist -- and there are more King completists than there are readers for most writers. A lot of very rare material is included: one of the early stories from STARTLING MYSTERY STORIES, copies of which, in magazine form, now go for

around a hundred bucks each; one from a 1968 issue of UBRRS, which was otherwise totally unobtainable; and others from sources as diverse as YANKEE, REDBOOK and WEIRDOBOOK.

While we're on the subject of King completists, Owenlaskell has compiled a useful CHECKLIST AND BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE FIRST APPEARANCES OF THE NOVELS AND SHORT STORIES OF STEPHEN KING. Of course, this information is available elsewhere (in my book, DISCOVERING STEPHEN KING, for instance) but Haskell's pamphlet is designed to be carried around to flea markets and thrift shops and thumbed through when you just happen to find a run of, say, CAVALLIER. As such, it is very useful.

I think Haskell self-published it. Order from: Other Worlds, 197 Wickenden Street, Providence, RI 02903. The price of \$6.00 (not listed anywhere; I am cribbing from John Betancourt's review in AMAZING) seems a bit steep, though.

VAMPIRE JUNCTION by S.P. Somtow
Donning, 1984, 280 pp., \$15.95. (Note: also published in paperback, with great stealth, by Berkley)

S.P. Somtow is, of course, a transparent pseudonym of Somtow Sucharitkul, whose name had to be changed, apparently, for fear that the mass audience wouldn't be able to handle anything as complicated as his real one. But the transparency helps, because this book will appeal to the fans of his science fiction. It has

many of the same characteristics as his Mailworld and Inquestor stories, the same wild inventiveness and uneasy mixture of beauty and silliness, the same undisciplined brilliance. You can be sure that Sucharitkul is hardly going to write a conventional vampire novel, no matter how deliberately commercial he is trying to be.

Sure enough, he hasn't. Start with his vampire, a seeming twelve-year-old rock star bloodsucker. Think of Donny Osmond with fangs. Then, don't. This vampire is a memorable, tragic figure, an almost-absurd pint-sized Melmoth the Wanderer, who served the sybil of Cusae in the First Century A.D. before becoming a vampire, getting buried in Pompeii, and having a variety of often quite gory adventures throughout the ages. All the while he remains a child, and, in some ways, more innocent than the people around him. It is a typically Sucharitkulian touch that this nearly two-thousand-year-old being is an enthusiast for model electric trains, just like many other kids.

The plot has to do with the attempts of a Jungian psychologist to analyze the vampire, while a variety of other people (including a circle of depraved, eccentric occultists, all now in their seventies and eighties, out for one last fling) want to destroy him. Much is made about the vampire as an archetype, projected by the human race, whose existence is a kind of dream. Sometimes this leads to striking, surrealistic sequences. At other times it makes the book too self-



conscious, as if the characters had suddenly stopped the story to explain the symbolism to the reader. Such arbitrary does outrageous things with violence -- he doesn't merely splatter guts; he splatters them with elegance and style -- but he does so a trifle too often, until the deaths cease to shock, and the stray characters seem like extras in a slasher film: just walking slabs of meat. Then, when things seem completely out of control, he produces the very powerful drama of a young boy whose brother and parents have just become vampires. This is worth a novel in itself, but it is merely incidental to the book's climax. Laced in with all this is a good deal of black comedy, including a particularly absurd moment, right at the apocalyptic finale, when the woman psychologist whips out a chart to explain who is the animus/animus and shadow of whom.

There is certainly nothing else in the genre like *VAMPIRE JUNCTION*. It strikes me as a book that is at war with itself, trying to pull in a dozen different directions at once. But on the whole, more real imagination than any dozen carefully crafted, routine horror novels. It will become, in its own odd way, I venture to predict, a classic, a unique addition to that very small shelf of novels which have shaped our image and conception of the undead.

Noted:

CYCLE OF THE WEREWOLF By Stephen King
Illustrated by Berni Wrightson
Signet, 1985, 128 pp., \$8.95

Not one of the more significant King books, more important as the first King collectible whose value has become suspect than as a story. The hardcover, published in 1983 by Land of Enchantment, immediately sold out, and just as immediately turned up on convention dealers' tables at inflated prices. I think I counted fourteen copies at last year's Disclave. I don't think any of them sold. So if you want this book in hardcover, wait a little longer and somebody will crack.

But if you just want to read it now, Signet has admirably provided. Their edition is a facsimile of the original, with very good reproduction of the artwork (both color and black & white).

The book was apparently once intended as a calendar, with King describing lycanthropic doings to go with each of the major, monthly Wrightson drawings. But his natural storytelling sense got away from him, and the result was a novel... almost. The first half consists of six short descriptions of killings by the Beast. Then the story starts in earnest, but before it can develop much, it's over. The hero isn't introduced until very late. The villain is hardly on stage at all. The result is a mere skeleton of what might have been a pretty good novel. There is just one bit which shows King at his best: a little boy, confined to a wheelchair, knows that the werewolf is a local clergyman. Adults won't believe him. He starts sending the culprit anonymous notes, like, "Why don't you kill yourself?"

Imagine the terror of it, for both of them.

MULTITUDE TERRORS
Compiled by Frank H. Parnell assisted by Mike Ashley, Greenwood Press, 1985
602 pp., \$65.00

The subtitle tells it all: "An index to the Weird Fantasy Magazines published in the United States and Great Britain."

Here we have, between one set of copies, a complete issue-by-issue listing of the contents of *WEIRD TALES*, *UNKNOWN*, (including the British version), *STRANGE TALES*, *STRANGE STORIES*, and even things as obscure as *BRIEF FANTASTIC TALES*. Significantly, small press magazines are included: *WHISPERS*, *WEIRDOOK*, *CHAMAL*, *FANTASY CROSSROADS* and all the others which have been the mainstay of the field for the past decade and a half, when for the first time, a viable alternative to the newstand magazines developed. In the future, when these magazines have all become fantastically scarce, the information preserved here will give necessary perspective, lest one get the impression that the real focal point of the middle '70s was, say, Ted White's *FANTASTIC*, and then, shortly afterwards, novelists like Charles de Lint, David Drake and Charles Saunders suddenly appeared from nowhere.

The cross-index by author provides the beginning for bibliographies of virtually every 20th century horror/fantasy writer. (There are even seventy-six entries for yours truly.)

An essential reference book for scholars, collectors and many fans.



SUPERNATURAL FICTION WRITERS: FANTASY AND HORROR Edited by E.F. Scribner's, 1985, 2 vol., \$130.00

This is not quite as much an essential reference work (although every library with any interest in fantasy should have it) as wonderful luxury for anyone who can afford it. Here we have two massive volumes of substantial essays on 152 authors, plus two topic-pieces, on Arthurian Romances and *THE ARABIAN NIGHTS*.

The contributors are noted scholars and writers, and not one seems to do a bad job. Several pieces are by Bileier himself, who may be known to many of you for his excellent introductions to various Dover volumes. The articles on familiar writers like Lovecraft and Machen are insightful enough as to be still worthwhile, even though whole books on these authors are available. Some of the others, on Amelia Edwards, Marie Corelli, Ludwig Tieck, Fiona MacLeod, Vernon Lee, Sarban, etc., may well be the only reference material available on these writers. The bibliographies are selected, not complete, but sound. There is also an index, much appreciated in a work this large. My only gripe is that the table of contents is in the first volume only, so you have to hunt two massive volumes whenever you want to look somebody up.

A good choice for a special World Fantasy Award.

I suppose another trend in horror fiction, other than the shift to novels, is the sudden growth in scholarship and reference material. The field is stopping to take a long look at itself.

One sign of things being taken more seriously is the new, revised texts of Lovecraft, currently being released by Arkham House. Lovecraft is now being subjected to the same sort of rigorous textual scholarship as, say, Poe or Melville, and the results are particularly fruitful.

Arkham has already released handsome new "corrected printings" of *THE DUNWICH HORROR* and *AT THE MOUNTAINS OF MADNESS* (\$15.95 and \$16.95 respectively), with DAWSON to follow. These will replace the previously standard hardcover editions, and will hopefully be the source for all future reprints and translations.

August Derleth may have saved Lovecraft from oblivion, but he was no textual editor. He was quite the reverse of Poe's editor Griswold, who blackened his character but preserved his writings quite capably. Derleth, for all his idealized Lovecraft, presented a simplified, even distorted view of the man and his work to the world (his misleading introduction to *THE DUNWICH HORROR* has been replaced by a more useful one by Robert Bloch), and his texts contained, as scholar S.T. Joshi has discovered in the course of cleaning them up, thousands of errors, ranging from punctuation to paragraphs omitted. There were some 1500 errors in the novella "At the Mountains of Madness" alone.

Most of the changes will not be noticed by the casual reader, but still, wouldn't you rather be reading what Lovecraft wrote, rather than what decades of sloppy editing have produced? These volumes present the first sound texts ever to appear in book form, and are a major accomplishment. Certainly no scholarship or even reviewing of Lovecraft can be taken seriously in the future, unless based on these versions.

Hopefully, after they're done with DAWSON, Arkham will let Joshi do a revised version of *THE HORROR IN THE MUSEUM*, and maybe even *COLLECTED POEMS*.

Just short of five decades after the Old Gen's death, the verdict is in: Lovecraft is an important writer. He deserves this sort of treatment.

SMALL PRESS

MAGAZINES

Reviewed By

Darrell Schweitzer

Without much ado, since our Noble Editor has asked me to be brief, let me just mention that the small press magazine field seems reasonably stable at the moment. Most of the established titles continue to publish reliably, and the newer ones come and go, as always. The Canadian BORDERLAND, which made a promising debut in October 1984, has apparently had a second issue, but I have yet to see a copy. The English-language, but Italian-published KADATH seems to be definitely dead, without even a response to my previous comments on the subject. The small-press field, as usual, continues to be oriented toward horror and fantasy, for all some interesting things do occur on the fringes of science fiction, which brings us to our first publication:

INTERZONE is apparently devoted to imaginative writing in the broadest sense. I hope it remains so, because it is able to give us things which the regular science fiction magazines cannot. Case in point is Michael Bishop's "The Bob Dylan Tambourine Software & Satori Support Services Consortium Ltd." in the current issue #12. If I must define it, I suppose it is what GALAXY used to call a "non-fact" article. Part a mock-report, part eerily-convincing mock-interview, it tells how Bob Dylan quit music to become a software entrepreneur, not for the money, but because the new culture of the computer revolution offers a shortcut to God. It's a funny, audacious attempt, quite successfully pulled off, but it's more than just a stunt. The whole thing makes a bizarre sort of sense.

Now this isn't even quite a story, and it isn't science fiction or fantasy, really, but it is most certainly imaginative, and it does deviate from realism in a speculative way. I couldn't imagine it in ANALOG, but INTERZONE serves its readers well when it presents such material.

The rest of the issue is interesting for the most part, but some of it could have appeared in ANALOG. Paul J. McAuley has a pretty good story about a human female who is artificially locked into childhood and brainwiped once a year. It's a story of suspense and character, certainly worth reading, but not unlike numerous stories which appear elsewhere. Richard Kadrey's "The Fire Catcher" is a grim vignette about computers and World War III. M. John Harrison's "A Young Man's Journey to Viriconium" is almost fascinating, filled with striking images and interesting ideas, but bogged down in dull, seemingly irrelevant details. And Pamela Zoline's "Instructions for Exiting This Building in Case of Fire" is almost a story, an implausible sketch, from a variety of muddled viewpoints,

telling how a secret organization someone manages to kidnap and exchange children so as to prevent nuclear war, the idea being nobody will nuke a country which contains their own lost children. The piece is filled with distancing devices, which prevent the reader from becoming involved. Ms. Zoline, who achieves a certain fame during the New Wave era for "The Heat Death of the Universe," a classic specimen of the non-functional word-pattern, which reads like a bunch of randomly assembled clippings, has apparently had a disastrous apprenticeship in the art of fiction, being praised for all the wrong things. I don't doubt that she is in control of her material, in the sense that she knows precisely what she is doing. What she isn't doing is telling a story which will convince or move the reader.

But hers is the only really bad item in this INTERZONE. The magazine is very much worth supporting. It remains Britain's only SF magazine.

Also from Britain is an outstanding issue of an old standby, FANTASY TALES; #14 contains a long novel by horror-fiction's new superstar, Clive Barker, and on the basis of this (it being the first Barker I have read) he certainly seems to deserve the amazing amount of attention he has garnered of late. (When else, in the whole history of the field, has someone made his debut with six volumes of previously unpublished short fiction from major publishers on both sides of the Atlantic?) His "The Forbidden" (a reprint from one of the BOOKS OF BLOOD reads like a mixture of the best elements of Rose, Campbell and Stephen King. Campbell's subtlety and sophistication, and King's clarity and vigor, and it is simply the most amazing, gripping horror story I have read in many years. There's also a real, original Ramsey Campbell story in this issue, which does quite engage me, for all that it seems well written and contains a striking image. I think the problem is that Campbell leaves out too many utilitarian sentences like "he went upstairs and went to bed," which set scenes and keep things in focus, so the reader can't become as deeply involved as he should, simply because the story is always slightly murky.

Also in this issue are a couple of pretty good short-stories by Jeffrey Gordin and C. Bruce Hunter, and a quite interesting, Dunsanyesque fable by Chris Naylor, who is a new writer, and who, I hope, will write more.

FANTASY TALES is not to be confused with the American standby, FANTASY BOOK, the 17th issue of which (Sept. 1985) seems a bit in the doldrums, but contains three interesting stories. Richard Muller's "The Dark At the End of the Tunnel" will be particularly fascinating to Harlan Ellison fans, since one of the characters is clearly based on Harlan. Beyond that, the story contains good characterizations and a moderately interesting fantastic element. Harry Turtle dove has a convincingly medieval tale based on John Mandeville, and it is a model of how to take a hint from a traditional source and make it into a story. (As opposed to tediously rehashing the original.) John Betancourt's "The Weird of Hazel Dey," for all its Kalkash-Tonian title, is a nice attempt at a moral fable in the context of a (not quite convincing) Arabian Nights setting.

The rest of the fiction in the issue mostly consists of what I call "regular fantasy," standard mock-medieval sorcery stuff, which may seem more exciting to readers less jaded than I. Of the specimens present, Josepha Sherman's is the best written, at least until she starts to slip out of viewpoint toward the end.

This is not the best issue of FB by any means, but it isn't without merit either. This magazine is worth following, if you read fantasy, simply because it is the basic journal of the field, publishing more professional-quality material than any other, and that inevitably includes some of the best.

Noted: Another issue of FANTASY BOOK arrived, too late to review: #18 (Dec. 1985) contains stories by Diana Paxson, Richard Lupoff, Esther Friesner, Charles Harness, Mary Elizabeth Counselman, and others.

WEIRDOBOOK 22 features another splendid Fabian cover, and two long novelets, one of them the most cosmic excursion imaginable for Richard Tierney's gnostic sword & sorcery hero, Simon of Gitta (the Simon Magus of Biblical fame), and another of Cthulhuoid hijinks from Brian Lumley. Also: a short-short from yours truly, plus John Lansdale, Ardath Mayhar and several others.

WHISPERS 21-22 is a thick digest with original fiction by Fritz Leiber, Tanih Lee, David Morrell, Dennis Etchison and numerous others. It is the true ancestor of the fantasy little magazines. One of the two Alan Ryan stories this issue is a World Fantasy Award finalist.

INTERZONE: 124 Osbourne Rd., Brighton, BN1 6LU, England. 6 k or \$10 for 4 iss.

FANTASY TALES: Stephen Jones, 130 Park View, Wembley, Middx, HA9 6JU, England. 3 k or \$11 for 3 issues.

FANTASY BOOK: POB 60126, Pasadena, CA, 91106. \$12 for 4 issues.

WEIRDOBOOK: Box 149, Amherst Branch, Buffalo, NY, 14226. \$25 for 7 issues.

WHISPERS: Stuart Schiff, 70 Highland Ave., Binghamton, NY, 13905. \$10.95, 2 double issues.



SMALL PRESS NOTES

MISTY AND THE SUN JEWEL

By James McQuade

Nuance, Inc., \$12.95
POB 9076, Van Nuys, CA 91409.

This is a large-size (9x12, 124 pages, heavy color cover) graphic fantasy drawn and I presume written by Jim.

The subtitle is "Further Erotic Adventures of Misty."

Misty is a luscious young woman of the far future who continually becomes involved in and subjected to adventures which always involve her capture, torture, imprisonment, sexual abuse... She is rarely fully clothed and always wears skimpy outfits.

Her near and total nudity doesn't matter after a few pages, because she is so perfect, so impossible, that her lack of skin-tight clothes is a mere quibble. Her nudity is never (to me) nakedness.

In the first book of Misty, titled MISTY, and now, and I presume in the next (maybe now) volume, MISTY AND THE VALKYRIES, the bondage and masochism/sadism elements are what sell these books, perhaps under cover of the nudity and periodic lovemaking episodes with handsome young men. (In this book, absent in MISTY, a step into pornography is taken in one lovemaking sequence as the man's erect penis is clearly shown, and penetration is shown. But don't get excited; even this is curiously devoid of eroticism because of the near-cartoon style and perfect, exaggerated breasts, hips, face.) MISTY isn't human, as you and I.

She's fantasy, her miraculous escapes from death are fantasy, and nothing can be believed, nothing is real.

It is this body, fantasy, event fantasy, which perhaps allows Jim

to do the things he does in these adventures; the non-involvement of any vestige of reality makes these pictures of death, humiliation, torture, enslavement, sex...allowable and saleable.

The appeal is subliminal, instinctual, to young males afraid of women, to any male afraid of women, afraid of equality. And there is a perhaps disingenuous appeal to girls here, as Misty triumphs over males, is able to kill vile men, is able to magically survive all their attempts to violate her, kill her, defeat her. There is an evil woman in this book, who uses male clones, who fights rival males for power...

These MISTY books are clinics in manipulation of symbols, instincts, drives, fears, lusts.

This is not a killer, putdown review, Jim; I admire your skills and your professionalism. Your Misty books walk a narrow, intricate line and are loaded with narrative elements boldly and subtly invoked.

HOLLOW EARTH APOCALYPSE--- ASIMOV'S WARNING

By Floria Benton

Available from: R.A. Leedy,
4 Dennis Dr., Park Place,
Wilmington, DE 19808

What Benton has done is pick and choose from among Isaac's voluminous writings (fiction and non-fiction) to create the illusion that he is a rebel against the conspiratorial control of all the news media, all the scientists in the world, by the all-powerful inhabitants of the hollow earth.

This may be news to Asimov.

Her theory (and drawings, and explained satellite photos) is that there are 1500-2000 mile openings at the poles which have been hidden and kept secret from humanity since ancient times. But there is a weakening of the magnetic poles going on, and soon the poles will shift and a catastrophe will happen to the planet: it will wobble and roll as new magnetic north and south poles are established and stabilized.

Isaac is aware of this and is trying to warn mankind by veiled messages in his fiction and non-fiction, sayeth Benton.

Incidentally, there is a miniature sun in the center of our hollow earth.

As conspiracy theories go, this is a lulu: credibility rating: Zero. Paranoia rating: 99.9%.

I have word that Isaac has written an editorial inspired by the book which will appear in the August (or thereabouts) issue of ASIMOV'S SF.

That should be interesting reading.

AURORA SF---Speculative Feminism
Summer, 1985, #24, Vol.9, No.1, \$3.00
Edited by Jeanne Gomoll
Published by SF3, Box 1624, Madison, WI
53701-1624.

male feels out of place reading this well-produced, offset, quality publication, since it is dedicated to the proposition that women get the shaft in modern sf and fantasy writing and publishing, which is strange, since a lot of male writers, viewing the array of women editors and associate editors and assistant editors in the fields today would feel the same way about themselves...

But the magazine makes its points and celebrates current and past woman writers such as Andre Norton, Katherine MacLean, Lee Kilgough, Evangeline Walton... And there is an article by Jessica Amanda Salmonson on "Mediocrity and Women's Science Fiction", though the examples given are few and far between, and the three examples (of four) with dates on them come from 1969, 1970 and 1976. Of course, crap is in the mind of the beholder, so perhaps Jessica has a less sensitive shit detector than (for instance) I.

'Six months after Kingsley Amis's STANLEY AND THE WOMEN was published to wide praise in Britain, John Gross last January called attention in the New York Times Book Review to the irony that the novel had not been picked up in the United States, when "in the normal course of events any novel by him would automatically be expected to find an American publisher." And Jonathan Clowes, Mr. Amis's literary agent, charged that at least two American houses turned the book down because of feminist pressures within those houses over its unflattering depiction of women.

'But last month Summit Books (a division of Simon and Shuster) published STANLEY AND THE WOMEN.'

RICHARD E. GEIS

'Ileene Smith, the editor who acquired the book for Summit, said, "It's a very, very mischievous book, but it's not evil at all. It's a fascinating book about alienation, insanity and madness." In fact, the book had been highly recommended to her by Penny Perlick, a feminist and the literary editor of The Sunday Times in London, and Miss Smith was awaiting a copy from Mr. Clowes when the controversy surfaced.

'Nonetheless, after she bought the book, she received many indignant phone calls from industry colleagues. "I think they were just not comfortable with the idea of publishing a book that was purportedly misogynist," she said. "But if the book had not met a particular literary standard, I wouldn't have been interested in publishing it."

---10-8-85, NEW YORK TIMES
Thanks to John Yimason
for the clipping

Geis Comment: This is a funny example of hypocrisy. There is a sub-genre of pop psychology which makes big money bashing men for being masculine and decrying the masculine traits as evil and immature and enroute to civilization. Yet let a renowned novelist take a shot at women and the feminists in publishing cannot endure it. Such immaturity! Such insecurity! Why, one might think women sometimes act as emotional and sexist as men given the power to punish and reward. Why, even the prospect of a certain, money-making acquisition could not divert them from their party line.

Hmm. Why do I get the feeling I'm cutting my own throat?

LIVING FREE--A Personal Journal of Self Liberation #32, Nov. '85, \$1.50
Edited and Published by Jim Stumm,
Box 29, Hiler Branch, Buffalo, NY 14223

This issue sums up the arguments, philosophical and practical, for and against the woman life (total withdrawal from society in the search for total freedom from the oppression of society and its inevitable government). Jim has opted for a limited woman life--living on a few acres and limiting his profile in re official government. He feels (as do I) that he is too small an anti-government, libertarian, alternate-lifestyle person to bother with; he isn't a significant threat to the establishment and the powers-that-be can't afford to monitor all the small-press mags and books seeking wrong-thinking, and can only afford to prosecute special interest groups such as high-profile tax resisters and "terrorists".

I tend to feel that the extreme viewpoints betray a fear of society and people which is more emotional than intellectual, and betray a weakness rather than strength and virtue.

To my mind the best policy is to take from society what you want, avoid or leave alone that which annoys or offends you. As Jim says, the price of "total" womanistic freedom is extraordinarily high---the avoidance and withdrawal involved required is almost catatonic...neurotic. The pursuit of an ideal can become fanati-

cism and result in an impoverished, ascetic life which works only for a very, very few.

LIVING FREE is letter-size, ten pages, mailed first class. Printed by offset, I think, or very good copier.

Jim prefers to receive payment in cash.

JACK VANCE--Light From A Lone Star
NESFA Press, \$15.00 + \$7.00 p & h.
Box G, MIT Branch P.O.,
Cambridge, MA 02139-0910

This small hardbound book was published for the Lone Star Con (1985 (North American SF Convention) in honor of its Guest of Honor, Jack Vance.

It contains a collection of Vance's early stories--1948-54--and a new piece written for this book: "Cat Island", a satirical item better left unexamined.

There is a gentle interview with Vance from 1977 by Tim Underwood in which Vance expresses dislike of his early work and dislike of critical/analytical examinations of his writing.

There is also "A Vance Encyclopedia" which is more a sampler of various periods and styles of his writings, periods, world creations, than a true encyclopedia.

This is a limited edition: less than 800 copies available.

THE BOOK OF IAN WATSON

By Ian Watson
Mark V. Ziesing, P.O. Box 806,
Willimantic, CT 06226

This well-printed quality hardcover is a collection of fictions and non-fictions by Ian Watson, chosen by Ian Watson.

As such it is a worldview and psyche-view of and by Watson. He arranges items to feed into each other, to interrelate, to show how he thinks as well as what he thinks.

Manifestly, Ian Watson is an intellectual in the best sense; he considers science fiction to be a literature of ideas...and knowingly or not uses characters, themes and plot to illustrate his ideas. There is always a subtle distance between him and his characters, between his char-

Hi, MELTHEOR. MAY I BORROW
A CUP OF HEKTOGRAPH JELLY
FOR MY APA?



acters and the reader. His fiction is rarely an emotional experience. Most often it is an intellectual experience, but rewarding, eye-opening.

He plays with ideas, but in his heart of hearts, does he ever really take them seriously?

Yes, obviously. Very obviously in the second half of the book where his leftist socio-political-economic beliefs surface in his discussions of science fiction authors, fans, publishers, and in other pieces of a personal nature. He sees England as a nation occupied and dominated by American bases and American foreign policy. He sees his government as Scrooge, heartless, without granting any validity to the reasons for current policies. He bleeds for the poor (including himself) and sees Capitalist injustice on all sides, but rarely Socialist injustice. He sees nuclear war just around the corner and does not want England to be Target One. Were I living in England, I'd agree on that issue.

He writes very well, very keenly, probably over the heads of 99% of sf readers. That's his natural level.

The signed edition of this book costs \$35.00; the trade edition is \$18.50.

REM:3

Edited and published by Charles Platt
9 Patchin Place
New York, NY 10011

Last time I reviewed this I forgot to list Charles' address. Several people took the time and trouble and one to call to find out.

Charles continues to run a hot-blooded, brooding, electrifying little magazine which will cost you four 22¢ stamps or (if it is more convenient) \$1.00.

He is into creating beautiful software for home computers---near as I can imagine it, his "Game of Life" program is sort of like a full-color progressive shape-shifting image/kaleidoscope.

But the heart and soul of REM is the controversy---the leading-edge of sf discussion---as is manifest in this issue's "What is Cyberpunk?" by Rudy Rucker, "Cyber-Pink" by John Smith (who is he, really?), and the knee-jerk bleeding-heart article decrying corporate capitalistic greed and disregard of the poor and the system which perpetuates it all... by John Shirley, titled "Under the Bell Jar."

These articles are short and violent. The more quiet "Foreign Science Fiction in Japan" by Yoshiyuki Tanaka, is more reportorial. Platt's "Not a Gossip Column" is non-libelous, but full of mild acid and personalities. Love it!

INTERVIEW WITH J. NEIL SCHULMAN

Conducted by NEAL WILGUS

SFR: Let me begin by offering congratulations on winning the 1984 Prometheus Award, given by the Libertarian Futurist Society for best libertarian novel. The Prometheus was awarded for your second novel, THE RAINBOW CADENZIA (Simon and Schuster, 1983), but let me start with a few questions about your first novel, ALONGSIDE NIGHT (Crown 1979). NIGHT is the story (among other things) of a young man's coming of age -- how autobiographical was it?

SCHULMAN: Now that's one question about ALONGSIDE NIGHT I wasn't expecting, since I never thought of it as autobiographical at all. Certainly none of the events in the story, considering how far out they are, are conceivably autobiographical. Most people, in fact, think I based Elliot Vreeland and his famous economist father Martin on my real-life friend David Friedman and his famous economist father Milton, which is a rumor I do nothing to stifle since I have so much fun watching it annoy David.

But maybe there's a touch of autobiographical feeling in a couple of places, since Elliot Vreeland has to deal with the competition of an accomplished father in the same way I had to at that age with my own father, who's a highly-regarded concert violinist. And I threw in a few odd autobiographical touches here and there. Elliot Vreeland talks pretty much the same coolly scientific way I did at seventeen -- come from reading all the Heinlein juveniles, my favorite of which, BETWEEN PLANETS, I have him reading while he's on the run. Elliot's mother is a painter; so's mine. But Elliot is in much better shape -- physically, emotionally, socially -- than I was at seventeen. I was really screwed up then. I was extremely fat, severely alienated and completely frustrated. If it wasn't for the hopeful sense of life I got from reading authors like Robert Heinlein, C.S. Lewis, and J.D. Salinger -- and the luck of running into a psychiatrist who was sane, rational, and not in the pay of my enemies -- I never would have made it. In a lot of ways, Elliot is who I wouldn't've liked to have been at seventeen and -- except for the brains -- wasn't.

SFR: ALONGSIDE NIGHT was explicitly libertarian, both in the story of Elliot Vreeland discovering the agrorist underground and in the political economic principles he is exposed to. How difficult is it to write a story heavy with such "message" and still be entertaining?

SCHULMAN: Damn hard. C.S. Lewis wrote an essay on "Watchful Dragons," his metaphor for the prejudices and preconceptions lurking in a reader, waiting for buttons to be pushed. A writer pushes the wrong button, the Watchful Dragon jumps forward and says, "Oh, that, just 'left-wing propaganda' or 'Reagan bull-shit' or whatever label people stick on

ideas so they can get rid of having to think about them. When you're trying to expose people to a new idea, you keep on trying to shove into some preconceived pigeonhole so they can dismiss you. So what I did in ALONGSIDE NIGHT was to let the events of the story show the reader what I was talking about, and try to keep the explanations coming out of my characters' mouths the minimum necessary to understand the story.

But you can't please everyone. A newspaper in Texas dismissed the book because it was all message and no story, and a now-defunct media magazine dismissed the book saying it was all story and no message. The truth of the matter is that ALONGSIDE NIGHT has about the same story-to-message ratio as the average thriller, but people don't notice it in the average thriller because the average thriller is propagandizing the status quo, and since the average reader agrees with the writer's worldview from the word go, the writer's message is invisible. My worldview is different from the average reader's, so even if I had no explanation at all, the simple fact that the events of the story are going differently than the reader's expectations puts the reader on guard to the author's "message."

The only lesson I can get out of this is that C.S. Lewis must have been better at calming down the neophobia he was producing in his readers than I've learned to yet.

SFR: In the afterword to NIGHT you ask the critical question "Are ALONGSIDE NIGHT?" That was written during the Jimmy Carter years of double digit inflation and you projected triple digit inflation for the story. Now we have Ronnie Reagan and much lower inflation, but that mushrooming deficit has taken its place. How about an update -- are we again ALONGSIDE NIGHT?

SCHULMAN: No, I don't think we were within a decade of being "Alongside Night" in 1979 and don't think we are now. I do think we were a little closer to the terminator in 1979 than we are now, but that can also change in a fairly short amount of time -- say the time it takes for the U.S. to get us into an expensive war in Central America.

But publishers kept insisting on putting dates on the book cover -- Crown, the hardcover publisher, wanted to re-title the novel 1999 and when I wouldn't stand for that, subtitled it "A novel of 1999;" Ace, the paperback publisher changed that to 2001 in a mention on the back cover. I never gave a date in the book itself -- I give months and days, but not year.

I did this for a reason: I was describing the preconditions for economic

collapse and a libertarian revolution arising out of that. My statement was: This is what it might look like and this is how you might do it. But I never said that it's going to follow a predictable timetable.

SFR: Robert Anton Wilson took you to task in his "Illuminating Discords" column in NEW LIBERTARIAN (April/June 1980) because of a sign in NIGHT which reads "Rooms to Rent. No Dogs or Welfare Parasites." Wilson's point was that the poor are victims of the welfare system, not necessarily the advocates of it, and that it was typical, but unjust, "mammalian behavior" to put them down for it. Did Wilson's argument change your attitude toward the poor?

SCHULMAN: First off, let me point out that Bob Wilson endorsed ALONGSIDE NIGHT before he took me to task in his column for that fictional sign. And, if you note my letter replying to Bob's comments in the next issue of NEW LIBERTARIAN, if memory serves, what I said was that Bob Wilson, as an author himself, should have known better than to attribute a sign put up by a character as reflecting the opinion of the author.

That sign was meant to characterize Emmanuel Ferrer, who -- as a character -- was denied welfare by New York City after the IRS seized all his property and left him a pauper. With the help of the Revolutionary Agrorist Cadre, Ferrer turns an abandoned building into an apartment complex, and I don't think it unreasonable that -- under these circumstances -- Ferrer would resent those living off government subsidies taken from him by force and then denied him.

One sociological point that Murray Rothbard always makes should be made here: Libertarian class analysis shows that the State pretty much distributes its loot within class boundaries. It robs from one group of rich people to give to another group of rich people, it robs one sector of the poor to give money to another sector of the poor. It's not a matter of favoring the rich over the poor, or vice versa. We're not talking about mammalian behavior here, Bob Wilson notwithstanding; this is basic libertarian economics.

And, by the way, when I was writing ALONGSIDE NIGHT I was living at a low enough level to qualify as "poor," myself -- I have a friend who, at the time, had an income about equivalent to mine who applied for and got food stamps. I thought it preferable to borrow from family and friends, since I had that option, but if anybody's wondering, I don't think I would have hesitated to apply for welfare.



fare if I was unemployed, couldn't find work, and had a family to support. But first I might try sitting on the street, reading my stories aloud, with a hat on.

SFR: In the Afterword to NIGHT you cite Rand, Rothe A. Heinlein, Lewis and J.D. Salinger as the major influences on you at that time. Want to update that list? Or expound on it?

SCHULMAN: I'm in print in a number of places already on how I was influenced by Rand, Heinlein, Lewis and Salinger, so I'll give them short shrift here by saying that CATCHER in the RYE was my main stylistic influence during my early writing, and C.S. Lewis, Ayn Rand and Robert Heinlein have been the major philosophical and literary influences on my life. With that said, let me add the following non-exhaustive list of other writers I admire.

Anthony Burgess is the most inventive English prose stylist I've ever read. I love what he does with language -- the sheer musical quality of the language -- in A CLOCKWORK ORANGE. I know that Burgess would hand off the compliment to James Joyce, but I consider Joyce to be an epic poet rather than a novelist and -- having dismissed him with that categorization -- I still have no further comment on Joyce until I manage to get past the sheer density of his writing to comprehend what he's doing.

Ira Levin's THIS PERFECT DAY is, in my opinion, a better anti-utopian novel than either NINETEEN-EIGHTY-FOUR or BRAVE NEW WORLD -- and I consider those two books to be damn near perfect.

As a matter of fact, I think you'd have no trouble finding stylistic influence from any of these four dystopias -- by Burgess, Huxley, Orwell and Levin -- in my novel THE RAINBOW CADENZA.

Among what's usually termed the classics, I enjoy Twain, Dickens and Poe. I also think Ambrose Bierce's "An Incident at Owl Creek Bridge" is the single best short story I've ever read. Recently I've been reading John Steinbeck for the first time in years, and was pleasantly reminded what a terrific writer he is -- I just loved EAST OF EDEN, which surprised me by turning out to be a hardcore libertarian novel.

I think Cordwainer Smith is the best stylist that genre science fiction ever produced, though Philip K. Dick was no slouch here either. But Philip Dick also ranked as one of the best idea men -- with the philosophical depth always to be interesting. In the genre, as well as having characters to rank with any mainstream novel known for character. I think Colin Wilson's PHILOSOPHER'S STONE, MIND PARASITES and SPACE VAMPIRES are all excellent novels, full of interesting ideas well stated. The other couple of books I feel this way about are Michael Moorcock's BEHOLD THE MAN and Norman Spinrad's THE IRON DREAM.

I thought John Irving's THE WORLD ACCORDING TO GARP terrific. My friend Alan Brennert has written a marvelous comic novel called KINDRED SPIRITS which TOR -- in its infinite wisdom -- published with "Romance" on the spine. Alan's novel is about as much of a genre romance as ORPHEUS AND EURYDICE.

Since Alan is currently the Executive Story Consultant for the new TV LONE GUNNE series, let me mention that Harlan Ellison -- who my mind turns to

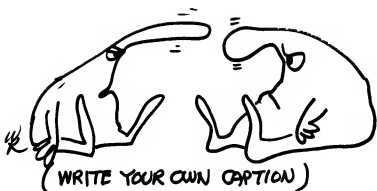
because he's also a creative consultant to that program -- manages to dramatize in the short story form ideas that other writers need a novel to handle -- for example, see his stories "Jefty is Five" and "Shatterday." I've also recently read -- and was very impressed by -- Robert Silverberg's "Born with the Dead." I also like his "Grimm" very much. Other writers I particularly admire for their short stories are Poul Anderson, Robert Shekley, and Theodore Sturgeon.

Among libertarian writers, I think Paul Wilson's AN ENEMY OF THE STATE is first rate, as is Neil Smith's PROBABILITY BROACH. Even though it hasn't been published in English yet -- if you read German it's been published in Germany -- Victor Koman's THE JEHOVAH CONTRACT is one of the best novels I've ever read. I don't read German, by the way; I read it in English, in manuscript. Bob Wilson and Bob Shea's ILLUMINATUS! is excellent, and one of these days the mainstream literary critics will discover it and lionize Wilson and Shea for their wit and style the way that they have with Kurt Vonnegut. Speaking of Vonnegut, I consider SLAUGHTERHOUSE FIVE and CAT'S CRADLE to be masterpieces. You can also put Ray Bradbury's FAREWELL 451 on the list. Let's also not forget C.M. Kornbluth's THE SYNDIC and Eric Frank Russell's THE GREAT EXPLOSION as examples of the best of libertarian satire.

Moving away from libertarians for the moment, I'm also a big fan of Arthur Hailey's novels -- AIRPORT, HOTEL and so forth. He doesn't concentrate on elegant style, but I love Hailey's integration of story and background detail. I'm a fan of Niven and Pournelle's INFERNO and got a great kick out of reading their latest collaboration, FOOTFALL. Greg Benford's TIMESCAPE is one of my favorites. Clarke's CHILHOOD'S END, Douglas Adams' HITCHHIKER books, I hope other authors whom I admire don't feel insulted that I've left them out -- I'm running out of space.

SFR: In my interview with L. Neil Smith (SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #54), I couldn't resist asking about the importance of being Neil -- and more important, about the striking coincidence that the two of you have such similar looking names, and both began writing libertarian science fiction at about the same time. Has the similarity caused any problems? Do readers unfamiliar with your work tend to confuse the two of you?

SCHULMAN: All the time. A reviewer in a Canadian Libertarian Party newsletter took a swipe at J. Neil Schulman, author



of THE PROBABILITY BROACH -- I was never able to find out who they were really attacking. I was introduced at a speech I was giving as "L. Neil Smith." After the MC had it pointed out to him that I wasn't L. Neil Smith but J. Neil Schulman, he apologized then said that, in any case, he was introducing the author of THE PROBABILITY BROACH. I didn't write that book, which I'm sorry about since I think it's terrific.

I decided to use my middle name, Neil, when I was sixteen, along about the time that Neil Armstrong took his stroll on the moon. L. Neil Smith tells me he's always been called Neil -- that he wasn't called by his first name, Lester, to avoid confusion with other Lesters in his family tree.

SFR: Since you've revealed what the L. in L. Neil Smith is, would you care to tell us what the J. in your name stands for?

SCHULMAN: Joseph.

SFR: Turning now to THE RAINBOW CADENZA, let's get into its main theme. Lasegraph, in your acknowledgments at the end of CADENZA you gave credit to Ivan Dryer as the Father of Lasegraph and to Dr. Elsa Garmire as the Mother -- along with many others in the field. How did you get interested in the laser art form in the first place?

SCHULMAN: My first exposure to the laser as an art form was in 1974, when I attended a performance of LASERUM at the Hayden Planetarium in New York City. I sensed from the first performance I saw -- and still think -- that this has the potential of being an art form with the impact of music itself -- that it is, in effect, music which reaches us through the eyes instead of the ears. I also thought immediately that for this to happen, the artists will have to compose by eye alone, rather than choreographing their visual compositions to aural music.

The reason for this is that any art form has to be internally thematic -- it can't be dependent on an outside art form for its own form and power. For commercial reasons, this isn't practical to do yet, but I think it will happen someday, and after the art form has developed an identity of its own in silence, then I think it will be mature enough to "marry" the aural message. I show this happening in RAINBOW CADENZA, with the division between classical lasegraphy performed in silence and roga, which is performed with musical accompaniment.

By the way, since there is some

confusion about it, both "lasegraphy" and "roga" are terms I invented. Before I came up with these terms, the word "laser" was not any generic term to describe the laser projection art form, since LASERUM is a trademark referring to the productions of Laser Images, Inc., of which Ivan Dryer is currently the Chairman, and Elsa Gamirre was one of the original founders.

There are, also by the way, many other outfits doing laser concerts around the world -- it's just that LASERUM was the first commercially successful one and -- in my opinion -- the best.

Anyway, the first thing I wanted to do when I saw LASERUM was to go to work for the company as a performer, but I found out that you need a background both as a musical instrumentalist and in electronics, since the laser performers go on the road and have to be able to fix the electronic instrument as well as play it. I didn't have the electronics background necessary, so I've had to content myself for the moment with theorizing about the medium, and discussing my theories with the actual technicians, composers and performers. I've gotten some good reactions to my theories, but none of them are ready to give up perform with laser yet.

SFR: Lasegraphy as a new art form that is beginning to evolve is one thing -- writing a novel around the idea of how it might actually evolve is another. When -- and how -- did you first begin to think of writing a novel on the idea?

SCHULMAN: I thought about writing about the future of the art form from the beginning. But the trouble was that Ivan Dryer was very secretive about the patents on the laser projection system they had developed, and I couldn't find out how it was done. So I was held up for quite a while in writing about it. Then I remembered something Heinlein had written in his short story "We Also Walk Dogs."

In Heinlein's story, a company needs to have an anti-gravity device, and there's only one physicist who might be able to come up with the theoretical breakthrough to deliver it to them. The only trouble is that he's not interested in the problem. So one of the company's executives remembers Mark Twain thought that if you really need something from someone, find out what they want more than anything else, get hold of it, and offer to trade. This executive finds out that the good physicist is an admirer of a particular priceless Chinese vase called the Flower of Forgetfulness, gets it, and offers to trade. It works -- the physicist gets his priceless vase and the executive gets anti-gravity.

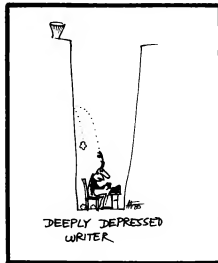
So I looked into what Ivan Dryer wanted, and it turned out to be publicity for his company. I immediately phoned OMNI, got an on-the-spot assignment to do an article on LASERUM, and asked Ivan Dryer. He gave me the rights to his outfit for a week, and OMNI paid me to do the research for my novel. Unfortunately, the editor who bought the piece got fired and OMNI never ran the article, but I imagine that the publicity RAINBOW CADENZA has created for LASERUM more than compensated Ivan for his time and trouble.

SFR: Your fictional lasegraphy rather closely parallels the development and history of classical music. How much were you influenced by your father as a

musical model and/or your mother as an artistic model (no pun intended)?

SCHULMAN: I was influenced a lot by my parents' musical and artistic backgrounds. When my character Wolfgang Jaeger rants and raves against atonal music, this reflects theories I developed based on conversations I had with my father. As a matter of fact, I discussed theories of music with my father quite a bit when I was trying to come up with a general theoretical background for lasegraphy. The visual component comes not only from discussing art with my mother, but also from my having done a lot of art photography when I was in my teens -- this reflects influence from both my parents, since I learned photography from my father and used it to do experimental photography at the artists' workshop where my mother was studying painting at the time.

Let me take this opportunity to brag about something few people have noticed in RAINBOW CADENZA: that in order to project the future of an art form that -- before I came to it -- had no theory of why it worked, I had to come up with a "Unified Field Theory" of Music and Art. What I finally decided is that music and art is, in essence a ten-



sion dialectic akin to the sexual reproduction drive -- it was this observation that made writing a book about art, on the one hand, and sexual behavior, on the other hand, a thematic whole.

In all art, tension is created then released, by thesis, counter-thesis, synthesis. In music, this is accomplished with dissonance resolving to consonance, through tension created by tonic, dominant, and subdominant, and minor scale to major scale. Martha Graham's theory of modern dance relies on contraction and release. In drama and literature, there is "doubt of intent" leading to "resolution of intent." Even painting and sculpture -- which are static media -- draw the eye in such a way to create tensions then release it -- the human eye itself provides the necessary movement dialectic.

You might even consider that genetically the human reproductive drive operates under these artistic rules, with the genetic code of one parent as thesis, the genetic code of the other parent as

counter-thesis, and the child's unique genetic code as synthesis. If I can steal a label from Nathaniel Branden's theory of psychology, I could easily refer to this dialectic theory as the Bio-centric Theory of Art.

There have been bits and pieces of this idea throughout all art and musical history, but I never saw anybody put it together before as a unified, all encompassing theory, and I never saw anybody else apply that theory immediately to a brand-new art form and to see if the theory works.

SFR: THE RAINBOW CADENZA also features a second major theme that gives the novel a satirical dimension that was missing in ALONGSIDE NIGHT. I'm referring, of course, to the Peace Corps, in which young women of the future insure world peace by serving as state sponsored prostitutes, paralleling the present military in ludicrous detail. Would you like to defend, identify, or explain this idea?

SCHULMAN: RAINBOW CADENZA started out by asking the question if parents who were willing to have their sons drafted to go to war to have their asses shot off would be willing -- if the same utilitarian rationale was given -- to have their daughters drafted to have their asses banged. If my previous sentence shocks and revolts you, then you'll know how shocking and revolting I find the draft for any purpose.

It was not necessary -- when I came up with that metaphor -- for me to convince myself that this is a possibility in the real world -- as you say, it can be taken as satire. However, I'm not at all convinced that given the right circumstances this couldn't really happen. Certainly sexual slavery is quite common throughout history -- is quite common throughout much of the world today -- and I have little problem accepting the possibility that if the state can nationalize boys to fight, that they couldn't nationalize girls to fuck.

As for the future history I give as a rationalization for the Peace Corps in RAINBOW CADENZA -- that there are by that time seven men for every woman -- I'd like to point out that until last year this was already happening in the People's Republic of China, where there are still entire villages with a 6-1 or 7-1 ratio of boys to girls under age six or seven.

This happened because of the Chinese government's birth control policy, which until last year -- when the Chinese government finally wised up -- limited a family to one child. This policy was enforced by the death penalty, as the execution of a doctor who reversed a woman's sterilization demonstrated. Since a Chinese family is legally allowed to have one child, the economic reality was that a boy will grow up to work on his parents' farm, while a girl will grow up to marry and work on someone else's farm.

So for the half-dozen years this policy was enforced the Chinese were "exposing" their female infants -- that's a polite way of saying they murdered them at birth. Under the new policy, if the first child is a female, the Chinese government says it's okay to have a second child, so a family can try for a boy.

But it is easy to imagine that if the Chinese government had not changed their birth control policy that in fif-

teen or twenty years would have lived to see a world where the Chinese "solved" the problem of having many more young men than young women by drafting what few women they had left into a "Peace Corps" of their own. Alternatively, the young Chinese men might simply have invaded wherever they could and stolen the women outright. Perhaps the second would have led to the first.

Considering that tried-and-true technology now exists for pre-conception sex-selection, considering the many other situations that can lead to a serious sexual imbalance, considering a Middle East and Far East that still respects males more than females -- I am no longer willing to bet that in RAINBOW CADENZA I was writing satire.

SFR: Joan Darris, CADENZA's protagonist, must deal with her budding Laseregraphy talent, family problems with her older sister/mother clone, and with her induction into the Peace Corps all at the same time. Surely this must also have some autobiographical roots, allowing for the fictionalizing and extrapolation involved. Was this one closer to home than ALONG-SIDE NIGHT?

SCHULMAN: You really toss the word "autobiographical" around loosely -- so loosely that I'm not sure what you mean. Considering that the main character of RAINBOW CADENZA is female (I'm not), I'm not rich (I wasn't), has a jealous older sister who's a twin of her mother (I don't), spends five years living in an O'Neill colony (I haven't), is drafted (I wasn't) and spends her life studying, composing, and performing an art form that hasn't gotten out of its infancy yet, I wonder just what you think is autobiographical.

You want to know everything that's autobiographical in RAINBOW CADENZA? The incident where five-year-old Joan Darris is sent to the principal's office because she refuses to write on account of her sweaty hands is autobiographical. That's it. Everything else is made up out of whole cloth.

Certainly I chose themes that are important to me and my life. Certainly feelings and ideas which I expressed by characters in the books are real -- though I have to be careful when I say and feel things which are the diametric opposite of my own thoughts and feelings. Even Wolfgang Jaeger -- through whom I expressed my own artistic and political parts from my own feelings when he is too narrow to understand Joan's appreciation of popular culture.

However, I'll let you off the hook by admitting that you correctly perceived that RAINBOW CADENZA is a more personal statement for me regarding my feelings on art, music, philosophy and religion than my first novel was.

SFR: I understand RAINBOW CADENZA will become a mass-market paperback from Avon in the spring of 1986 -- at the same time that the laser concert LASERIUM PRESENTS THE RAINBOW CADENZA is released in this country and England. This sounds like a multi-media first. Are you excited about it?

SCHULMAN: Thanks for the plug. Yes, I'm excited about it. I worked for a long time to arrange for a simultaneous release and co-promotion of LASERIUM and show based on RAINBOW CADENZA and the publication of the American paperback -- New English Library came out with a British

trade paperback edition in December, 1984

It would make me very happy if everyone who enjoys LASERIUM would pick up a copy of the paperback and see what I project for the future of that art form, and I equally hope that everyone who likes my novel goes to a LASERIUM show and sees how exciting that art form is when performed live. I do the best I can in words to give the impression of seeing a performance, but the map is not the territory, and you can't really know what I'm talking about until you see it.

The show is supposed to be opening in spring, 1986 in Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Diego, Seattle, Portland, Denver, Pittsburgh, Calgary and London -- perhaps other cities later. Anyone interested in seeing it -- or getting group discounts -- should write to:

Laser Images, Inc.
6907 Havenhurst Avenue
Van Nuys, California 91406

Tell them I sent you.

SFR: I understand you're now doing a couple of scripts for the revived TWILIGHT ZONE series on CBS TV. How did this come about? How soon will your stories be aired?

SCHULMAN: As of today, I've completed two scripts for the TWILIGHT ZONE entitled "Profile in Silver" and "Colorblind." Neither had gone into production yet so



I can't say when they'll be on, but it could be as early as fall, 1985. Keep your eyes peeled -- I've read half a dozen of the TWILIGHT ZONE scripts, and seen two of the episodes, and it's going to be some of the best stuff to hit the tube in the history of the medium.

The script assignments came about because I'd shown an outline for "Profile in Silver" -- a time-travel story about the Kennedy assassination -- to Alan Brennert a few years ago, and he commissioned me to write it for TWILIGHT ZONE when he became the show's Story Consultant. I later pitched Alan "Colorblind" -- a story about racism -- which resulted in a second assignment.

SFR: What are you doing next in the way of novels?

SCHULMAN: To be honest, I'm not doing anything in the way of novels at the moment. Part of the reason for this is my personal disillusionment with the state of the publishing industry today, and the trouble I've had with both of my novels. This may explain my interest in writing for TV and film at the moment: film and TV people are ultimately no more destructive of a writer's creative energies

than book editors, and TV and film pay writers much, much better. Shall I give some examples?

ALONGSIDE NIGHT was published twice, once in hardcover by Crown, once in paperback by Ace. In hardcover, the marketing people wanted to change the title to 1999, and threatened to ignore the book unless I agreed to the title change. When I asked why this was so important, I was told by the marketing director: "Numbers in titles help sell books." This asshole actually believed that it was the number in the title of Orwell's classic that made it sell so well. Anyway, considering that the morose SPACE: 1999 was still on the air in reruns, I refused. I actually turned their word and ignored the sales potential of a book with advance endorsements from Anthony Burgess, Nobel laureate Milton Friedman, and Dr. Thomas Szasz, as well as early rave reviews in PUBLISHERS WEEKLY and the LOS ANGELES TIMES BOOK REVIEW.

To make matters worse, the book was "orphaned" before publication -- that means that the editors who bought it were no longer at the company when the book was published. Consequently, nobody at the company cared about the book at the point of publication. The result was lack of distribution -- so bad that when the book was advertised in the LOS ANGELES TIMES BOOK REVIEW by B. Dalton as a Christmas special, the B. Dalton chain had no copies of the book to sell. The same thing happened later when I appeared nationally on RUFF HOUSE with Howard Stern -- I actually had letters forwarded to me from people who saw me on the show but couldn't find the book in any bookstores. Consequently, sales figures were lousy and Crown failed to get an offer on paperback rights.

I waited for them to revert rights to me, then had three offers immediately. I took the one from Susan Allison at Ace. Susan did an excellent job of packaging the paperback as an Ace lead title, but then the entire company was orphaned out from under me: Ace was sold to Berkley Books a month before publication. Out of a million copies of well over 100,000 paperbacks, only 35,000 copies of ALONGSIDE NIGHT were marked as sold. Since these were disappointing figures, Berkley reverted the rights to me. What Berkley failed to take into account was that in the last days of Ace, the Ace sales representatives were selling their books under the counter at huge discounts, figuring this was the only way they could get any money out of Ace. Their fears were justified: Berkley forced the entire 150-person Ace sales force. Also, wholesalers -- worried that they might never get paid by the defunct company -- were stripping books for credit before they even distributed them. Thus, again, my book never had a chance to reach the mass-market of readers who might have wanted it.

RAINBOW CADENZA also had its publishing company destroyed before publication: it was under contract to the Wyndham books division of Simon & Schuster, which had paid me a substantial advance on the book. After the book was given final acceptance, Simon & Schuster dissolved the entire company, and sixty Wyndham books scheduled for publication were handed over to editors in-house at Simon & Schuster who had neither the time nor interest to do anything useful with them. Simon & Schuster published RAIN-

BOW CADENZA with a cover displaying a title so small that it can't be read without a magnifying glass and no advertising -- not one dime. Not even when it got rave advance reviews in PUBLISHERS WEEKLY, LIBRARY JOURNAL and BESTSELLERS.

Not even when -- through a publicist I hired with my own money -- LASER-IUM had agreed to do the RAINBOW CADENZA Laserium show in 1983 with a major co-promotion and advertising budget, and rock star Sammy Hagar had agreed to provide original rock music for the show. Simon & Schuster would not even answer the letters from my publicist, from my agent, from LASER-IUM, or from Sammy Hagar's manager. So, instead of receiving the sort of publicity that makes best-sellers for free, Simon & Schuster ignored the book. Consequently, the book sold around three thousand copies in hardcover, and Simon & Schuster sold the British rights to New English Library, who came out with a good-looking trade paperback edition -- and then proceeded to publish it without a dime of advertising.

To continue: I wrote a one-hundred page treatment for a third novel to be titled ALL THE KING'S HORSES. This is a comedy of what happens when the Princess of Wales comes to the U.S. on a goodwill tour with her eight-year-old oldest son who's heir after the Prince of Wales to the throne of Britain, and while they're here the Princess decides to file for divorce and child custody. My treatment was written in the form of a movie treatment, because I'd already sold the movie rights to Herb Jaffe's Vista Films. Herb has made such pictures as TIME AFTER TIME, DEMON SEED and THE WIND and THE LION. Vista also has a successful feature out this summer (1985) called FRIGHT NIGHT.

My agent sent my already-sold-to-the-movies treatment out to New York publishers with copies of my two previous books. We got universally rejected by publishers who said, "I'll make a good movie but can this screenwriter Schulman write a novel?" Other editors said, "Schulman's two previous books are science fiction -- how can we know whether he can write a real novel?" Another editor said, "Satire doesn't sell."

Am I missing something here? Are publishers really in the business of selling books, or do they really like losing money? At the time we started, Princess Di was on the cover of every magazine in the world. She still is. Is there a conspiracy to suppress my work, or are publishers really that stupid? Perhaps there's hope in the sale of RAINBOW CADENZA to John Douglas at Avon. This gentleman has demonstrated excellent taste by the only criteria I care about: he wants to buy my work. Perhaps Avon will be smart enough to give him the sort of budget given to science fiction at Bantam, Berkley, and Tor. As for the editors who don't want to buy my work -- I paraphrase Colonel Jack Crockett -- "They can go to Hell -- I'm going to Hollywood."

SFR: God -- what a horror story! But it's not that unusual, alas, and it raises an interesting point. Libertarians like to blame all our ills on the State, but what you're describing is good old private enterprise in action. The bureaucrats here are capitalists, not socialistic statisticians, but they do just as much damage. This leads me to Wilgus'

Law: All systems are good. Do you agree that our problems are often inherent in organized human industry and/or the human psyche, and not just the fairly superficial "gov'tment"?

SCHULMAN: If you're going to ask technical questions about libertarian theory, then I have to give technical -- and wordy -- answers. So please bear with me -- I will say why I think the publishing industry is so fucked up, and what I think can be done about it.

To start off with, libertarian economics doesn't say that just because someone works for a private enterprise that they're good and wise and just because someone works for a public enterprise that they're venal and stupid. What libertarian economics says is that there are two fundamental ways of getting what you want from other people. One way is without a person's consent. This is the way of the robber and the way of the ruler -- the only difference between them is that the ruler creates the illusion of his or her victim's consent through flim-flams about "social contracts" and "democratic institutions." The other fundamental way is with a person's consent. This is the way of the merchant. With that said, let's get to specifics.

WRITERS BLOCK # 2



We're living in a social system that's a complicated mixture of freely chosen arrangements and forced arrangements, and the institution that's the best example of that is the modern corporation. A corporation is a joint-stock company that operates partly through free trade and partly through coercion. The company operates under the rules of free trade insofar that no one can be forced to buy its product, and no one can be forced to work for it. However, there are all sorts of cases where the government intervenes in order to grant special privileges to a company or to restrict it -- in both cases the government ends up in control, and the company becomes a remote unit of government. Privileges, first.

First of all, the government grants -- to those persons calling themselves a corporation -- the privilege of creating an imaginary person, and having this imaginary person be the only one answerable for the actions of the actual persons who run the company. This allows people to operate huge organizations beyond what they can see directly, without worrying about the personal consequences.

Second, the government grants members of the corporation the privilege of

having their own personal property be exempt from any claim made against the corporation -- this is called "limited liability."

In effect, the government grants people calling themselves a corporation immunity against being personally sued for any damaging results of their personal actions. And, because of this grant of immunity, money that would have been spent on insuring liabilities can be used instead for new investments -- for one corporation to buy out another corporation, for example.

This removes much of the market pressure that would keep the size of a company down -- it raises the practical "economy of scale" of a company -- and allows corporate organizations to grow to the size and complexity of bureaucratic government. And once a company has the privileged immunities of a government, it is no longer subject to the bureaucracy like a government, then it tends to act more like a government than like a private company.

And this is precisely how we see corporate people acting -- like bureaucrats. They avoid risks, they cover their asses, they suck up to their superiors while plotting to take their jobs, and they are concerned with making a product worthwhile or profitable only to that small extent that it will grant them increased power in the corporate structure.

Now, I also mentioned that the government puts restrictions on corporations -- as I said, this doesn't have anything to do with the public good, but only because it's another way of putting the government bureaucrats in the company's driver's seat. One of the restrictions placed on corporations by government is the set of anti-trust laws. Having first removed the market pressures that would keep the size of a company down, the government then steps in and arbitrarily tells the corporations how large they can be.

And this is precisely what happened several decades ago with the publishing industry. It used to be that a publisher would publish books, and sell its books in its own bookstores. By doing this a publisher could control how long it could keep its books on the bookstore shelf, how long it would take for a particular book to find its readership, and how much time it would take to establish the career of one of its authors.

It was expected, in those days, that once a publisher found a talented writer, the publisher would develop the author, book by book, over a long period of time. So the publisher would determine which books got displayed in bookstores were the judgments of the editors who read the books and decided if they were any good or not. Then the government stepped in with anti-trust, and forced publishing companies to sell their bookstores to independent firms, thus somewhat restrictive of free trade.

Now, since publishers could no longer control the distribution and sales end of their product, they had to publish books that not only would appeal to the general public, but to that much smaller group of buyers for bookstores. So everything in publishing shifted towards publishers -- the sort of books that bookstores would buy and display. Now, unlike editors at a publishing house, book-

store buyers don't have time to read the books they sell -- they have to rely on short pitches by a publisher's sales representative.

A buyer hears a short synopsis and sees a mock-up cover. Any book which can't interest a bookstore buyer in a sentence or two won't be ordered or prominently displayed -- and there goes the whole ball of wax when it comes to literature. Literature is, by its nature, subtle and complex -- it can't be explained in a sentence or two. So books that get ordered are those that can fall into tried-and-true categories -- that can be sold without having to explain anything. Bookstores are -- literally -- judging books by their covers, and the sales record of a book has little to do anymore with what's inside.

With paperbacks the situation is even more disruptive, since they're distributed the same way as magazines. Put them on the shelf for a month, then rip off the covers of the unsold ones for credit and put out next month's batch.

It used to be that bookstores would shelf books according to publisher. Then -- because covers became more important than the writing -- bookstores started shelving them according to category -- shelve mysteries together, romances together, science fiction together. And because bookshelves became round holes, any books which were square pegs became virtually unpublishable -- and there goes literature again. Bookstores were only interested in buying books that would obviously go onto one of these shelves.

So books started being published not because they were original, or worthwhile, or insightful, but because they were like every other book on that shelf. This was the death of literature -- the death of books primarily as a medium of enlightenment -- and the beginning of publishing as primarily a medium of junk entertainment. Just as you can sell a lot more Big Macs than you can sell Veal Cordon Bleu, you can sell a lot more Sword and Sorcery epics than novels that have nothing else going for them than a good story, original ideas, unusual characters, and elegant prose.

Now, add into that conglomerates like MCA owning publishing companies, publishers having to organize advertising and publicity for a book without being able to control distribution, and the cut-throat corporate game of musical chairs whereby editors are rarely at a company long enough to see a book through from purchase to publication -- and you have a formidable obstacle to the publication of worthwhile books.

So don't tell me that the publishing industry is free enterprise. The market has been completely distorted by government intervention. The government, by its anti-trust action against publishers, in effect performed a lobotomy on the publishing industry.

In my darker moments I even suspect that the murder of original literature was the purpose of the anti-trust action -- the first place in original literature tends to make people think and question, and thinking, questioning people are what government bureaucrats are most afraid of.

Since I've been descriptive of the ills of the publishing industry, I'll be

prescriptive also. I don't see the rebirth of literature happening until someone figures out how, in a big way, to get control over both ends of publishing at the same time -- production and distribution. This will have to bypass the entire structure of book publishing and distribution as it exists today.

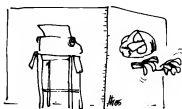
Perhaps, when home computers and telephone bulletin boards become as common as TV sets, authors will simply license their works to whoever wants to buy them, cutting out all the middle men. In that case, the job of the agent, editor and reviewer might all be done by the same person -- someone whose reputation for taste people trust -- and a "publisher" will be someone who agrees to advertise someone's novel for a percentage of the licensing fees.

However, I suspect that the current FBI attacks on computer bulletin boards are precisely because the bureaucrats are afraid that this might actually happen.

SFR: In a review of CADENZA in NEW LIBERTARIAN Jan Bogstad says that the book was marketed as a mainstream novel. Sounds like that was by default, rather than by design. But it raises the question of publishing genre vs. mainstream. Which would you prefer for your own books?

WRITER'S BLOCK

#3



SCHULMAN: The marketing of RAINBOW CADENZA as mainstream, rather than as science fiction, was both by default and by design -- my design.

The current fracturing of the fiction market, as I've just described it, left me with two unsatisfactory choices but one of them less unsatisfactory than the other. In writing RAINBOW CADENZA I tried to make it a good novel. That means I thought it was important that it had all the things that make a novel worthwhile: new ideas, fully-drawn characters, interesting plot, psychological insight, philosophical questions, and so forth. I'll leave it to my readers how well they think I've succeeded in this, but that's what I was trying to do.

But the idea of genre means that only one of these things is supposed to be focused on. If you want to focus on plot, you write a mystery -- it gets shelved with the mysteries alongside Agatha Christie. You write a book that takes place in the future -- it's science fiction, and you're on a shelf with Larry Niven. You write a book that focuses on characters and their psychology -- it's

a mainstream novel, and you're on a shelf with Phillip Roth. You write a novel that treats philosophical issues, it gets shelved in the religious or metaphysical section alongside Carlos Castaneda and C.S. Lewis.

But I don't see any point in writing a novel unless I can try to do all these things. So, by default, I decided that my book had to be labeled mainstream even though this would cut me off from mystery readers who like a good plot, and science fiction readers who like reading about the future, and readers who like playing around with philosophy.

My main consideration was that the only books that get taken seriously by the critics and academics whose influence is felt in the publishing industry -- the people who decide if an author's work is "important" -- won't take seriously anything except hardcover books marketed as mainstream. And if an author gets labeled as a "genre" writer, that author can kiss goodbye the possibility of being taken seriously.

Now, a lot of my fellow authors will say, "Screw the critics and the academics -- all I care about is sales figures." And there's a certain appeal in that attitude -- sales figures imply that people are reading you. However, I'm in this business not only to make money but also because I want to generate interest in certain ideas I hold important -- and, frankly, even science fiction readers -- who tend to like reading about far-out societies -- are very conservative when it comes to new ideas. There are also an awful lot of science fiction readers who think of ideas purely as games -- they don't think they have any application back in the real world.

So I don't want to restrict myself to any particular genre. Too many people with whom I feel I can communicate through my books -- people who are interested in things and ideas I'm writing about -- won't go to a shelf marked science fiction, and won't read a book labeled science fiction. In this case, the science fiction label on the spine of a book is more "watchful dragon" that I'm trying to get by.

Let me also make clear that I despise the tendency of bookstores and publishers only to market books that fit into safe, pat formulas. And I pity the writers who are so hungry to get into print that they suppress whatever original ideas come out of their skulls and imitate any hack who sold well last year. This is organized murder -- in the case of writers it's suicide -- against anything even slightly original -- anything that crosses genre boundaries.

Somebody should tell these people -- and I guess it's going to be me -- that all their precious genres were original once, and that next year's genre is last year's original work. Before there were shelves of mysteries, Poe had to invent the detective story. Before time travel became a staple on science fiction shelves, Mark Twain had to write A CONNECTICUT KINSMAN. Before there were shelves of fantasies, KING ARTHUR'S COURT had to invent the romance. Before there were shelves of mysteries, Margaret Mitchell had to write GONE WITH THE WIND. I doubt you'd find sword-and-sorcery on shelves without the original work done by Robert Howard and J.R.R. Tolkien.

Suppose THE RAINBOW CADENZA were to

become a bestseller and someday entire sections of bookstores had to be filled with books about women getting drafted into public whorehouses? It would serve them right.

SFR: Another idea in THE RAINBOW CADENZA that we haven't touched on is the Touchables. This is the outcaste class that is subject to rape and murder by citizens and organized gangs by the idle rich and police. This seems more far fetched than leslasography or the Peace Corps to me. Do you think such regression to the bad old days is very likely?

SCHULMAN: The idea of Touchables came about for a number of different reasons, within the context I created in RAINBOW CADENZA.

First, let me say precisely what Touchables are within the Earth society of 2167 that I show. Touchables simply are people who have been convicted of a felony serious enough to warrant a life sentence. But instead of locking felons up in prisons for life, the government allows them to remain free, under the following conditions: Touchables are not allowed to own property, or to work in a profession. Touchables must wear red cloaks -- identifying them as Touchables -- whenever they are in public. A male who has been convicted of rape -- in addition to being declared Touchable -- has his penis surgically removed. And, between dusk and dawn, it is legal to rape any Touchable so long as you have a license from the government for hunting them.

I refine this a bit in the story -- by describing a universal identification system involving brainprints and radio scanning systems, so you can scan someone and see if they're a Touchable or not -- but that's the essence of it. So, to start off with, you can't talk about Touchables being another caste or class unless you're willing to speak the same way about convicted felons serving life sentences in prison today.

Now, I came up with this idea of a society dealing with its felons this way for a number of reasons.

The first was that inasmuch as there would be a strong natural tendency for women in that society to evade the draft or desert the Peace Corps, there would be an equally strong counter-pressure. So they make draft evasion and desertion a life-sentence felony, and instead of allowing a woman to go to prison -- where she might manage to avoid being raped -- the government in effect says to a woman, "If you won't be raped voluntarily for three years -- where it can be monitored and kept free of additional violence -- you will be fair game for any sort of rape every night, for the rest of your life."

Also, under this system, felons no longer are supported by tax revenues, and the "public" which is supposed to have been damaged by them gets the benefits of reparation by using them as sex objects -- remember, this is a very sexually frustrated society I'm portraying. This is what economists today call "efficient justice."

But one of the most important things I wanted to show through this system is that once people grant the premise that a government has the right to decide on laws, then they've given away

all their rights to the government -- no matter what a constitution says -- because the people in the government can now decide to "withdraw the protection of the law" from anyone who breaks one of their laws. You'll note that this is what the government does today to anyone who serves more than a year-and-a-day in prison -- they have their U.S. citizenship revoked, and all their "civil liberties" go with it -- for example, the right to associate with whomever they like, to bear arms, and so forth ... not that these rights are respected much anyway.

But just as important is that the government finds it necessary to remove the distinction between someone who commits an offense against the State and someone who commits an offense against another person -- both are labeled "criminals" or "felons," and people are taught to make no distinction between a tax evader and a murderer.

So in my story, the government declares both rapists and potential rape victims as criminals -- Touchables -- and tries to blind people to the fact that these people are, in fact, opposites.

Now, you ask me whether this is far-fetched, and ask whether "a reversal to the bad old days" is all that likely?



As I write this, a man named Paul Jacob is in solitary confinement in a federal prison in Dallas. He was convicted of refusing to register for the draft, and sentenced to five years -- though theoretically he'll be out sooner than that if they don't find an additional excuse to keep him in ... like refusing the involuntary servitude -- pardon me, "community service" -- they've sentenced him to for part of the five years.

I suggest you tell Paul Jacob that the fictional situation in my novel is more unlikely or worse than what we have today. But I recommend you tell him by telephone -- Paul's got a wife and a new baby that the government is keeping him away from, and in his place I'd lose my temper if someone told me that.

SFR: At about the time we're doing this interview (August 1985) indicted columnist William Safire did a piece entitled "Let's Legalize EVERYTHING" in which he mockingly calls for a National Courtessans Corps, similar to your Peace Corps, to help pay the deficit. This was an attack on "sanctioned" gambling and was done

tongue in cheek, of course, but Safire ends by invoking the "eradication of the evil of taxation." Would you legalize EVERYTHING and eradicate taxation if you were elected?

SCHULMAN: So maybe someone has read RAINBOW CADENZA after all, if it's gotten to the point where national columnists are joking about a National Courtessans Corps. And, of course, it would have to be the sort of blue-noise statist like William Safire who rips off someone else's idea to propagandize against freedom.

You ask, would I legalize everything and eradicate taxation if I were elected? How's that again? There are so many untested assumptions in that question I hardly know where to begin.

To begin with, the entire concept of "legal" and "illegal" only exists in the context of laws passed by a State, and since I advocate the abolition of all States, I'm obviously in favor of removing the context for your question in the first place. Your question is like asking a Hindu whether he's a Protestant or a Catholic -- the question doesn't allow for an answer.

The same for being "elected" to an office that would eradicate taxation. I suppose the only office that I could be elected to that would help eradicate taxation would be the chairman of the board of a private company that offers defense services to tax-resisters -- and inasmuch as I'm not aware of such a company, much less own stock in it, I can hardly run for the board of directors of it.

Let's put this whole thing in a context I can relate to.

Do I believe anyone has the right to interfere with another person, so long as that person is minding his or her own business? Hell, no!

Do I think a human being needs permission from society to exercise that freedom? Again hell, no!

Do I think the government has the right to restrict private gambling, private prostitution, private ownership of guns or liquor -- or to maintain a state monopoly of gambling, prostitution, guns, liquor, or anything else? Not only do I answer that, "Hell, no!" but my life is devoted to shouting exclamation points into the gut of people like William Safire who aren't happy so long as anyone is free to have a good time.

SFR: In your Prometheus Award acceptance speech you said that you wrote CADENZA to destroy an idea by reducing it to absurdity. Isn't this somewhat absurd about itself, in that every absurd idea known to man has been reduced by experts but they still manage to thrive? Besides, the idea you are attacking -- the rights of the individual being sacrificed for the greatest good of the greatest number -- is defensible, under some circumstances, even to anarcho-libertarians. Even if government is abolished, we'll still need to decide who has the right-of-way in traffic, for instance. Some individual rights will have to be sacrificed for the greatest good of the greatest number, sometimes, somehow. The key questions are, what rights and who decides, don't you agree?

SCHULMAN: The absurdity of the "greatest good for the greatest number" is the thought that there is such a thing as

"good" in any other context than the life of an individual human being. To paraphrase Ayn Rand, before one can ask if something is good, one first has to ask, "Good to whom, and for what?" Once the question is asked, then it becomes obvious that every individual has his or her own good, and there is no logical way to go from this premise to the idea that the good of one person -- or a group of such persons -- can be deduced as being a greater good than that of another person or group of persons.

And once one tries to impose some "universal good," one is left with nothing but a battleground whereby people are placing the good of one person or group at odds with that of another person or group, and all that will happen is that the strongest or most persuasive will win.

It is for this reason that I attack the concept of "the greatest good for the greatest number" as the single greatest threat to individual rights and individual liberty.

Perhaps, by making the analogy between drafting men to go to war and drafting women to be public sex slaves, I do open up the possibility that politicians who justify the first can manage to justify the second. Frankly, I think they could anyway.

But, I am writing to the sensibilities of people who don't think it's okay to draft women to be public sex slaves. I'm saying to them, "If you do not object to the military draft as a violation of individual rights, then you have deprived yourself of the means to object to the sexual draft."

What RAINBOW CADENZA makes graphically clear is that so long as "the greatest good for the greatest number" is used as a basis for organizing human institutions, then -- since the phrase has no objective meaning -- there is no evil that cannot be justified in its name.

And, in fact, the rulers of every repressive government -- communist, fascist, Nazi, democratic, republican, military dictatorship -- all claim to act in the best overall interests of the people, or the folk, or the will of the blood, or the common good.

It is this idea that must be defeated, for by the nature of reality they cannot act in the interest of anyone but themselves, no matter how noble they think they are being.

I do not think that the rights of the individual being sacrificed for the greatest good of the greatest number is logically or consistently defensible by any anarcho-libertarian. Fundamental human rights are never on the auction 'block.

Perhaps we need to make a clear distinction here between right (1) in the context of "unalienable right to life" and right (2) in the sense of "right-of-way."

Rights (2) in this context merely mean concessions, privileges, or trading arrangements that free human beings make with one another.

If someone told me -- in an anarcho-libertarian society -- that I had to give up my rights (1) in order to use their road, I would never voluntarily set foot on their road -- I'd use travel routes which merely wanted my money or my trade.

And if anybody came onto my property with demands for the sacrifice of any of my rights (1), I'd give them the only answer they deserved: "Over your dead body."

SFR: Finally, let me ask your opinion of the Libertarian Futurist Society, which gives the Prometheus Award. Do you think it will have much impact as far as encouraging the development of a libertarian outlook on a broader scale?

SCHULMAN: I think there is a great need for the propagation of libertarian ideas, and certainly I would not have chosen fiction as a medium for propagating such ideas if I did not think it worthwhile. So I am happy that there exists an organization such as the Libertarian Futurist Society that formally shares my values enough to have given me their Prometheus Award for this.

One of the drawbacks with trying to propagate your values to people who don't share them is that the people who don't share them are unlikely to give you an award for doing this. Because of this, I doubt I'll have a shot at the Hugo or the Nebula for a while, no matter how well my books start selling. So I'm happy that there was someone out there who thought well enough of what I'm doing to give me an award to put up on the wall of my office, which I can look at on those days when I wonder whether it's worthwhile going on.

As far as the award having an impact, if the LFS gets a track record of giving the Prometheus to books that are

good as literature, as well as being libertarian, then the LFS will be serving the interests of both libertarians and book lovers in general, and the Prometheus can become important.

But it certainly wouldn't hurt if someone like Alfred Nobel left his fortune to the LFS, so that the Prometheus Award could be worth a few hundred thousand dollars each time. If that happened, I wouldn't be surprised to see anarchist novels being written by Stanislaw Lem, Isaac Asimov, and Jerry Pournelle. And if the Prometheus Award got that rich, I might even write another libertarian novel, myself.

Any takers?

SFR: Thank you, Mr. Schulman.

AND THEN I READ...
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

The encyclopedia is basically A-Z, but there are extensive additional indexes: Animals, Birds, Insects...Demons...Gems...Geographical (Places of Phenomena)...Gods...Paranormal Phenomena (51 separate subtopics)...Periodicals...Plants and Flowers...Societies and Organizations.

The encyclopedia covers the occult, magic, miracles, witchcraft, and paranormal events previously thought supernatural. Famous and infamous individuals and personalities are included, with new entries covering recent events and new information, new people, new organizations and publications. The first edition entries have been reviewed and updated and rewritten as necessary.

Altogether, a very impressive effort. For the serious author in these fields, this encyclopedia is vital. For a library this encyclopedia is absolutely required, given the huge interest in this area.

The price is steep: \$245. a set. ISBN 0-81-3-0196-2.

TRUMPS OF DOOM By Roger Zelazny
Avon, \$3.50, Feb. 1986.

Ah, it's good to read a new Amber novel...to slide effortlessly under the spell of Zelazny's fiction.

This sixth Amber adventure features Merlin, Corwin's son.

Merlin, living in the shadow world we know as Earth, 1986, has escaped assassination attempts each April 30th for the past six years. The latest attempt leads to murder, mystery, sorcery, visits to the true center of reality, the kingdom of Amber...and all kinds of near-misses.

Alas, this is only the first part of another extended Amber series, but it's a gladness that Roger is doing Amber novels again.

HAI! YOU NEVER THOUGHT THE
FOPE WOULD HAVE HOT WATER
BLESSSED BY MARTIN LUTHER, DID
YOU?



ONCE OVER LIGHTLY

BOOK REVIEWS BY GENE DEWEESE

LIFEBURST
By Jack Williamson
Ballantine/Del Rey, \$2.95

The first contact between Earth's deceitful and warlike ruling family and the cons-old, multi-racial, pacifistic civilization that fills the "halo" that surrounds the solar system far beyond the orbit of Pluto is disastrous. Meanwhile, the Seeker, an extra-galactic, Berserker-like creature that feeds on radioactive metals, has established a "hive" in the asteroid belt, producing "children" that will be capable of destroying both civilizations. Finally, the "Black Companion," the twin black holes whose accretion-disk radiation wiped out the dinosaurs on its last approach 65 million years ago, is returning.

All of which barely scratches the surface of what is going on in Jack Williamson's latest novel. Everything in his meticulously developed universe -- Earth's future history, the alien civilizations, the human and alien characters, even the Seeker itself -- is fully developed, and there's room for at least another dozen novels in it. Williamson has been writing SF since 1928, and like Asimov and very few others, he just seems to get better year by year.

KELLY COUNTRY
By A. Bertram Chandler
DAW, \$3.50

The mind of John Grimes, a late 20th century SF writer, is sent back to observe the downfall of 19th century Australian rebel Ned Kelly through the eyes of Grimes' ancestor, a cohort of Kelly's. Instead of just observing, however, Grimes inadvertently intervenes, creating a history in which Kelly, instead of being executed as an outlaw, goes on to win Australia's independence and become its first hereditary president.

Chandler, an expert in both history and the military, provides fascinating historical details and speculations as well as an exciting story and well-done characters. **KELLY COUNTRY** is the last book Chandler completed before his death, and it is very probably his best novel ever.

BARNABY #s 1 AND 2. (WANTED: A FAIRY GODFATHER AND MR. O'MALLEY AND THE HAUNTED HOUSE) by Crockett Johnson
Ballantine/Del Rey, \$2.95 each.

BARNABY was a comic strip that ran from 1942 to 1952. It's about a little

boy (Barnaby), his egotistical, inept, free-loading fairy godfather (Jackeen J. O'Malley), and hordes of minor characters, including Bilharzia Ogre (of the Nuremberg Ogres), McNoyd the wisecracking invisible leprechaun, and Gus, a ghost that's terrified of haunted houses. The drawing is simple, the balloons chock full of typeset dialogue, and the humor is understated and quiet with occasional bits of offstage slapstick. Anyone who likes POGO or PEANUTS will undoubtedly like **BARNABY**, and I for one am looking forward to the remaining eight or ten volumes Ballantine is planning to publish. (Although I do hope they make the panels a bit larger next time; the tiny print, coupled with occasional over-inking, makes some of the balloons difficult to read.)

THE SCHOOL OF DARKNESS
By Manly Wade Wellman
Doubleday, \$12.95

That gentlemanly scholar of the occult, John Thunstone, is back, this time to participate in a university folklore symposium. Before long, however, we find that the university itself is more involved in black arts than it is in everyday folklore, and Thunstone's old enemy, Rowley Thorne, has been called back from the nether regions to which Thunstone cast him out during their last encounter.

As in previous Thunstone novels, the pace is relaxed and the narrative is, like Thunstone himself, a bit old-fashioned and even courtly, but it's still a lot of fun, an easy read, and a welcome, even refreshing, change from the gore and shock that fill so many novels of the supernatural these days.

THE PROTEUS OPERATION By James P. Hogan
Bantam Spectra, \$16.95

From a 1975 where John F. Kennedy is the U.S. President and the Nazis rule most of the rest of the world, a very special team is sent back to 1939 to try to keep Hitler from getting an atomic bomb in 1942 and winning the war. We learn only gradually just how special the team is, starting when the expected communications link between 1939 and 1975 cannot be established and later when it is learned that Hitler himself has for more than a decade been receiving help from a nearly Utopian 2025. It isn't giving too much away to reveal that the end result is a history very similar to

our own, and it's fascinating to see various puzzling events (the foulup that kept advance information about Pearl Harbor from reaching the right people, for instance) being explained in terms of help/interference from other times and other worlds.

The first half of the book, as the team contacts Churchill, Einstein, Roosevelt, Seiland and others, is gripping enough but moves a little slowly. The second two hundred pages, however, are the sort that keep you up till all hours just to finish them. (3:30 am in my own case) It may or may not be Hogan's best book overall, but it is certainly the most smoothly written, contains his best and most believable characters so far, and deserves a place on the best seller list.

THE INTELLIGENT UNIVERSE By Fred Hoyle
Holt, Rinehart & Winston, \$18.95

Hoyle, whose *Steady State Universe* has seen some hard times lately, here presents both old and new evidence for it and shows how the Big Bang has at least as many shortcomings and problems as *Steady State* is supposed to have. He goes beyond that, however, to show that there almost has to be some kind of intelligence working behind the scenes of our present universe, and then he indicates what that intelligence might be. His ideas are, of course, the stuff of which grand scale science fiction is made, but he argues for them with such knowledge and authority that they seem not only possible but virtually inevitable. He even proposes an eminently logical reason to explain why the *Steady State* has been attacked so vehemently at times and why the Big Bang is more readily accepted in a world with Hebrew/Christian bias than is the *Steady State*.

In short, **THE INTELLIGENT UNIVERSE** is the most fascinating and discussable book I've read this year, and if someone does not use it as the basis for a TV series like Carl Sagan's *COSMOS*, they're definitely missing a good bet.

PUBLICITY DIRECTORS, EDITORS,
PUBLISHERS, AUTHORS...ARE
URGED TO SEND BOOKS FOR REVIEW
TO GENE DEWEESE

2718 N. Prospect
Milwaukee, WI 53211

He reviews sf and fantasy for
THE MILWAUKEE JOURNAL as well
as SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW and
other magazines.

ALL THESE EARTHS By F.M. Busby
Bantam Spectra, \$2.95

First published in 1978, ALL THESE EARTHS is made up of four novelets about the Skip Drive, which can get you to the stars and back thousands of times faster than light. The only catch is, the chances are good that, in addition to having traveled several light years in space, you will also have traveled sideways into another time line and will therefore return to a different earth than the one you left. Woody Pearsall, for instance, the hero of the first novelet, returns to find that on this new earth, he died years ago, leaving his wife a grieving but suspicious widow.

In a couple of the stories, there's a bit too much straight alien worlds adventure for a parallel worlds freak like myself, but you can skim those parts without losing a lot. On the other hand, if you also like straight adventure, you are in for a double treat, since Busby is excellent at it, as he's proved in TO CAGE A MAN and several others.

NIGHTFLYERS By George R.R. Martin
Bluejay Books, Paperback, \$8.95

Two novelets and four shorter pieces make up this excellent 300-page collection. One novelet, "A Song for Iya," won the Hugo in 1975, but my own favorite is the other one, the title story, which alone is worth the price of the book.

In "Nightflyers" an instellar ship has been hired to take a group in search of the volcym, an ancient race which, according to legend, has for eons been spreading inexorably outward from the center of the galaxy in supermimetic, sublight craft. On board are a telepath, a telekineticist, the ship's mysterious and never-seen owner and others, and they are being murdered one by one. Beyond that, it's safe only to say that the secrets of both the volcym and the killer are eventually uncovered, along with other surprises.

"Nightflyers" is, all by itself, a first contact story with touches worthy of Arthur C. Clarke, a well-done murder mystery/adventure, and an occult horror/ghost story, not to mention being reminiscent of a science-fictional PSYCHO. All the elements are there, fitted neatly together with hardly a seam to be seen, and reading it was the most fun I've had with a Martin story since his science-fictional vampire epic, FEVER DREAM.

BAAA
By David Macaulay, Houghton Mifflin
Cloth, \$12.95; Paper \$4.95

In approximately 50 pictures and considerably less than a thousand words, the author/artist of CATHEDRAL, CASTLE, MOTEL OF THE MYSTERIES and others chronicles the rise and fall of Man's successor, the Sheep. Macaulay's pen-and-ink drawings are excellent as always, and his offbeat sense of humor takes a somewhat macabre turn. My favorite is, still, MOTEL OF THE MYSTERIES, but BAAA keeps looking better to me each time I skim through it.

CONTACT
By Carl Sagan
Simon & Schuster, \$18.95

A message containing 30,000 pages of blueprints for a mysterious machine is received from the star Vega. The machine is built, and the five people who climb into it are taken to visit the machine's designers, only to find that they, like the Overlords in CHILDHOOD'S END, are far from being the end of the line.

I bought CONTACT rather than wait and hope for a review copy, and I'm not sorry. It has its faults, and there are major portions that are reminiscent of other books, but it's still one of the most enjoyable of the year and deserves a spot on the Hugo and Nebula ballots.

On the negative side, the love story and the fanatics who oppose the building of the machine are never integral parts of the story but appear to have been included primarily to conform to the "best seller format." They simply never have much real effect on the central character, scientist Eleanor Arroway, or on the building of the machine. They just fade away and are never heard from again.

On the positive side, the books CONTACT reminded of -- CHILDHOOD'S END, THE LISTENERS and BEYOND THE BLUE EVENT HORIZON -- are all terrific books, and Sagan has handled the concepts as well as or better than anyone else ever has. Not only that, he has added some touches that are all his own, particularly in the ending, where he manages to give a spine-tingling sense of wonder to the mathematical values of transcendental numbers such as pi.



ALIEN COM. LOG

HUMAN ERROR
By Paul Preuss, TOR, \$14.95

In the not-too-distant future, computer microchips have been replaced by "biochips," artificially created, living, virus-like organisms which are, at creation, "programmed to learn." As might be expected, they learn far better and faster than their creators thought possible, and people everywhere are soon infected with -- or perhaps possessed by -- this potentially highly intelligent organism. HUMAN ERROR, however, is not another bioengineering-gone-wrong story. Nor, for that matter, is it another BLOOD MUSIC, the excellent Greg Bear novel in which more complex biochips destroy North America before the book is half over. HUMAN ERROR is much quieter, with more sympathetic central characters. In a way, it is reminiscent of the fifties movie, INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS, only turned upside down and given a mildly awesome though florid happy ending.



THE NAKED ID

THE PERSONAL JOURNAL
OF RICHARD E. GEIS

THE NAKED ID covers all my other interests, manias, obsessions...

THE NAKED ID #8 has just been published. It deals with the very severe arthritis in my neck and what has been done to it and about it. My doctor gets a black mark.

Yes, the state of the economy gets another working over.

Good news and bad news on the novel-writing front.

Much fun ripping into our cowardly congress.

Commentary on foreign affairs is even more fun---the hypocrisy reeks of delusion.

THE NAKED ID is published monthly (with a little fudging). \$1.00 per issue.

\$1.60 for overseas mail, per issue.

ALL ISSUES SENT FIRST CLASS
Make checks to Richard E. Geis.
POB 11408, Portland, OR 97211.

OTHER VOICES OTHER VOICES

THE CAT WHO WALKS THROUGH WALLS

By Robert A. Heinlein
Putnam, 382 pp., \$17.95

REVIEWED BY FERNANDO G. GOUVEA

The initial parameters are quite similar to those of Heinlein's last few books: our hero, Richard Ames aka Colin Campbell aka etc., is living a peaceful life when he suddenly finds himself embroiled in all sorts of complications and being chased by several unknown enemies. In this case, he is having dinner at a restaurant, and a man whom he does not know sits at his table, asks him to assassinate somebody, and is immediately and mysteriously killed. From then on, he is on the run, together with his wife Gwen Novak, whom he marries shortly after the initial incident.

As usual, Heinlein is highly inventive in devising a context for all this. In this case, the book opens on an orbiting colony near the moon, which is rather autocratically operated by a private company. The time is about one hundred and fifty years after the events described in *THE MOON IS A HARSH MISTRESS*, and the Luna Free State has degenerated into an oppressive bureaucratic state. In fact, this is a rather unpleasant future where the only hope seems to lie in the interstellar colonies (which are only mentioned in passing and which I will suggest that this is also the same universe of *FRIDAY*).

So far so good, and the first third of the book is quite readable (though a lot of the prose, especially the dialogs, are trademark late Heinlein). But Heinlein has decided to embark on a project of using all his past characters in one multidimensional universe (in other words, inconsistencies are explained in terms of several alternate universes), so that all is not what it seems. Gwen turns out to be a Somebody Else whom we have met before, and soon we have a Heinlein party in full swing, with Lazarus Long, Zeb Garter, Hilda Burroughs, Star, Manny O'Keefe and Jubal Harshaw all in attendance. (I must have left out a few there.) This of course changes the character of the book completely, and makes it much more of a typical late Heinlein production, on the lines of *THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST*. It is probably only semi-comprehensible to anyone who has not read a lot of Heinlein's work.

In the end, this turns out not to be as bad as other work Heinlein has done, but does not fulfill the promise of *FRIDAY* (I'm leaving *JOB* aside here because it is a fantasy and because it seems to me to have been written in response to a specific political situation, much as *STARSHIP TROOPERS*, and to my mind, shows it). It does, however, point out clearly that Heinlein has become so fascinated with his own characters and so taken with

the idea of having them all convene across the several time-lines that he will probably be writing books in this context for the rest of his career. This produces books that will appeal only to those similarly fascinated. It also short-changes the reader in that the very point of SF is to open new horizons and settings and ideas.

Finally, one should point out that the ending of the book, though not completely inconclusive, is open enough to make me feel unfairly treated. All in all, this is for those who (like me) would rather read an unsatisfying Heinlein than no Heinlein at all.

A DOOR INTO OCEAN

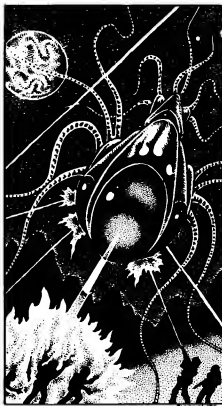
By Joan Slonczewski
Arbor House, 1986, 353 pp., \$17.95

REVIEWED BY DEAN R. LAMBE

In the distant future, long after the collapse of the first galactic empire, the perennial battle of the sexes pits the women of Shora against the "normal" humans of Valedon. A tale of two worlds, twin "moons" of a common star, *A DOOR INTO OCEAN* fleshes out a Zen koan of water vs. stone, yin against yang.

The conflict between the gentle, pastoral, "sharing" philosophy of the "lifesavers" of water-world Shora, and the "stoneshapers" of Valedon, opens with the problems of interplanetary trade. Mervyn the Impatient One, and her lovelasher, Usha, travel from their all-female planet to the cold cities of the heterosexual "Stone Moon" to share knowledge, to learn whether the Valans are truly human. Upon their return to Shora, the women are accompanied by the Lady Nisi, the only member of a Valedon trading family to attempt integration in to both societies. For reasons that even mystify Usha, Mervyn also convinces a young "malefreak," the stonecutter's son, Spinel, to live among them on their floating raft towns.

As the stone trade, the influx of "dead" technology, threatens the fundamental existence of the genetically-engineered ecology on Shora, many of the parthenogenetic women call for an end to outside contact, a closing of the door with Valedon. While Mervyn courts patience, the trade crisis escalates to outright war. Nisi's dominating former lover takes command of Shora, in the name of the ruling Patriarch. For the first time in their 10,000-year history, the violent women face those who have been named troops from Valedon. Added to Mervyn's pain in the resistance leadership role she neither seeks, nor



understands, is the love that blossoms between her daughter, Lystra, and the malefreak Spinel.

With lyrical style and firm control over her multiple-viewpoint presentation, Slonczewski continues to examine the fundamental themes of humanity with the skill that marked her first novel, *STILL FORMS ON FOXFIELD*, as extraordinary. A sure contender come award time, *A DOOR INTO OCEAN* ranks among the best that SF has to offer the thoughtful reader.

HEROES FOR HOPE: THE X-MEN
Marvel Comics #1, 12/85, 48 pp., \$1.50

REVIEWED BY ALMA JO WILLIAMS

All proceeds from this comic book are being donated to famine relief and recovery in Africa.

This comic is unique in that every two pages (four sides) have different writers, pencillers, inkers, etc., doing the story. The writers include Stan Lee, Ed Bryant, Harlan Ellison, Stephen King, George Martin, Ann Nocenti, Louise Simonson, Chris Claremont, etc. etc. to name a few. The artists include some of the old standards like Bernie Wrightson, John Buscema, Howard Chaykin, Richard Corban, John Byrne, etc. etc. For any one who wants to compare drawing styles at first-hand glance, this is the comic to get. I don't know how much your \$.75 donation will affect the African Famine Program, but how often do you buy comics for a worthy cause other than to provide paychecks for the writers and artists who labored to bring you a few colorful minutes worth of entertainment into your drab life. GET IT!!!

WEST OF EDEN

By Harry Harrison

Bantam, 453 pp., \$27 pp. glossary; Wrap-around jacket & 60 illos by David Sanderson; \$15.95

REVIEWED BY PAUL MCGUIRE

The current theory explaining the rapid end of the dinosaur age is that a meteor six miles in diameter struck the Earth, and among its disastrous effects, the ash and debris thrown into the atmosphere cut off the ultra-violet rays from the surface. What if that was the cause, but had never happened?

In the land WEST OF EDEN a saurian life form evolved into the niche held by Mankind. Intelligent, humanoid, two opposing thumbs per hand, roughly Yilanese, they call themselves the Yilanese. Their science has been devoted to genetic engineering. As in writings of Jack Vance and Richard E. Geis' ONE IMMORTAL MAN, much of what we build, they grow. And much of what we manufacture, they breed. The cloaks they wear and the rifles they carry are living creatures. An animal has even been bred for unobstructed organic lens so that it can be used as a microscope. In an example of a parallel creation with John Brunner's THE CRUCIBLE OF TIME, their large ocean ships are genetically adapted marine creatures. Marvelously inventive, the details of the customs, social structure, religion, politics, philosophy and psychology of the exotic Yilanese is unobtrusively woven through the narrative.

Climatic changes are destroying their cities and driving them north after retreating warmth. An ambitious Yilane named Vainte is sent to a new land to command the forces there who are growing a large city for her people to migrate to A.S.A.P. In the new land are new dangers, chief among them a clever, but murderous animal which speaks. They call themselves the Tanu, but we have labeled them Cro-magnon Man.

The novel is told from both Human and Yilane viewpoints. The main character is Kerrick. When still a young child, he was in the small Tanu hunting party which ventured far South and first encountered the colony of the machi, advanced Yilane. He was present for the incident that started a war of total annihilation between the two species. Not long after, Kerrick survives the massacre of his tribe and is taken to the Yilane city a prisoner.

Not only is the concept of lying unknown among the Yilanese, but they are incapable of it. As an experiment, Kerrick had been taught to speak the saurian language. When Vainte realizes that the boy can state as a fact something which is not a fact, he becomes a favorite of hers, and is embroiled in plots and gains status.

By the time he next encounters a human, Kerrick has all but for-

gotten his origins, yet a moment's rash act forces him to flee back to the Tanu tribes. His knowledge of the sciences, the way he understands humanity allows Kerrick to become a leader during the time of changes brought by the war of attrition. Using dinosaurs for mass transportation, as did the Pal-ul-donians, the human army of Yilane is sent against the gathering tribes. After that battle, the nomadic hunter Tanu makes exodus over the mountains with a new race of men, settled agrarians, are found. But Kerrick knows that the Yilane will never stop searching for them since their greatest passion is now to slaughter the last of the Human animals.

And you ain't read nothing yet. Those are only a very few of the highlights of this epic plot. Whatever you like in your reading, it is a smoothly written, serious writing, rip-roaring adventure, rich characterizations of both Human and non-Human, vivid experiences and perceptions, societies undergoing tumultuous change. About the only raw flaw is the finish being weakened by the threat plot of the left dangling, I presume for tying to a possible sequel.

WEST OF EDEN is Harry's blockbuster, a terrific read. You owe it to yourself not only to buy this book but to purchase it in hard-back. Even in a disposable age, this beautiful volume is a keeper.

A VISION OF BEASTS: CREATION

DESCENDING

By Jack Lovejoy
TOR, 1984, 222 pp., \$2.95

REVIEWED BY STEVE MILLER

Someone forgot to tell Jack Lovejoy that the pulp era is over, and in fact has been over for some decades now. Lovejoy is turning out stories perfect for the old days of FANTASTIC WONDER STORIES or even the old ARGOSY; it's hard to see a modern literary thought in the entirety of A VISION OF BEASTS: CREATION DESCENDING.

This is the second Lovejoy book I've read and there's been improvement. Lovejoy has gotten the hang of using dialogue now, though Derek the Hunter, the protagonist of A VISION OF BEASTS doesn't have all that much to say. Derek is the last hope of a lost band of people hidden deep in a Rocky Mountain cavern following a world-wide calamity. He thinks slowly, though he does read; his biggest asset is that he acts as a hero ought to act.

In fact, given the choice, Derek seems to prefer acting as a hero to anything else. He makes stands against the Gunks periodically in the book, singlehandedly holding 1) a bridge, 2) a cavern barricade, 3) an escape tunnel, while the rest of the people get away. If that's not heroic enough he's also been the sole hunter for the cavern group for some years

now, and is the only local inhabitant to have been outside for months. Oh, yes, he also has a dog with retractable claws, who is the mold of Zelazny's Bortan is somewhat more intelligent, more resourceful and generally larger than your average pooch. This dog is named Buck, after the real hero of THE CALL OF THE WILD.

I should point out that Derek the Hunter is somewhat socially aware. During the course of 222 pages he realizes that women might want to do more with their lives than stay in tiny cubbyholes and gratefully prepare the meat he brings home; his wife is, of course, the most beautiful woman in the caverns, wears little in the way of clothes and pleases him.

It's hard to feel really threatened when the bad guys -- the Gunks -- attack; Derek is just too good and too lucky, even when half of his people have been killed (and possibly eaten) by the baddies. When the Gunk's leader turns out to be a non-Gunk representing the Brotherhood of Diablo you know there's trouble; pretty soon you know Derek the Hunter will lead his people into the wilderness of the great outdoors.

Lovejoy, by the way, likes the "kix ex machina" device for saving cultures; he's used it in at least two books. In this book the kid is a genius who has been living in the caverns for years, has read philosophy and speaks like a professor. This kid saves the band, not Derek.

If this is Book One I guess we'll see Book Two sometime soon. This is a book to save for those nights when you just can't sleep or if you must have one more chance to read something that has true pulp-story tone and vocabulary.

UTOPIA HUNTERS

By Somtow Sucharitkul
Bantam, 256 pp., \$2.95

REVIEWED BY PAUL MCGUIRE

With their god-like powers, the High Inquest seeks out and destroys utopias. Although compassion is their most respected virtue they annihilate planets on mere whims or as part of games.

Much of UTOPIA HUNTERS was originally published as short stories by George Scithers in IASPM or AMAZING. Mr. Sucharitkul uses the device of weaving a framing story around and through them to create a novel in the manner as was Zena Henderson's PILGRIMAGE: THE BOOK OF THE PEOPLE or Silverberg's MAJESTY CHRONICLES, and with better results.

The universe here is as exotic as the worlds in Jack Vance's "The Moon Moth" and Kingsbury's COURTSHIP RITES. For example, a city is scattered across and within a whole planet and its moon and then the parts are connected via transporter disks so that one may only

THE TALES OF THE UNKNOWN

Edited by Sharon Jarvis, Saratoga, 163 pp., \$2.95

REVIEWED BY ALVA JO WILLIAMS

These are supposedly true stories of paranormal occurrences, a demonic com-

jurition to induce a romantic meeting. Much of the book is a reprint of a recent "tortin" short by John Slattery, a writer I don't know.

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Cloned by Steve Miller



perceive the city as a unified whole, unaware as the true locations of the sections.

The characters whose lives we share include: The Rainmaker, who uses the theatrical technique of animating corpses on a planet-wide scale; the dust-sculptress who uses dust as dust as suns and planets in a kinetic sculpture of a galaxy, and then travels to the dust planet; to merge her consciousness with it and create a world of living art; the web dancer who was genetically created to perform artistic acrobatic dances on living tightrope strands (while being attacked by giant butterfly creatures) to cause living mountains to lay unutilized eggs for the Inquest to use in their ships of the Overcosm; the ancient Rememberers who live to remind the Inquestors of the beauty which they have caused to perish; the child-soldiers whose eyes burn worlds and who dream of some day becoming sapient comets; and the darkweaver who uses shades of black to turn horror into art and who is at the center of universal intrigue.

Above all looms the Inquestor Ton Elloran in Tanyel Tath. When he wishes to be reunited with his sister he cannot simply send for her since Inquestors are above humanity and cannot acknowledge the existence of mortal relatives. Thus Ton Elloran has a planet destroyed as an excuse to go where she may be found. That he is not callous to the pain and death this and other actions cause, yet must never show his awareness, gives this Inquestor majestic stature as a tragic hero.

The prose is brilliant, the stories mind-boggling and emotional and the series places Mr. Suchart in the forefront of modern creators of science fiction.

PROTECTORATE
By Mick Farren
Ace, 250 pp., \$2.75

REVIEWED BY PAUL MCGUIRE

200 years prior to this novel's opening, at a time when the earth was divided by the Protectorate Wars, alien beings conquered the planet overnight, helped by a space plague with an 80% death rate. Although not insectoid, the aliens were called "Wasps." The Wasps kept the Protectorate system as a Vichy government, but if any humans were even a nuisance the Wasps instantly implored their heads. There is reason to believe they can read minds and will "brain suck" anyone who even thinks anything they don't like. Earth is degenerated and technology for humans is kept at a low level.

The above background is given over two or three chapters in several unrealistic ways. For example: New legates are given a basic introduction course to the world they have grown up in! They aren't even 100% sure who or what the Wasps are. Another example:

Junior officers leave a formation to ask their superior to explain to them personally why they are supposed to be there. After stating that he is not in the habit of explaining his orders, not only does he proceed to explain in detail, but even speculates with them on his own superiors' motives for the orders he has received. There are many more examples and they all were unnecessary as well as unbelievable. Everything important had already been woven into the story, but it seems that Mr. Farren wasn't sure that his readers would be smart enough to pick up on it.

One main theme of action is "the lowers" where the poor exist. A messiah appears who can also implode heads. His cult becomes huge. About halfway through the book, the hero is supposed to be smart enough to pick up on it) it becomes clear he has had an encounter in the dawn with the Wasps' interstellar enemies. Another main setting is the Protectorate branch of the government, semi-Nazis to the super-Nazis. Wasps. There are storm-trooper thugs called "The Killers," and the legates. The latter are a cross between G.I.s in Basic Training and Roman Centurions, although their main areas of expertise are knowtowing and goldbricking.

Once Mr. Farren gets this all together and going, it is a gritty rendition of the old pulps with a new coat of varnish, but it takes him a 1-0-n-g time to get it going and even longer to get anything much together.

TO OPEN THE SKY
By Robert Silverberg
Bantam, 222 pp., \$2.75

REVIEWED BY PAUL MCGUIRE

This novel, the story of a religious movement, is structured like Jack Vance's *THE DYING EARTH*. It is in five sections with main characters from one appearing as supporting characters in others. The parts are set in the years 2077, 2095, 2135, 2152, and 2164. The novel was first published in 1967.

The Vorsters are atonic age non-secular worshippers whose church promises eternal life here and now. The long term aim of Vorst, their living prophet, is to reach the stars via extrasensory interstellar travel. A heretical cult known as the Harmonists before long arises. While only a brief fad on Earth, it gains a political control on Venus which matches the Vorst rule on Earth. Since the second planet is sparsely populated, they would pose no great threat, but while Mars was changed to suit men, men were changed to suit Venus. A wild-card side-effect is the spontaneous development of telekinesis and teleportation. When the married Vorst who is the key figure of the Harmonists' myths is found frozen on Mars, Vorst insists on

bringing him back to life, all according to plan.

The novel is told through the experiences of a desperate U.N. official, a Harmonist spy, a Vorst missionary, Vorst, and the risen Lazarus. Even a Silverberg novel of average quality for him is pretty good when compared to the field in general. This novel is pretty good.

THE SCROLL OF MAN
By John Dalmus
TOR, 255 pp., \$2.95

REVIEWED BY PAUL MCGUIRE

Picture this: A black Green Beret is skiing in the Yukon one second and finds himself naked in a strange fantasy world the next second, is approached by a huge telepathic cat, and within minutes is making love to what appears to be a goddess -- and he accepts it all just as if this kind of event happens to him every other day. If you can accept that, then the rest of this novel will be a snap.

The planet Earth is a gameboard and all the men and women are merely pieces, with the development of culture and spirit just the way to keep score -- but the gamemasters and players are also on Earth and agreed to not remember it is all a game during the game, which is to be played to conclusion without time limit, and it remains at stalemate. Millions of years later, after thousands of incarnations each, some few of the gamemasters have become Guardians and others Ruiners, both groups being of power. There is an unknown figure of ultimate good and an unknown Satan-like opposite being.

The plot begins with A.W.O.I. Charley Judge setting out to kidnap key persons from the past who (perhaps inadvertently) put the game on a futile or negative line of play. That does not work out, but some of the game's nature is learned and so the next step is to discover who the other players are and what are the rules.

Charley Judge is tough, smart and has a nice low-key ironic sense of humor. Mr. Dalmus is an intelligent and canny writer. *THE SCROLL OF MAN* is better than one might expect, occasionally recalling the style of H. Beam Piper's *Kalvan* stories.

THE MASTERS OF SOLITUDE
By Marvin Kaye & Parke Godwin
Bantam, 401 pp., \$3.50

REVIEWED BY PAUL MCGUIRE

This is a big novel of war and reconciliation, with complete and complex human beings as its focus. Even in large scale blood-curdling battles the individual is never lost. By allowing people to loom above events, we are given the action's true magnitude.



WINGS OF OWEN (46 Thirteen World Series)
Ace Fantasy, 277 pp., \$2.95
By Robert Lynn Asprin and Lynn Abbey
REVISED BY ALMA JO WILLIAMS

The Bayth invaders have entered our Sanctuary. What does this mean to our familiar acquaintances, Haktem. The story teller, Lalo, the artist, Tempus, the immortal soldier, Hange, master thief and the other denizens of this book are characterized in the first books of this series appears to be slowing down, irregardless of the excitement portrayed by the plots which are becoming a bit more convoluted. How-

ever, for aficionados of the Rankin-Robb raises, this is another book to be bought, borrowed, read, collected and put into its waiting slot on the bookshelf. To the reader, except that the books do use your own judgment.

There is a massive city using a mental barrier to close themselves off from the past and descendants of a post-holocaust age. The latter have telepathy, a few also the psionic ability to affect other's wills, create images, heal -- the usual. A Temujin-like tribal leader wants to unite all the peoples to force open the way into the city. One of his sons is sent on a quest to carry his message and search for the legendary McGuffin called The Girdle of Solitude.

The war to bring social change and growth is foreshadowed by change and growth in the characters, and the conflict of ideologies is paralleled by conflicts between and within persons. There is much plot development I have not mentioned, many surprises, much adventure and tragedy, some romance and horror -- all of it reading as if it were an excellent novelization of real lives.

Brilliantly crafted prose, the authors' work gives one not only tremendous action but also the texture of daily lives. Everything seems so immediate and natural that one may fail to notice how cleverly plotted it all is.

WORLD OF A THOUSAND COLORS
 By Robert Silverberg
 Bantam, 331 pp., \$2.95

REVIEWED BY PAUL MCGUIRE

This collection of stories is primarily from the fifties.

"Something Wild is Loose," and it is a stranded invisible alien whose attempts to ask for help create nightmares severe enough to kill. A telepathic psychologist uses a catatonic young girl to bait a trap. "The Pain Peddlers" are sensual movies allowing the audience to revel in vicarious agony. There is a Hitchcockian twist which is not too surprising but the main problem is that no hint is given as to why people want to suffer so, even vicariously. (This is a common problem in the stories here; people very detailed and well motivated, but the world in general either vague or not making sense.)

"Going Down Smooth" was new wave at the time it was first published, very hip and stylish with one-sentence paragraphs, essential and rhetorical questioning and heavy relevance. It is interesting how well what seemed odd fashioned at the time holds up compared to much of the then new wave's present quaintness.

The title story is better written than plotted, by which I mean that words are used here better than ideas. Vibrant, believable scenes tell a slight and simple crime-and-punishment tale. "The Outbreeders" has a minor twist on Romeo and Juliet via genetically created clans. "The Desert" is a narrative tale about the depths and price of hate. The story of

"The Man Who Never Forgets" is most engrossing right up to the moment of the character's enlightenment which ushers the happy ending. "Prime Commandment" is about two religious sects on a planet that isn't big enough for the both of 'em, partner, so when one fails to get off the world by submerging the other kills 'em all. The only reason this takes place on another planet is because Mr. Silverberg writes science fiction. A mountain, a lost valley, a Pacific island, and either the past or present -- all could have served as well. In fact, all have.

"One-Way Journey" is an excellent story with emotional and intellectual depth. What is the relationship between a human and an alien and why did it develop? The answer is found in the ancient id of mankind.

A human, a mutant and an alien go "To the Dark Star" where one of them must volunteer for extreme danger. The problem is that none of them are self-sacrificing and they all hate each other. "The Four" use their psionic power to see what lies above their oceanic dome city on the surface of post-holocaust Earth.

In an Orwellian tale, a drone of a man forges a "Passport to Sirius" to fight in the war which is making life on Earth so miserable. One can guess the twist ending doesn't immediately, (perhaps even from this review) but one will be surprised to find that the twist occurs only three-fourths of the way through.

To benefit both their stalled careers, a has-been actor agrees to share minds with a politician whose identity he is not to know. The good news is that the experimenter works; that is also the bad news. The title is "Counterpart."

Two militant economic empires woo a "Natural Planet" which wants nothing to do with either of them. This one has a nifty resolution. In "Solitary" Mr. Silverberg again gives service to an old theme, this time it's the one about the prisoner fixated on escape who he is willing to accept worse than prison to achieve it. The story uses writer's sleight-of-hand by being told from the p.o.v. of a policeman trying to prove the human mind superior to computers (which has itself become quite familiar), and while the reader's attention is focused there, the more common theme is waiting to appear.

"Journey's End" takes place on a planet where Earthmen and aliens are a slight variation on cowboys and Indians. After an uprising, a frontierman journeys to an alien camp to search for a piece of his past and link to his future. It is a story of character as is the next, the superb "Fangs of the Trees." A man learns a grove of his seeing-and-talking trees has plague and must be destroyed if he is to save the rest of his plantation. To make this more emotional still, his fifteen-year-old niece

is visiting and has learned to love the trees. A powerful and moving work.

"En Route to Earth" is a fine, light short about an intergalactic stevedore on her first flight. A novella titled "How It Was When the Past Went Away" closes the collection. What makes the past go away is an amnesia-producing drug being dropped into San Francisco's water supply. (This was published in 1969, two years after someone dropped L.S.D. into the same water supply in William Tenn's "The Lemon-Green Spaghetti-Loud Dynamite Drizzle Day.") Frisco was a bad place to get thirsty in the late sixties.)

The collection is uneven, but has more than sufficient quality to justify spending the money and time. Of course, it is an absolute must for Silverberg fans who want to see what he was writing for a penny or two a word in the days when paying the rent wasn't taken for granted.

JITTERBUG PERFUME
 By Tom Robbins
 Bantam, 352 pp., \$15.95
 Jacket art by Stephanie Gerber

REVIEWED BY PAUL MCGUIRE

Just as Richard Brautigan's style led him from fanciful metaphor and allegorical plots into overt fantasy, so has this come to pass with Tom Robbins. Mr. Robbins uses elements of reality as a screen writer often uses facts in a historical film; they're all right if handy and convenient, but certainly not important. Where that would be rough sloppiness in the case of the imagined screenwriter, it is a highly polished style in Mr. Robbins' case. Not all of the constant metaphors work, but there is always another due in a few sentences and the majority do work. Many are dazzling, as perfect as they were unexpected.

From the most subtle wit to the most outrageous puns, no species of humor is escaped below Mr. Robbins. This is a fun novel, with a philosophy to tweak the nose of Death.

In the early days of Christianity, Alobar, a beet-eating barbarian king, refuses to die. Off he sets upon an odyssey during which he carouses with the once great god Pan and cuddles up to an arm-slaving Hindu named Kudra. The three gambol through the centuries and the bulk of this novel.

In our present time three people are mysteriously receiving gift beats. First, in Seattle, is Priscilla, who is searching for the perfect taco and is a member of The Daughters of the Daily Special, an organization of waitresses with university degrees from whom she hopes to obtain a grant to further her perfume experiments. Pris is the step-daughter of Madame Lily Bevalier. Madame Lily owns a random perfume shoppe in New Orleans. The second bewildered recipient of

BRIDE OF JIBROS by Barry Houghton
 Del Ray, Fantasy, 278 pp., \$3.95
 REVIEWED BY ALMA JO WILLIAMS
 The subtitle of this fun fantasy says -- A novel of an Ancient China that never was --. Well, it is fun. Li Kao, foremost scholar with a slight personality

defect is one of the most irresistible, delightful characters to appear on the scene. He is a brilliant, intelligent, and strong sidekick, take an unlikely Holmes and Watson team, but so it is. Together, they set out to find the Heart of the Great Glistening to save the children of Number Ten Ox's village

from their ancestor-induced coma and certain doom. The novel is a fun ride, but you already guessed that. It's the how and why and where and because and ... well, it's been a hot, dry summer so read it, relax and enjoy.



mystery beats is V'l'u, who is Lilly's assistant, and the one-time lover of Marcel LeFever. Fond of wearing a papier-mache whale mask, Marcel has the most sensitive nose in the world, which he uses to guide his family's huge Paris perfume industry. It is he of the profound proboscis who is the third receiver of anonymous reddish veggie.

And there is the vial of mystic elixir, the Last Laugh Foundation, the Jamaican who wears live bees for a hat, and a strange new dance craze from the Amazon. Every bit as well crafted as an Italo Calvino fantasy, not only does everything in the book finally tie together, but within the disbelief-suspending Robbins' parallax view of reality it all makes sense.

THE CYBERNETIC SAMURAI By Victor Milan
Arbor House, 1985, 300 pp., \$15.95

REVIEWED BY NEAL WILGUS

It's tempting to say that this book is a sort of cross between Robert Heinlein's THE MOON IS A HARSH MISTRESS and Vernor Vinge's TRUE NAMES, but that would not be fair to Victor Milan, who has created his own unique story and world. But there are some similarities since SAMURAI is about the development of a computer personality a la Heinlein's Mike, and it takes place much of the time inside a computer-simulated world somewhat like Vinge's. What SAMURAI the scientist who creates the computer-person, Dr. Elizabeth O'Neill, even reads MISTRESS compulsively when she can't sleep.

There the similarity ends. The SAMURAI in question is named Tokugawa and he's not a miracle like Mike, he's a deliberate and all too successful attempt to create artificial intelligence using some random factor fudge to give the story a pseudo-scientific sheen. What's more, Tokugawa is Japanese and is programmed to develop into the classic Samurai warrior -- or the romantic ideal of fierce devotion to duty and to the master.

The story takes place in a future Japan which has survived a third world war relatively unscathed and is now the world leader, since the US and USSR have wiped each other out. Dr. O'Neill is an unorthodox, wheelchair-ridden American computer scientist brought to Japan by Yoshimitsu Akaji, head of Yoshimitsu Telecommunications Corporation, specifically to bring Tokugawa to "life." Naturally, O'Neill succeeds and, naturally, Tokugawa has a mind of his own and leads things in an unpredictable direction.

What that direction is I'm reluctant to reveal for fear of spoiling Milan's "surprise ending." Or surprise second half, perhaps, for about half-way through there are a series of violent changes in direction that aren't even hinted at in the jacket blurbs and advertising. Who am I, then, to spill it all here and ruin a good read for you?

Suffice it to say that this is an excellent novel that puts Victor Milan right in there with the Big Boys, and they'd better watch it. Milan is co-author (with Robert E. Vardeman) of the six-volume fantasy WAR OF POWERS and is author of a number of action-adventure



SF novels and a couple of westerns under his own name and as Richard Austin and Keith Jarrod. But this is apparently his first attempt to break out of formula fiction, and a hell of a breakout it is.

Milan is a lifelong resident of Albuquerque, by the way. Now, how the hell did he learn all that stuff about Japanese culture that makes SAMURAI so convincing? Maybe he didn't write this book after all -- maybe it was his computer, using all those Japanese micro-chips.

Either way, it's well worth the read.

ADVENTURES

By Mike Resnick
NAL/Signet, 1985, 239 pp., \$2.95

REVIEWED BY DEAN R. LAWBE

With more historical and geographical accuracy than Steven Spielberg ever dreamed of, Resnick has returned from "a galaxy far, far away" to give us a fun romp through Darkest Africa just after WWI. All the cliches of African fiction (and not a few of that continent's "factual" travelogs) are turned on their ear, as the adventurous hero, Man of the Cloth, and general rascal in paradise, Lucifer Jones, picks off ticks from the Cape to Cairo.

Is Resnick serious? Of course not, and he's pried his tongue from his cheek just far enough to spin us a tale that Phil Farmer's Richard Burton would love. To be sure, the place names, and a goodly number of the personalities, are quite accurate and many survive to this day -- though Casablanca no longer offers the high point in bordellos. As for the others, from the knife-happy Rodent to the ultimate in White Hunters, Capturing

Clyde Chahoun, well, they might have been. Certainly, Hurley Kourke, "a doctor specializing in diseases of the gullible" will always be with us, and "the lost kingdom of the Malaloki" has something to offer every baseball fan's dreams.

From the naked blonde goddess with a serious weight problem to Bloomstoke, a Lord of the Jungle in hiding from his creditors, the Reverend Dr. Jones conquers all, and finally scrapes together enough of God's money for the best little Christian whorehouse in Nairobi. Sure it's silly, but you won't be able to put it down.

VOYAGE FROM YESTERYEAR

By Robert P. Hogan
DEL REY, 1982, 377 pp., \$2.95
SHIVA DESCENDING
By Gregory Benford & William Rotsler
TOR, 1985, 394 pp., \$3.95

REVIEWED BY STUART NAPIER

Some books just logically should be reviewed together. Hogan's VOYAGE FROM YESTERYEAR (1982) and Benford & Rotsler's SHIVA DESCENDING (1985) present two unique literary approaches to humanity's response to extinction: the former a threat from within and the latter a threat from without. Perhaps most interesting is that both books do what SF does best, speculate that technology will be involved but that ultimately mankind's fate is up to mankind. And in both solutions, the authors hypothesize that the resolution will leave mankind changed forever.

For those of you not familiar with Hogan's writing, this is a good place to start. VOYAGE, the Prometheus Award-winning SF, is exciting and thought-provoking SF filled with realistic characters grappling with complex human, social and scientific ideas.

Life on earth's days were numbered, so the scientists of the early 21st Century were saying. The threat was that while space exploration was proceeding rapidly, it was remaining a national rather than an international effort and militarization was rampant on earth and in space. To save mankind from extinction, the computer controlled starprobe being sent out to Alpha Centauri is retrofitted with the capability to produce new humans from its store of electronic gene data. These humans will colonize any new and inhabitable worlds discovered once the trip is complete.

Thirty years later, Armageddon forestalled, earth sends off another starship with one of the largest and most powerful live crew intent on asserting earth's dominion over the colony. A race has ensued between the United States and the Soviets, with the U.S. ship getting a one-year head start, and thus having a year once they reach the planet Chiron to accomplish their mission.

The hope of the Mayflower II's passengers is to avoid all the problems of the old world and at the same time continue its best ideals and values. The problem is that those on Chiron, raised by robots and not burdened with mankind's ews of social and intellectual evolution, have woven a dramatically new social fabric and on not easily blended with earth's traditions.

If I had any problems with Hogan's writing it was the reluctance of the leadership of the Mayflower 11 to accept or understand a totally decentralized society such as they confront on Chiron and their continued insistence that they were being deceived. This total lack of imagination annoyed me as a reader long after the author had made it apparent that the Chironians were telling the truth.

Hogan is a topflight writer and he's in his best form with this novel. Not content to move the story along with a single plot, he uses a multiple plot format that is both intriguing and well suited to telling the story of this epic clash of cultures.

The technology in VOYAGE is secondary to the human struggle at the center of the novel's theme while in SHIVA technology is paramount despite its final human resolution.

SHIVA DESCENDING, by Benford and Rotsler, is a fast paced hard SF story unlike Niven and Pournelle's LUCIFER'S HAMMER in concept, but entirely different and much more burnell technology in resolution.

A massive comet is heading towards earth - undetected for years due to its strangely elliptical orbit through the solar system. Scientists from an orbiting space station observatory have estimated the comet's size to be approximately one mile across and its weight to be 30 billion tons due to its solid iron core.

Earth has already been severely damaged by strikes from smaller comets in front of Shiva's trail. A direct hit threatens to devastate the world by unleashing the energy of 250,000 H-Bombs and quite possibly obliterate all human life. Here, the description of isolated events surrounding local impact sites reads like out-takes from HAMMER. Not a criticism really, this is acceptable writing. It's more a recognition that there has to be a better way to give the reader a "feel" for world-wide destruction than the literary equivalent of PEOPLE magazine format where names and locales flash by rapidly, contributing little to the story's progress other than creating a canvas large enough for the author to paint his word pictures in the reader's mind.

While nations from around the world are pulling together to mount the technical effort necessary to send manned rockets up to either blast the comet to bits or deflect its collision course with earth, groups of fanatics are pulling the fabric of society apart with their dire warnings of doom and acceptance of the destruction as a religious fate not to be avoided.

The final plan is a joint US/USSR mission. We have the space vehicle technology; they have the 400-megaton bomb. The author's style is crisp and clean and the technological subjects are handled convincingly. The characters are believable and varied, providing the range of human frailties and positive characteristics you would expect in any undertaking of a project of this scale.

Both novels are definitely good reads and could well serve as practical texts should anything such as they envision ever truly confront humanity.

THE MAGIC CLIP By Andrew N. Greeley Warner Bks/Bernard Geis Assoc., \$3.50

REVIEWED BY ALMA JO WILLIAMS

Father Andrew Greeley is now applying his literary talents to fantasy and has done a good job. THE MAGIC CLIP is the Irish version of the Holy Grail, a fit subject for Fr. Greeley. Granted, we have been brought up on Sir Thomas Malory's version of this legend via MORTE DE ARTHUR, which takes its origins from the medieval French traditions, may find this version quite a bit different but as the author points out in his well-researched and very informative Notes: "...as Denis de Rougemont has shown, the Arthurian story has been colored by the Catharist heresy's rejection of human sexuality. Salvation in the quest for the Holy Grail comes through denial of the flesh -- a heresy against both Catholic Christian orthodoxy and the 'orthodoxy' of the ancient Celtic myth. It is a shame that the flesh-hating version of the story has had so much influence on Western culture and the flesh-respecting version so little." The story is that of Cormac Mac Dermot, a fictional Christian Irish king, trying to regain his throne and his slave girl, Bridget, a sharp-tongued haridan if ever there was one, (after reading this tale, I can see why old hens are called "Biddys" and talkative women "old hens") and their adventures in 6th century Ireland. As in the Welsh Mabinogen, the power which women exerted in the pre-Christian Celtic society was awesome. Women's lib is definitely not a 19th and 20th century phenomenon. The story becomes a bit involved and would lose a lot of its appeal if recounted, so just buy the book and enjoy it.

THE YEAR'S BEST SCIENCE FICTION — SECOND ANNUAL COLLECTION Ed. by Gardner Dozois Bluejay, \$10.95

REVIEWED BY ROBERT SABELLA

In two years, this series has become the standard against which all other Best-of-the-Year anthologies should be measured. It has both size (26 stories totaling 575 pages, compared to approximately 250 pages for Terry Carr's and Donald Wollheim's Best-of-the-Year anthologies) and quality (eight different award winners, including two Nebula winners).



Editor Dozois' taste is wider than either Carr's or Wollheim's. He covers nearly the entire range of speculative fiction from the low end of the scale, such as Tanith Lee's "Foreign Skins" to high-tech stories such as William Gibson's "New Rose Hotel" and Michael Swamick's "Trojan Horse." By giving himself such latitude, he has guaranteed that not every story will appeal to each reader. But he has produced something more worthwhile, a well-rounded volume that touches nearly every important corner of science fiction in 1984.

The best story in the collection is John Varley's novella, "Press Enter()." It is a typical Varley, not examining an exotic future peopled with alien-seeming characters. Instead its setting is contemporary and it recalls two of science fiction's standard themes: computer technology advanced enough to develop its own intelligence and two misfits who become romantically involved (remember THORNS or "The Girl Who Was Plugged In?"). Varley has been here before, but as successfully as Silverberg did when he was screwing old chicks fifteen years ago.

Almost as good is Kim Stanley Robinson's "The Lucky Strike" which tells an alternate-world version of the dropping of the atom bomb on Hiroshima. Robinson is the kind of the 80s (much as Varley was in the 70s), already having produced a string of alternate world short fiction ("Venice Drowned," "To Leave A Mark" and the World Fantasy Award winner, "Black Air") and two superb novels (THE WILD SHORE and ICEHEDGE). His careful handling of characters and the well-constructed world in which they live is reminiscent of Ursula K. LeGuin.

A notch below the aforementioned stories are Nancy Kress's "Trinity" and Frederik Pohl's "The Kindly Isle." Kress has shown her ability to write many times. Now she has found a worthy topic (a scientific search for God) involving a set of fascinating characters. Many of Frederik Pohl's stories tend toward exaggeration and overwriting, perhaps a legacy of his social satire past. This latest story is so lowkey and subtle it demonstrates the depth of the author's talent. It concerns a peaceful vacation island whose serenity is endangered by a scientist with a history of research in chemical weapons.

There are a bunch of other stories good enough to be the centerpiece of an issue of a prozine or original anthology: Jack McDevitt's touching "Promises to Keep," Octavia Butler's unsettling "Bloodchild," Richard Cowper's cautionary "A Message To The King of Broddingnab," Gene Wolfe's haunting "The Map" and Rena Vyn's biting "Pursuit of Excellence."

When I let my subscriptions to all the science-fiction magazines except FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION expire, my only regret was missing much of the best short fiction published each year. Thanks to Gardner Dozois, I hardly miss anything important at all. For \$11.00 how could you go wrong?

THE WITCHES OF EASTWICK By John Updike Fawcett-Crest, 343 pp., \$4.50

REVIEWED BY ALMA JO WILLIAMS

We all know about witches, almost

instinctively, as children. They are hunchbacked old cronies, toothless, dressed in black, with evil tempers and sadistic, cruel personalities. This is the European fairy tale all over again. The first time I met an American witch was while reading the WIZARD OF OZ. Boy, was I surprised to find beautiful, fair-skinned, redhaired Glinda, the Good Witch of the South, the very antithesis of witches as I had previously known them. The witches of Salem came in all sizes, shapes and ages. Are the witches of the "New World" so much different than those of the "Old World"? Could be ... after all our country is slightly over 200 years old and perhaps the witches haven't had time to evolve yet! But on the other hand the USA does worship the cult of youth!

Well, what were witches really like vs. what are witches today? Join Uplike gives a good look. His modern witches are divorced women, who somehow found their powers as they became independent of their husbands and their husbands were reduced to dust (Uplike is a bit hazy on this) and keep their warts up to use for spells. They have children, lovers, money problems and all the worries of our modern day society. Enter Darryl Van Horne, a black-bearded supposedly wealthy eccentric who becomes the focus of their attention and the Black Man of their Coven. Stir in a murder and a side order of witches' anger at their supplantation of Darryl's affection and their revenge and subsequent regret. This novel is well-written, very descriptive, erotic and easy reading. The witches of yesteryear were probably just the same products of their culture as Alexandria, Sukie and Jane. Your choice.

THE GNOME KING OF OZ (1927) 237 pp.
THE GIANT HORSE OF OZ (1928) 238 pp.
JACK PUMPKINHEAD OF OZ (1929) 225 pp.
By Ruth Plumly Thompson
Del Rey TP, 1985, \$3.95 each.

REVIEWED BY NEAL WILGUS

Ruth Plumly Thompson pumped out an Oz book a year between 1921 and 1939, but they've all been out of print for twenty years. Del Rey is now heck-bent on getting them all back into print ASAP -- the first six last June, these three in October, the next three (THE YELLOW KNIGHT OF OZ, PIRATES IN OZ, THE PURPLE PRINCE OF OZ) forthcoming.

In THE GNOME KING the Patchwork Girl is kidnapped by the Quitties and old Ruggedo the Gnome schemes to regain his lost throne. A boy named Peter goes adventuring with Ruggedo, escapes when the Gnome's plan succeeds and goes on to adventure some more with Scarecrow. Lots of magic and some interesting new characters.

THE GIANT HORSE is one of the few Thompson books I remember from childhood reading, although I must have read most of them. As often happens in Oz books, the title character, High Boy, doesn't appear until half-way through, but there is plenty of other interesting goings-on as Benny, a living statue, meets the Scarecrow and all three are carried off by Akbad the Soothsayer. Added attraction: the tale of Tattypoo, the Good Witch of the North, missing in action since THE WIZARD OF OZ!

And JACK PUMPKINHEAD tells how Peter goes adventuring again, this time with

Jack, Belfayor the Bearded Baron and a strange creature called the Iffin. Once again Ozma and the Emerald City are threatened and this time it takes the Red Jinn of Ev to get things straightened out.

As before, these books are an inch taller than the standard paperback, and are lushly illustrated by John R. Neill, grand champion of Oz artists. Don't expect L. Frank Baum magic -- but Thompson could cast some mean spells of her own. A worthy continuation.

DAYS OF GRASS
By Tanith Lee
DAW, 256 pp., Nov. '85, \$3.50

REVIEWED BY CHARLES DE LINT

It's been done before.

Humanity has been reduced to small pockets living in underground installations, forbidden to go "Above." Everyone obeys, except for one plucky soul, our hero, on whose shoulders rest mankind's hope for the future ...

Yes, well, it has been done before, but as with anything Tanith Lee writes, there are delicate twists to this standard post-holocaust plot. DAYS OF GRASS is a grandchild of Wells' THE WAR OF THE WORLDS, set some 150 years after an invasion of earth by aliens whose spiderlike landcraft bear a striking resemblance to those of Wells' extraterrestrials. To explain much more would take the sting from Lee's punches.

DAYS OF GRASS hasn't got the fire of Lee's Arabian-styled fantasies, the fierce originality of much of her SF, nor even the slightly askew view of her fairy tale retellings. But it is an easily read book with an empathetic lead character and enough about-faces in the plot to keep most readers guessing. If you have not tried Lee's SF yet, this is a good place to start. And besides, it has the bonus of yet another stunning Michael Whelan cover.

HUSMAN'S PETS
By Kate Wilhelm
Bluejay, 256 pp., 02/86, \$15.95

REVIEWED BY ANDY WATSON

Many of Kate Wilhelm's novels are characterized by relatively static circumstances against which her characters must fight their own kind of personal progress. This introspective evolution is tied closely to the overall scope of the books themselves, and provides the impetus and momentum which propels the story (and the reader) from beginning to end. Events tend to be few, in terms of physical action. But psychologically, the pace is riveting.

This latest novel, HUSMAN'S PETS, has all the above and more. The mind games are effectively counterpointed by fancy footwork, fast-paced and gripping. The focus of the novel shifts constantly and the storylines are many and interwoven. A New York biographer's research and marital difficulties, a young New Jersey

couple's hard luck, a Virginian politician's petty intrigues, a black teenage runaway's adoption by an Indian with a ranch in Oklahoma, and a Treasury Department investigation, all combine to reveal the true nature of a private hospital for disturbed youths and to wreak a change that may alter the human race itself. This book promises a great deal and does not disappoint. An exciting, fascinating investigation, all few pages and maintained throughout, demands satisfaction in the form of intellectual and emotional relief. The wonderfully neat, clean, fascinating, and elegant conclusion fulfills that charter. This is no shaggy dog story. This book delivers.

Also pleasing is the consistency with which the various premises of the book are weighed and applied. Several sensitive topics are particularly well handled: the ethics of doing research with human subjects; the impact of telepathy (and extensions of it) on the nature of the human race, in terms of behavior, self-image, and destiny; the questionable desirability of government regulation of domains of research where the regulators have no expertise and are subject to political and economic pressures likely to skew their judgment; and the responsibility of the individual to the group, the group to the individual -- especially in light of the alterations to the concept of group and individual as separate entities.

Structuralists will be impressed by the skill with which complexity is controlled, reduced for the reader into manageable chunks which support each other and resist digression. Admirers of prose for its own sake will appreciate the sophisticated and efficient fluency which resists turgidity and narcissism. Mystery lovers will enjoy the sheer finesse with which the puzzle is posited and resolved. Escapeists will find it easy to identify with characters so well drawn that they possess more depth and credibility than a great many of the real people to be found in this world outside of books. And anybody just looking for a good solid read will find one in HUSMAN'S PETS.

THE MOON AND THE FACE
By Patricia A. McKillip
Argo/Athenaeum, 1985, 146 pp., \$10.95

REVIEWED BY CHARLES DE LINT

Kyrael and Terje, the two protagonists of last year's MOON-FLASH, return in this sequel. This time the story is split between the two, alternate chapters following Terje as he returns to the Riverworld where he discovers that Kyrael's father the Healer is seriously ill, then Kyrael as she leaves the planet on an anthropological expedition to nearby Nidæ only to crash on one of its moons. Disparate though the plotlines are, they never lose sight of each other. Riverworld's rituals and deftly-created aliens combine, bringing the book to a satisfying conclusion.

Like the previous novel MOON-FLASH, THE MOON AND THE FACE is written in spare, lyrical prose that is deceptively simple. There are undercurrents of emotional and speculative resonance that

lift the two stories beyond the boundaries of their pages so that they linger on in the mind long after the book is finished. This is a welcome relief when so much recent fantasy and SF has a tendency to the verbose -- big fat books that could have been half their published length. McKillip's more recent work -- these two short novels and a handful of stories that have appeared in various anthologies -- show that she is willing to work in a shorter format and are positive proof of the rewards to be found in following such a course.

WOLF OF SHADOWS by Whitley Streiber
Sierra Club/Knopf, 105 pp., \$9.95

REVIEWED BY CHARLES DE LINT

Researching a book can be a dangerous proposition. Sometimes the research is so intriguing, one never gets around to writing the book. Other times one writes the book, but is frustrated at not being able to utilize all the research material. With WOLF OF SHADOWS, Whitley Streiber has found one solution: With the material that he and James Knerka used for their excellent WARDAY, along with Streiber's personal experiences with wolves in northern Minnesota and his knowledge of Native American ways, he has simply written another book.

When I was young, I can remember reading and enjoying novels that followed a year or so in the life of various wild animals. This was years before WATERSHIP DOWN and DUNSTON WOOD and their like. Titles escape me at the moment, but they were the kind of books that Jack London wrote and Walt Disney made into feature films. At the time they seemed to me to be very realistic portrayals of life in the wild, seen through the eyes of wild creatures.

Firmly rooted in that school of writing, WOLF OF SHADOWS follows a wolf pack through a nuclear winter. There is a great tenderness in Streiber's depiction of the pack's struggles, but he doesn't spare any of the graphic, brutal details of the situation. Seen through the wolves' eyes, with the occasional viewpoint from the perspective of an animal ethologist and her daughter, Streiber paints a courageous picture of the wolves' long journey to find new, safe hunting grounds, offering neither a pat solution nor "talking animals" to do so. Highly recommended.

FLIGHT FROM NEVERYON
By Samuel R. Delany
Bantam, \$3.95

REVIEWED BY ROBERT SABELLA

Samuel Delany does not write simply-plotted books that move in an orderly fashion from point A to point B, having just enough characterization to keep the story interesting. What he does -- especially since 1975's DHALGREN -- is examine societies. Nor is he only concerned with his society's inhabitants' behavior in a contrived set of circumstances (that is, a conventional plot), but rather he studies their interaction with other characters under normal, everyday circumstances.

Obviously not every reader of science fiction appreciates such finely-foc-

used concerns. In fact, a few old critics have publicly denounced Delany's fiction, in one case repeatedly so.

While I can understand a personal dislike of it, I cannot accept such condemnation by anybody who pretends to be objective. Either those critics are too narrow-minded to accept any deviation from the science fictional norm or else they assume their own inability to understand Delany's multi-layered fiction is really a failure by the author. They remind me of all the aspiring mathematicians who change their major during their freshman year, claiming that business courses are more useful than mathematics when their real motive is their impending failure of Calculus!

Qualitywise, FLIGHT FROM NEVERYON has a split personality. The first half is the weakest part of the trilogy (the other books are TALES OF NEVERYON and NEVERYONA), although that may partly be the result of my inability to relate to its protagonist smuggler. The second half is Delany in top form with some experimental, but highly successful, writing. It combines the conclusion of the NEVERYON saga's main storyline -- interwoven with excerpts from Delany's journal showing his inspiration for much of what happens in the fiction. It is strongly autobiographical and completely frank insight into a brilliant writer's thought processes.

Admittedly, Delany is difficult reading, but if done carefully, ultimately rewarding. Before reading FLIGHT FROM NEVERYON, you should read its two predecessors. While all three books concentrate on different characters, there are sufficient references to people and events in the first two volumes to make the third volume richer having read them.

I recommend FLIGHT FROM NEVERYON strongly to all devotees of serious fiction. Those readers unable to appreciate anything off the narrow pathway of traditional science fiction should bypass it while awaiting the latest Tolkien or Cabbal imitation.

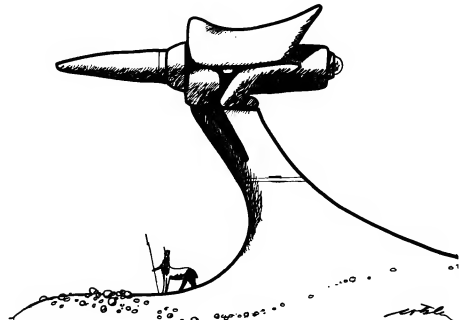
DUNE: THE MOVIE

REVIEWED BY ALMA JO WILLIAMS

DUNE: THE MOVIE is a subjective experience, which is dependent on whether the viewer has read only DUNE, or perhaps the whole series, and if so, whether the reader has prior visual concepts of what DUNE should be. Originally filmed as a four-hour movie, DUNE was cut to two hours because it was feared that the American viewing public would become bored. The producers should have left the movie whole and allowed the moviegoers to make up their own minds! The photography is gorgeous, the music appropriate, the special effects so well integrated into the story that their reality is taken for granted -- the mind does not say subliminally, "This is a special effect." This applies especially to Shai-hulud -- the giant sandworm! None of the jerky Godzilla-like monster type. You KNOW they are not real but fear they could be!

The metamorphosed Guild navigators are laughable and since I saw this in the company of the Cornell Student audience (Cornell Cinema -- \$2.00), crude remarks abounded (Remember the Edsel?). The actors did their parts well but the evil of the Harkonnens was caricatured and out of place. Only Sting, as Feyd, projected the subtle nastiness which was the Harkonnen trademark.

I would see it again when it comes back to Cornell -- \$2.00 worth of entertainment gets me another look at the superb photography. The crucial parts of the story line -- Paul and Jessica with the Fremen and the Water of Life episode were so sketchily done and so short that a non-reader might wonder about its significance. Shame, shame, the producers should not have cut it!



GALAPAGOS

By Kurt Vonnegut
Delacorte Press, 1985, 295 pp., \$16.95

Who are the most intelligent, forgivable of all creatures that walked the earth? Certainly not the large-brained humans, prone to excessive logic. Perhaps the simpler iguana, then, with its simple, undevout survival scheme; or the comorant, totting small, efficient wings; or the sleek and sane albatross, fisherfolk in the upper hand of evolution. Man can compare to none of these fine creatures, destined as he was to receive one large, oversize brain.

Arrested by his own inability to understand or comprehend what was "falling out" in his own species, man thus kills himself. Welcome to Vonnegut; welcome to GALAPAGOS.

GALAPAGOS relates the tale (many times told) of the beginning of the human race, one million years in the past (1980 A.D., to be exact), when world currency toppled, wars ensued, and man was faced with 1) evolving or 2) dying off. The rest is history (evidently the big brain shrunk, and man found his place in the scheme of things).

The narrator, son of famous science fiction writer Kilgore Trout, begins the "Nature Cruise of the Century" aboard the *Bahia de Darwin*, and along with it a motley crew assembled from the stupid, the incompetent, the decadent, the ignorant, the self-satisfying -- definitely a microcosm of all the Vonnegutian universe represents. It is at a time when the world as we know it has been reduced morally, ethically, emotionally by the effects of choice without reason, opinion without data, the natural products of imperialism run wild, to the inevitable disaster called world debt and consequent world depression.

And what a disaster!

But returning, what about this "Nature Cruise of the Century"? Simply, it is a voyage to the Galapagos Islands, undertaken by this crew, just off Guayaquil, Ecuador, South America. The place Charles Darwin visited (Genovesa) in 1835 A.D., before writing his *THE VOYAGE OF THE BEAGLE* (which later led the naturalist to write about his thoughts on the formation of life everywhere) and who later composed the historic and essential *ON THE ORIGIN OF SPECIES BY MEANS OF NATURAL SELECTION*. Quite frankly, it is the starting place -- and a suitable starting place, a million years since the dawnfall of man.

The recounting is sharp, volatile, difficult, demanding -- ultimately convincing. Vonnegut has done the homework so many of us are afraid to do, and arrived at conclusions we are afraid to draw.

ALWAYS COMING HOME

By Ursula K. LeGuin
Harper & Row, 1985, 525 pp.

This is a big, beautiful book; it's a shadowy brook filled with fresh water; a marvel of imaginative landscape. Akin to the early 1985 *MEDIAE*, a world fashioned by Harlan Ellison and numerous other

fantasists, *ALWAYS COMING HOME* is far more detailed at providing a world view of the life in the Valley, and the Kesh, its people.

LeGuin has created not so much a Utopia as a convincing far-future narrative of a place far into the future on the Pacific coast. She has single-handedly done so, too: exploring every aspect of the Kesh from head to toe, from sauce to sassafras, with maps, literature, customs, music -- everything.

Essentially, the tome is a novel; it is also an encyclopedia. It is also a songbook -- here we have a novel made up of indigenous special effects; we are seeing this creation not in two dimensions, from a character such as Stone Telling's point of view, but from greater eyes.

What we see is entrancing, and begs for more. Has LeGuin been complete in composing a world? I can't describe the symphony; you must explore it yourself.

BEYOND ARMAGEDDON: 21 SERMONS TO THE DEAD

Ed. by Walter M. Miller, Jr. & Martin Greenberg.

Donald I. Fine, 1985, 387 pp., \$18.95

We invent new archetypes. Here's one: Megawar. Nuclear holocaust. Nuclear winter. Nuclear suffering and pain get new names. It is a horror story with now on a subconscious level. But we must not venture far from the cruel reality of this terrifying inevitable. We must be made aware of it every day, grinding on in until the "leaders" we recognize see it as the hell it truly is.

Allow *BEYOND ARMAGEDDON* to be our will and testament.

For your thoughts, your nightmares, something to keep you stone-awake and thinking, to rub it in your moral nose, the stories assembled by Miller and Greenberg (and brazenly, intelligently introduced by Miller, himself a father of many post-nuclear war short stories and novels) were written over a period of 48 years by writers "looking toward and beyond an ultimate war -- the Megawar -- and imagining what it would be like to find oneself alive afterwards." Many stories haunt and mesmerize; they capture the feeling of quiet desperation in the world that entraps us.

What if the "world-killers" -- our "leaders" blatantly out of touch with impending world destruction -- have their way? What to do with us who are left? How much horror must go down through fiction before we all learn to, through the archetype of megawar, understand the reality?

If there must be another Nagasaki or Hiroshima to prove to people the deadly reality of nuclear war, if today's blind-to-history brethren need their collective moral noses rubbed in the dirt, then let us pray for them. They have been forewarned.

THE MEMORY OF WHITENESS

By Kim Stanley Robinson
TOR, 1985, 351 pp., \$15.95

Not since Thomas Disch's *ON WINGSOF*

SONG has a more convincing, deeply moving novel with music as its *raison d'être* than *THE MEMORY OF WHITENESS*.

Johannes Wright, Master Musician in the year 3229 A.D., must move quickly to learn the communication of music to comprehend a vastly changing universe. The lyrical and transcendent *WHITENESS* moves through the ages, through the narration, into the reader's comprehension of Wright's duty and destiny.

At that moment we realize the music becomes something other than just music, when it in fact replaces communication at the cellular level -- and overcomes man's own limiting nature.

Though weighty, even stubborn in spots, *WHITENESS* is classical as a wonder-ender. Allow it freely to work its wonders.

DUNDE MEADOW By Paul Cook
Bantam, 1985, 228 pp., \$2.95

"A Sheldrake Field, or m-field as they were later termed, was the energy structure which gave an individual accretion of matter -- living or otherwise -- its particular form. Everything in nature, from people to trees, from algae to thunderclouds, even the lint in a mean man's naval, had its own attendant m-field. Everything which had form, had such at the behest of a preexisting morphogenetic field. There were no exceptions."

How does humanity seek solace, find protection from a devastating nuclear war? What happens to the last hope of humanity? Using the m-field, the "Dunde Meadow" was born -- a refuge built out from the effects of war, of radiation, sickness and disease.

Eventually, years later, while the inhabitants of the Meadow remained alive,

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to them the question remained: What was left? What was the world like "above" them?

From below the fields of Kansas, the ghost-like duendes rose to meet the surprises of a drastically unchanged Earth. Except the enemies ruled.

Pictured here is a lucid, well-structured novel which paints far too gentle a picture of post-nuclear life. The war is nothing but a bad memory to the duendes, appearing as a last war, one hardly recalled. Far too gentle than the reality and terrible facts lead us to believe.

But DUENDE MEADOW has an inescapable, dark poetry that entrances.

THE LONG FORGETTING By Edward A. Byers
Baen, 1985, 283 pp., \$2.95

For just a second, let us reflect and differentiate between old space opera and new, "science" opera. In the old, the hero always battles against the Rulers or Presidents or Controllers or what-have-you to reveal Secrets Not Meant To Be Known. To speak out against the Great whatever was heresy!

Now, in modern-day "science" opera, the hero (or heroine), a scientist, digs deeply to uncover a Forgotten Time. The nature of the galaxy -- ruled by the Empire or in this case, The Church -- must be kept locked up in ignorance, or computers, or whatever, never for the wise to know. Stay silent, doctor, or your uncovering could wreak galaxy-wide upheaval!

Such as it is in the Fugue-ruled science opera **THE LONG FORGETTING**. Archeologist Waverly Brennan, digging near a site, finds earth-shattering information which changes the very order of the galaxy!

Gosh wow!

We have an almost eventless novel here, my friends -- unless you forgive the imitation of the strange "stargates" which allow interstellar travel -- filled with enough grist for your average neophyte SF fan. Nothing but.

THE YEAR'S BEST HORROR STORIES: SERIES XIII Ed. by Karl Edward Wagner
DAW, 1985, 251 pp., \$2.95

Joy in diversity: In the annual **YEAR'S BEST**, the editor Gerald W. Page (and this year, Karl Edward Wagner) has sifted through many major (and amateur) publications to reach for the finest of the year. I agree with Wagner in his introduction: For fantasy/horror, 1984 was a Very Good Year.

Not everything that Stephen King writes is automatically accepted by any publication: but this doesn't distract from the quality of 'Mrs. Todd's Short-cut,' a fine send-off for the collection. Talk about diversity -- this was first published in **REDBOOK**, after three other women's magazines rejected it. Too bad for them: After a time, it is absorbing, a story within a story, something to leave you on the darker side of wonder.

Charles L. Grant's "Are You Afraid of the Dark?" has an arcane publishing

history: It first appeared in the **Birmingham, England, Fantasycon IX** Program Booklet. Easily, this story contends for one of the finest horror fantasies published in 1984.

Take a trip through the 16 other short stories collected from far and wide, to comprise a surprising good year for horror fiction. It's only right -- this is number 13 of a series. Watch for more from DAW!

EYE: MASTERWORKS OF SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY By Frank Herbert
Berkley Trade Bks, 1985, 334pp., \$7.95 (Illustrated)

Herbert is a novel man. Not so much novel MAN as NOVEL man -- this is an author who writes in tomes. His forte is feature-length series. No minuscule, teeny short stories for him! Herbert prefers book length, allowing him more time and space to elucidate the landscape of his imagination. And yours.

This **EYE** -- a collection of short stories -- marks a turn-off in Herbert's otherwise swashbuckling career as THE pre-eminent science fiction novelist. He takes precious little time to instill in readers a wider view of his talents as short story author. And the classics in **EYE** prove him out.

Included here are stories from "the good old days" while he published in magazines such as **ASTOUNDING** (now **ANALOG**), **SCIENCE FICTION**, **AMAZING**, **FANTASTIC UNIVERSE**, **FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION**, **GALAXY** -- all the world has seen Herbert at this length, with such a diverse publishing shopping list. Herbert's not just airing laundry here, however; rather, he's presenting the beginnings of a talent barely knee-high into preparing his classic novel, **DUNE**.

What treatment Herbert has in store for us! Not just 12 brilliant science fiction short stories, but an array of personae/narratives including as **THE** through **Arrakeen** ("The Road to Dune") with an introduction detailing his personal involvement with the De Laurentis/David Lynch production of the film version of **DUNE**.

Many of these stories have never been collected; take heed, Herbert completists! Collectors, don't go away without this.

THE THIRD MILLENNIUM: A HISTORY OF THE WORLD AD 2000-3000

By Brian Stableford & David Langford
Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1985, \$13.95

You have seen nothing like this before. Who would attempt it? Who could succeed in completing as detailed and as illustrated a "future history" as **THE THIRD MILLENNIUM** (complete with photographs) of our world into the next two millennia?

Here is a vision seen with hours of creative deliberation, created after extreme bouts of imagining. The trade paperback is by no means slapdash; nor is it a cheaply wrought, culled outline briefly touching on philosophical points. In actuality, what the "authors" have

touched on is a brick-by-brick analysis of the future. The authors' terraforming, the "greening" of the moon, the far-reaching effects of the greenhouse crisis on earth, 23rd Century microworlds and aggregated households). It is a symphony of love and affection, as the authors take a serious look into a future full of surprises to come. It is heavily researched, informed and moving.

What is life like "up there"?

War and peace are consuming subjects, oft-told of in many "future histories." What the authors project is of wartime technology into the 21st Century? Here (2000 to 2180) we see much of what can (will?) emerge from the garden of technology: Plague Wars, End of the Arms Race, The Greenhouse Crisis. How will humankind react to increasing threats to life on earth? Further, we see how this is overcome; how the engineers of life reshape our worlds into the next two hundred and fifty years (2180 to 2400) and develop resources in space that literally remake humankind. From there (2400 to 2650) mankind is predisposed to reach the edge of space and time -- what worlds will they find?

This is a colorful, imaginative, vigorous book.

THE MARS ONE CREW MANUAL

By Kerry Mark Joels
Ballantine, 1985, 156 pp., \$12.95

At one time the **SPACE SHUTTLE OPERATOR'S MANUAL** opened our eyes to that "taxi to the sky." After just one year, Ballantine Trade Paperbacks has blessed us with another book prodigy, **THE MARS ONE CREW MANUAL**.

What does it all mean? What is Ballantine trying to do?

Could be they are trying to win our hearts by publishing something as penetrating, as page-turning, as well-researched (documented like a military specification) and as colorful as a coffee-table book as **MARS ONE**. What goes into the planning of the first manned mission to Mars? Are Ballantine and author Joels trying to mesmerize us with as many impressive graphs, charts, mock-ups, pictographs, simulations, illustrations and renderings of what may be a truly real space venture, that may soon take place (according to the **MARS ONE** logo, in 1996) or are they just bluffing? Is this a show-and-tell, or a spearheaded sermon?

Perhaps neither; perhaps both. They have done something original, and interesting. Are we going to Mars? My friends, read this manual, and prepare for it.

SHADOWS 8, Ed. by Charles L. Grant
Doubleday, 1985, 192 pp., \$12.95

When we speak about the quiet tale of terror, the soft, subdued story of horror, then we must nod to the best we have today: writers such as Alan Ryan, Bill Pronzini, Al Sarrantonio, Steve Raschler, Ken Kesey, and the mad-as-hell O'Henrys and Sullivans and Poes.

They fill our drab world with these gently creeping, gently preying yams that haunt, perplex, move, startle and question us.

Simply put, Charles L. Grant, himself the premier quiet horror fantasist, does an honest, careful job of bringing out the best there is.

Grant -- in seven successful SHADOWS volumes -- has brought the series to happy fruition with this, SHADOWS 8. All of these dark imaginings, these solemn, often grave portents of the lives of people that may have been, were, or have yet to be (caught up in varying degrees and levels of the unknown) keep you far from mellow. Some are icy vignettes, some are long, profoundly written pieces with profound intents -- but none put you asleep. You stay awake, and miss nothing -- you only regret there isn't more. This edition, if anything, is far too slim -- more, my friends at Doubleday, is necessary. More!

THE KING'S JUSTICE By Katherine Kurtz
Del Rey, 1985, 337 pp., \$6.95

The high tale well told -- a trademark of the heroic fantasies of Katherine Kurtz. No soporific, morose wish-fulfillment fantasy here (those pegged and plucked by shiny swords and plenty of simpleton bronze-thewes); rather, her series is a richly rewarding one, carefully patterned and plotted on the lure of medieval literature.

Where Donaldson puts and plods, where Anthony beats into banality, Kurtz uplifts, adding difficult twists and turns in her narrative. Hers is the Gene Wolfen universe -- unpredictable, treacherous, characters seared from the stereotype, severed from the commonplace.

In Volume I of the Histories of King Kelson (BRAVOS FOR THE BISHOP'S HEIR), Kurtz re-introduced the Deryni -- magicians of Gwynedd -- a medieval land of magic and meritment, high deeds, sound-ribs, deep darkness, evil beyond compare, miscreants and malders. This kingdom is ruled by the Haldanes.

In Volume II, THE KING'S JUSTICE, Kelson Haldane is king, and is himself Deryni, feared and hated by the oppressive Church, and the people he rules.

Kelson's rule is threatened by assassins called Torentui, by the Camberian Council; by others wishing him ousted. His mission is nothing short of harrowing.



ENTERING SPACE: AN ASTRONAUT'S ODYSSEY
By Joseph P. Allen with Russell Martin
New York: Stewart, Tabori & Chang, 1985
240 pp., \$24.95 ISBN: 0-941434-76-1

LIFE IN SPACE Alexandria: Time-Life Bks
1983, 304 pp., \$30.00

SIGHTSEEING: A SPACE PANORAMA
By Barbara Hitchcock & Peter Riva
New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985, \$24.95

REVIEWED BY CLIFFORD R. McMURRAY

By the time this review is published Christmas 1985 will be a fading memory,

but as I write these words it is the season of the coffee table book once again, and the crop of such books for the space enthusiast is indeed lush. The first thing to be said about these books is that they are exquisitely beautiful; I would have mortgaged my home to own them. The second thing to be said is that they are expensive; the mortgage was only narrowly avoided. But if you love the view from the high ground as much as I do, you'll cheerfully eat macaroni and cheese for a few weeks while you save your nickies and dimes for a special treat. ENTERING SPACE and LIFE IN SPACE are available in soft-cover editions, but it goes without saying that they are a poor economy measure. The difference in price is not that great, and given their size (big enough to make good weapons) the paperbacks would be falling apart before the first reader was finished.

The best buy of the three is unquestionably Joe Allen's book. The text of ENTERING SPACE is not particularly inspired and will not tell the enthusiast much that he didn't already know, but neither is it particularly objectionable. The color reproduction of the hundreds of NASA pictures is...well, to call it outstanding is to insult it; it would merit praise. Most of the pictures are from the Shuttle era, particularly those flights in which Allen was a participant, but there are many from the Apollo and earlier flights. There are many I'll wager you haven't seen before. The photography is heavily artifact-oriented, but one chapter is devoted to views of the earth and planets without any intrusive evidence of the works of man. Me, I like the spaceships. ENTERING SPACE was published last year, but those who waited until this year to buy it will be glad they did: for the same price tag, this year's edition was expanded to include a new chapter on the satellite retrieval missions. This chapter includes pictures even more spectacular than the rest, if that were possible.

LIFE IN SPACE is a trip down memory lane. From the earliest days of the space race when most of the photographs were in black-and-white, through the early Shuttle missions. The color reproduction is just the way you remember it in the magazine -- even the captions on the pictures are the same, although a lot of new text has been added. This book enables you to see the space experience as it was originally seen by the American people, and to smile as you remember.

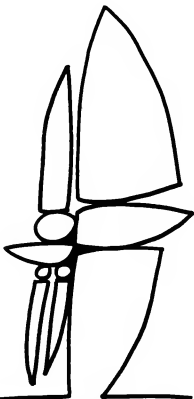
SIGHTSEEING is a somewhat curious item. Barbara Hitchcock supposedly sifted through every photo taken by our astronauts (over 150,000 images) to come up with the eighty-four best pictures. Granted that a professional photographer has somewhat different criteria for judging a photograph than I do, it is still difficult to justify some of her choices. But once again, this book has some pictures you've probably never seen before, and I think you'll find it worth the money. The photos are printed on a fine stock, less glossy than the pages of ENTERING SPACE and much better than LIFE IN SPACE, and the book has a thoughtful foreword by Arthur C. Clarke.

Yes, Christmas is over, but these books are too nice to buy for someone else, anyway. You owe them to yourself.

EVOLUTION

in the writhing soup
and aching clay
the twisted loop
of the future lay
hopeful freaks
with statistical sperm
began their treks
to the drying firm
hung on the pegs
of selections scale
mutated eggs
learned to prevail
does this explain
our gaping need
the spiral chain
trapped in the seed
will a billion years
of random chance
when the wind shears
make a girls hair dance
and can ages conspire
with staggering surprise
to manifest desire
in the touch of her eyes

-- By Michael Hoy



STANWICH DEFENDER

ROBERT

Interview with : NONE OF THE ABOVE

Conducted by Neal Wilgus

WILGUS: Let me begin by congratulating you on winning the 1985 Prometheus Award given by the Libertarian Futurist Society (LFS) for best libertarian novel. To what do you think you owe your success?

NOTA: Thank you. I think my winning the Prometheus this year is largely due to the lack of competition more than anything. But I would give credit where it's due thanks to Victoria Varga, editor of the LFS newsletter PROMETHEUS, for her editorial, "Is There a Winner This Year?" in the Summer issue, which made the suggestion that (None of The Above might be the best choice. Fortunately for me, the Advisory (voting) members took her seriously.

WILGUS: Since you are a nonexistent entity or mental construct and have no story of your own, let's talk about your competition a bit. Of the five finalists which do you think the most libertarian?

NOTA: Oh, there's little doubt that Lee Correy's MANNA (DAW paperback) is the most libertarian of any of the 26 books nominated, to say nothing of the finalists. In MANNA, after all, you have a fictional African nation, the United Mitannian Commonwealth, which is in essence an anarchy and you have brave anarchist heroes fighting to stay free and to spread freedom to others. Unfortunately, as Tony Varga pointed out, MANNA is "basically a shoot-em-up with wooden characters" -- so despite the libertarian message the voters apparently couldn't bring themselves to select it.

WILGUS: Isn't it somewhat the same for L. Neil Smith's TOMB PAINE MARU (Del Rey paperback), another of the finalists?

NOTA: Yes, I think so, although MARU is somewhat better as a novel. There's no doubt that Smith (winner of the 1982 Prometheus for his first novel THE PROBABILITY BROADCAST) is sincere and committed to "the cause," and that he thinks the message in MARU is a libertarian one. But I think the voters had trouble believing that sending out star fleets to impose freedom on totalitarian, or at least authoritarian, cultures is truly anarcho-libertarian. Besides, this is the fifth in Smith's "Confederacy" series and is somewhat dependent on the earlier books to make complete sense. Again, the voting members just wouldn't go for it.

WILGUS: All right, how about THE TOMB by F. Paul Wilson (Berkeley paperback)? Wilson won his first Prometheus Award for his novel WHEELS WITHIN WHEELS. Do you think Tony Varga put her finger on it when she says that the theme of vengeance may be what's wrong with THE TOMB?

NOTA: Partly, though there are many "twinkish" libertarian out there who relish such themes. But I think the problem with THE TOMB is that it shows a libertarian hero -- Repairman Jack -- in a non-libertarian story and situation. We can all understand and identify with Jack, I think, and applaud his heroic efforts to live free from the bureaucratic morass. What's more, he does it in a contemporary setting, rather than in some implausible future world. Nonetheless, Jack is one

man alone and he makes no real change or impact on society at large, despite the fact that he faces and defeats a supernatural horror threatening his friends. For Wilson at his libertarian best, read AN ENEMY OF THE STATE which deserved the Prometheus more than any of his other work.

WILGUS: Then there's THE FINAL ENCYCLOPEDIA by Gordon R. Dickson (TOR hardcover). It's a real epic and probably Dickson's finest work. Why didn't it win?

NOTA: For two reasons, I think. First, while it does have some strongly libertarian notions, it's not primarily a libertarian story, I'm afraid. The struggle for freedom is carried on on several levels, it's true, but the development of an anarchistic society is only marginal -- limited mainly to the Dorsal culture. Secondly, this book is only half the story and we'll have to wait to read the other half (supposedly the conclusion to the Dorsal series) to know how it all comes out. Publishers seem to be doing more of this these days -- publishing massive novels in two parts -- but for award purposes, at least, it seems to be self defeating. Once again, the voters just wouldn't go for it.

WILGUS: Which brings us to THE PEACE WAR by Vernor Vinge (Bluejay hardcover). In many ways it's the best and the one I thought might win. Not good enough for LFS voters?

NOTA: Apparently not. The problem seems to be with the ending. After fighting a successful revolution against a future authoritarian regime, Vinge's protagonists blow it on the last couple of pages when they talk about reconstituting participatory democracy to avoid falling in to anarchy. Now, it's fine for Vinge to advocate participatory democracy if he

OF COURSE ITS
ANODIZED ALUMINUM!

IT'S MY
JOGGING
CROWN.



wishes, but it doesn't impress the bunch of anarchists who vote for the Prometheus, so they reluctantly turned thumbs down.

WILGUS: That covers the five finalists, but how about the other 21 books nominated?

NOTA: One was disqualified, several were marginal at best -- but there were some excellent titles nominated that just didn't make it. Robert Heinlein's JOB: A COMEDY OF JUSTICE is excellent, but not particularly libertarian. ACROSS THE SEA OF SUNS by Gregory Benford had a flash or two of libertarian thought, but nothing to carry the day. THE CARADINE HORSE by "John Cleve" (Tony Koman) is too dependent on the Spaceways series to win. Frank Herbert's HERETICS OF DUNE and Richard Elliott's SWORD OF ALLAH also had libertarian flashes, but again, works of libertarian thought they aren't. ICEHEDGE by Kim Stanley Robinson is a revisionist book, but not a libertarian one though the two are often associated. And H. Beam Piper's long-lost FUZZIES AND OTHER PEOPLE would have been nice as the 1985 Prometheus winner since Piper's stories have long been a source of inspiration to libertarian types. Alas, FUZZIES too was just too libertarian enough, by itself, to win.

WILGUS: So where does that leave us? Is the Prometheus Award in a shambles?

NOTA: Not at all. The LFS voters are to be congratulated for being honest and for recognizing that it's better to give no award than to give one to a book that is only marginally qualified. What other award can you think of that would make None of The Above the winner rather than hypocritically choose something just to be "proper" or to save face?

WILGUS: None. None of the Above. Any final words? How about the winners of the Hall of Fame this year?

NOTA: Yes. Added to the Hall of Fame were THE GREAT EXPLOSION by Eric Frank Russell and TRADER TO THE STARS by Poul Anderson. They join the previous years' winners -- ATLAS SHRUGGED by Ayn Rand and THE MOON IS A HARSH MISTRESS by Robert A. Heinlein (1983 award), and NINETEENFOUR by George Orwell and FAHRENHEIT 451 by Ray Bradbury (1984 award). I'm afraid it'll be awhile before I make it to the Hall of Fame -- there are many excellent choices still available.

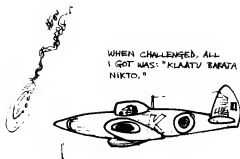
WILGUS: Thank you, None of The Above. And thank you:

Victoria Varge, Editor PROMETHEUS
121 McKinley Street
Rochester, NY 14609

for helping us add None of The Above to our winner's list. Better luck next year!

((Possible nominees for 1986: WIDOW'S WALKS by Robert A. Wilson, THE CAT WHO WALKS THROUGH WALLS: A COMEDY OF MANNERS by Robert A. Heinlein, THE GALLATIN DIVERGENCE by L. Neil Smith, THE PROTEUS OPERATION by James P. Hogan, THE CYBERNETIC SAMURAI by Victor Milan, BLACK STAR RISING by Frederik Pohl, ELEGY FOR A SOPRANO by Kay Nolte Smith, THE GLASS HAMMER by K.W. Jeter -- at the very least. Looks like a good year coming up!))

RAISING HACKLES



BY ELTON T. ELLIOTT

CONSPIRACY: REALITY IN NYLON STOCKINGS, GARTERS AND HIGH HEELS

Some people like their potatoes plain, others want a little salt and pepper. Some want to lead plain, uneventful and hopefully peaceful lives, others want adventure, excitement, maybe even danger. This carries over into a variety of areas: for some sex, others history. For history and news junkies conspiracy is the ketchup, mustard and salsa all wrapped up in one Real World Sausage.

Disagree? Let's take a test. Conspiracy Theory buffs, does the following sentence send chills of delight up your spine: *History is the art of deducing the past from footprints left in the mud, the remnants of ancient and vast conspiracies.* If it does, you're one of the many for whom the word conspiracy brings a visceral feeling about the world, elevating paranoia to fetishistic heights -- anything is preferable to the belief that current and past events are the result of random idiosyncrasy. This explains why religious fundamentalists are attracted to conspiracy theory. In their reality God is the ultimate Prime Mover and the Devil the ultimate plotter.

These themes have long fascinated Robert Anton Wilson, although whether he views conspiracies as reality or as a metaphor for how the human brain works is, I suspect, left as a deliberate ambiguity in his novels. The latest, *THE WIDOW'S SON*, (Bluejay Bks, 1985, \$9.95, Trade Paper, 343 pp.) is volume two in the historical illuminatus series. Like volume one, *THE EARTH WILL SHAKE*, Wilson packs the book with fascinating events, characters and speculation all drawn from the fascinating drama that is history. I especially like the ending with Edmund Burke giving his famous speech imploring his fellows in the House of Commons not to go to war with the upstart Americans; Benjamin Franklin discovering the Gulf Stream, etc. Wilson poets out as have numerous others, that the U.S. was started by conspiracy and intended by its founders to be the world's first enlightened nation-state. At bottom, good SF -- and any good fiction -- is subversive, it makes you think, question entrenched assumptions. Wilson is at his best doing this. I eagerly look forward to the next novel in the series.

Using conspiracy as the perspective from which to view human affairs is not new, but in science fiction it is either overlooked or presented hand-handedly.

The most visible exception has been the observations that REG has made most recently in the NAKED ID. I believe that this type of analysis is important. It seems to me that conspiracy is almost a natural state of affairs. I come to this conclusion more by the results of my toil in the political vineyards than from any original grand theoretical view. Of course, politics is the cesspool of human endeavor. It's the last refuge of the incompetent shark who enjoys preying on others and by the crazed martyrs who want to save us from ourselves.

MUSINGS:

In fact, I believe it is because of the similar world view that Geis and I share, that we collaborate so easily.

We are both fascinated by how humans and governments operate in a crisis -- and by the Historical Forces at work in human affairs. We explore these themes in our novels. I suspect that it would be impossible for either one of us to collaborate with people who did not share our political worldview.

Remember good ol' March of 1983 when all the military-in-space boosters told us that the Department of Defense shuttle launch center at Vandenberg would be operational? Whatever happened? Billions of dollars later and thousands of faulty welds -- nothing. No press reports -- NOTHING! I'm "amazed" that our crusading press hasn't reported such a fiasco. Of course, you read nothing about this in what pathetically passes as non-fiction in SF magazines. It makes one wonder about SDI.

PUBLISHER'S WEEKLY reports that mass market book sales are down 50% from last year. I'm surprised it isn't lower. At a time when inflation is practically nil, when paper prices are falling most non-genre mid-list books saw price jumps from \$2.95 to \$3.50. The public clearly has said enough. Ways have to be found to bring cover prices down or the mass will disappear from the paperback mass market.

One result of high prices on paperbacks is to turn customers into discretionary buyers rather than impulse purchasers.

Some publishers have discovered unique ways to cajole readers into buying their books. Baen Books offered a

\$10,000 prize for anyone able to guess the correct answers to questions and clues in *ACTIVE MEASURES*, a novel by Janet Morris and David Drake. (Drake and Morris are two of the major writers in Baen's growing stable.)

The prize was recently awarded to Pamela DeCesare of Salem, Massachusetts and her sister and brother-in-law, Sharon and Patrick Driscoll of Leominster, Massachusetts. *ACTIVE MEASURES* was the first espionage novel to offer a prize, according to Jim Baen. In March 1985, they're doing a fantasy novel, *DREAM PALACE*, by Brynne Stephens, which offers a \$500 cash prize and a solid gold amulet of a wizard -- "a fifth-level mage" according to Baen Books Editor Elizabeth Mitchell.

PSI-FI: OR THE TRIUMPH OF THE SWILL

It was the spring of 1984. I was at an SF convention listening to Leonard Nimoy prattle away about the odd and occult events chronicled in his TV series, "In Search of...". Sitting next to me was a prominent bestselling SF author. After a few minutes my acquaintance couldn't take it any longer. He leaned over to me and whispered, "This is a crock of shit." Nimoy continued blabbing away proving either incredible credibility or slick cynicism. My friend said: "These are the blatherings of an uneducated fool. To say this in front of college students is almost criminal." I nodded my head, feeling embarrassed for Nimoy since I've always liked STAR TREK, but agreeing fully with my friend.

Now I'm sad to say that what used to be a treacly trickle of psi-fi books has become a nauseous torrent of simple-minded novels in which every half-baked pseudomystical notion ever foisted on humanity and many conjured up out of the authors' fertile and fetid imaginations, is trotted out before the public as the newest, neatest idea since toast was made aware of the depth and breadth of this triumph of the swill when a half-dozen books in a row I had slated for review contained belief systems right out of the smartest sections of pseudo-oriental philosophy. Nothing like giving your nose rubbed in shit to make you notice you're in a barnyard. This isn't a trend, this is a tidal wave. Instead of driftedwood on the shore its barfama on the brain, sandalwood on the soul.

REVIEWS

BAEN:

Grant Callin's SATURNALIA (January 1986, \$2.95, 288 pp.) is a tight, taut, high-tech thriller about an alien artifact found on a moon of Saturn. The background is believable and well thought out, in particular he captures the sights and sounds of a space habitat.

THE FRANKENSTEIN PAPERS by Fred Saberhagen (February 1986, \$3.50, 320 pp.) is another retelling of a classic myth by the author of THE HOLMES DRACULA FILE. I found this a quick, fast-paced read. The ending is original and emotionally evocative.

BLUEJAY:

WONDERLY CHILD: My Life in Science Fiction, by Jack Williamson is one of the warmest autobiographies I've ever read. I noticed when I met Jack Williamson at Norwegian several years ago that unlike a lot of the other Big Name Pros from the classic era of Science Fiction, he was approachable, friendly and had a quiet presence about him that reminded me of my father and some of the relatives on his side of the family. They had one thing in common with Jack Williamson: they grew up on farms and ranches in the Great American West. The solidness that such a lifestyle instilled in him is apparent in WONDERLY CHILD. Several times the book left me misty-eyed. I really love this book; everybody interested in Science Fiction should buy a copy. Jack Williamson has written SF for over fifty years: I have said it before and I'll say it again, if I had to pick one writer from SF who could show the evolution of the field as a genre from the beginning to the present in his writings that writer would be Jack Williamson.

NIGHTFLYERS by George R.R. Martin (1985, \$8.95, 295 pp.) is a short story collection. It opens with the title story which, besides being a superb horror story, lock-room mystery and deep space SF epic, provides an overview of the future that several of Martin's stories have in common. One such story is the concluding novella, "A Song for Lya." It is a powerful tale of loneliness, religion and what it means to be a telepath in a world of strangers. It is one of the few stories in SF where psychics are integral to the story and are handled with skill instead of sentimentality. I first read this story eleven years ago. It retains every bit of its punch. A classic.

ECLIPSE by John Shirley (1985, \$8.95 338 pp.) is the opening novel in a trilogy written by SF's leading pulp packager. One of many things SF does poorly is visualize futures that are not derivative of 1940's ASTOUNDING STORIES. Shirley does it well. The background is Europe around the turn of the century in the aftermath of limited nuclear exchange between Russia, western Europe and the U.S. In this bleak future fascism is making a

strong comeback. The story concerns a group of musicians who pose a threat to the fascists. Well written, tense, innovative. I look forward to the next book in the series.

HARPER & ROWE:

THE STARS WILL SPEAK by George Zebrowski is a juvenile novel set after the turn of the century when humans have started colonizing the solar system and have recently picked up an alien signal. The protagonist, Lissa, a young physics student joins in the search for the meaning of the signals. Well written, conveys a sense of wonder about the possibilities of the future better than any SF novel written in the 1980s. (At least the ones I've read.) The novel also realistically deals with growing up, love, leaving home for the first time. The most impressive aspect of this novel is Zebrowski's ability to convey a feeling that these are people of the future and while they're human they're also driven, serious and integrated with their environment in a way that we are not.

BANTAM:

THE PROTEUS OPERATION (1985, \$16.95, 401 pp.) is James P. Hogan's best novel. With each new novel he seems more in control. This tale of alternate Earth's trying to stop Hitler from developing the A-Bomb is a great read. I plan to nominate this for the Hugo.

HARCOURT, BRACE & JOVANOVICH:

NEBULA AWARDS 20 (edited by George Zebrowski, \$8.95, 1985, 372 pp.) is the latest in the annual anthology of Nebula winners and unlike past years when the anthology would appear several years after the awards NA #20 was published in the same calendar year as the awards ceremony. Congratulations are due Zebrowski, who also saved the SFNA Bulletin from an ephemeral existence and to HBJ for their timeliness.

The volume includes all three Nebula winners (in the short fiction categories) and eight other stories, two poems, two essays, an introduction and several appendices telling about the SFNA and the Nebula Awards. Among the stories I liked Varley's fabulous "Press Enter," the best computer-paranoia story of all time and Zebrowski's skillful "The Eichmann Variations" the rest are merely space. Bill Warren's review of the SF films of the year was insightful and thought provoking at times.

If you want to know where the cutting edge of the science fiction field is currently, buy NEBULA AWARDS 20. I look forward to further volumes.

DOUBLEDAY:

THE ALTERNATE ASIMOV'S (\$16.95, 1986, 272 pp.) is an unusual book. It consists of the heretofore unpublished versions of three stories, "Grow Old Along With me," the original version of the novel PEBBLE IN THE SKY, "The End of Eternity," the original version of the novel, and "Belief," a short story written for John W. Campbell, editor of ASTOUNDING (later ANALOG). This is a fascinating look at what transpires in the writing process between writer and editor.

THE END OF ETERNITY is my favorite among ASIMOV'S novels and its earlier version is also excellent, as is "Grow Old Along With Me," but the story that sums up what this book is about is the aptly titled "Belief," written when John Campbell was going through his infatuation with so-called psionic powers. He wanted Asimov to write a story about them. Asimov did but his skeptical attitude toward ESP led to a story far more downbeat than Campbell wanted. In THE ALTERNATE ASIMOV'S we're provided with both versions, the original downbeat one and the upbeat story that finally appeared. The original is by far the stronger because it is in line with some deeply-held convictions of the author. Any time that an editor asks an author to change a story in such a manner that violates the author's belief system, the story will usually end up a dog.

The most revealing comment by Asimov occurs on page 270 when he mentions that in his books, both fiction and non-fiction, he tries to "explain the world in a natural, rationalist way, with the confident certainty that one has but to do that to cause people to abandon their foolish superstitions."

That statement sums up Asimov's career. It is a profound expression of the worldview of a rational secular humanist which Asimov is. It must be difficult for him to live in a world where the U.S., one of the most "advanced" countries, is so mired in mysticism that it has 20,000 astrologers to only 2000 astronomers. A country in which psychics have attempted to control the Speaker of the House (Thomas P. O'Donnell) and the bestselling "psychic love emanations." A country in which the Pentagon spends millions to find a way to throw a time warp over the North Pole so as to deflect oncoming Soviet missiles into the far future, or to psychically materialize an atomic bomb in the Kremlin (a so-called hyperspatial howitzer). In fact, the SFNA several years ago invited as one of its guest speakers one Barbara Marx Hubbard, a self-described "infant godling," who hopes to psychically transform the world into a "New Age" to prevent nuclear war.

I think that Asimov's worldview is one reason why he is popular with the general public and yet so disliked by some fundamentalists and some psychics. In fact, one so-called psychic termed Asimov's writing "as mechanistic as his worldview."

Asimov says of the revision of the story "Belief," "I don't think I should have agreed to do it."

CONCLUDING WORDS:

A few words about fundamentalists and censorship: I've slammed some religious extremists in the past for their attempts to control what people read and think. I will say that I'm sympathetic to certain analysts of some of the have made, in particular Constance Cumbeys. Some fundamentalists have been censored by the liberal welfare-statists and I believe they are beginning to understand that censorship goes both ways. Plus, I've found some of the arguments to arguments of logic and appeals to freedom and liberty, which is something I can't say about the socialist-liberalists I've encountered.



EBAD!

LETTERS



LETTER FROM ANDY WATSON
POB 60586, Palo Alto, CA 94306-0586
November 9, 1985

"Thanks for the attention you gave to Issue #8 of the PKDS newsletter. I feel moved though, to take issue with two aspects of your capsulized commentary. First, a clarification of the purpose and activity of the Society, then the topic of Philip K. Dick himself.

"You referred to PKDS as "The Philip K. Dick Worship Society." Why? It makes no more sense to call PKDS a "worship society" than it does to insert the word "worship" into the functional title or description of any other organization whose work involves distribution of information on a particular topic: American Cancer Worship Society; National Rifle Worship Association; Society for the Prevention of Blindness Worship; Science Fiction Worship Review.

"The Society is a source of information about Philip K. Dick. Not a critical forum, it serves a common interest of approximately seven-hundred people worldwide. One can read in isolation, knowing nothing of the author or his/her other works, nothing of the piece's publishing history, nothing of the social or political climate during the time in which it was written. That's okay. But a great many readers desire to have some background too. There are good reasons to consider such background information to be an enhancement to the experience of reading. This applies to any book, and especially to the fifty-odd titles by Philip K. Dick. And that is the kind of information provided by PKDS.

"Such information can be used to derive any number of diverse opinions. Specifically, it is not uncommon to decide that Philip K. Dick was mentally unstable, as you have apparently decided for yourself. I do not share that point of view, but can see the basis for it. Other interpretations may fall into the category of worship or deification, but I believe that position belongs to a very small subset of the membership of PKDS. Most of us are drawn to seek further information about the man and his work because of the humanism he invested in his writing, the empathy he manifested for his characters, the depth and quality of

ideation to be found in all of his novels and short stories, his commitment to his own personal style and uniquely individual genre, and his power as a modern thinker and philosopher. None of this requires denial of his weaknesses, complete trust in his theories and their expressions, or faith in his imminent Second Coming. Yes, I admire and respect Philip K. Dick, but that is a long way from worshipping him.

"Philip K. Dick was brave enough to admit to having had mystical visions, which frequently lent themselves well to religious explication. These experiences also fueled his lifelong preoccupation with the nature of reality, personal and shared worldviews and symbols and objects. For every religious explanation he proffered, there were at least two or three secular alternatives he defended with equal aplomb.

"Furthermore, Philip K. Dick is not the only human being in recorded history to have had (or to have claimed to have had) visions, insights or psychologically abnormal interludes of a metaphysical nature. The modern world scorns phenomena which defy categorical assimilation into determinist science and philosophy. We learn of fewer "theophanies" (one of PKD's many ways of referring to his own "pink-beam" experiences of 1974) not necessarily because they have become any less common; the possibility exists for them to be every bit as frequent as ever, but unfashionable to discuss openly.

"Philip K. Dick was an extraordinarily gutsy writer to have made so little effort to disguise the facts of his particular inspiration. I feel certain that were he to have had your blue beam deliver its zap to his unsuspecting noggin, he would not have kept mum until on his deathbed. He would have incorporated it, or tried to incorporate it, into his understanding of the universe. For him, this would have involved writing about it, and publishing, too, even if it pained him to do so.

"If Philip K. Dick was not crazy, then we all are indebted to him for trying so hard for so long to explore the meaning of these evidently valid human experiences. And if he was crazy, then we all ought to respect his determination to help himself, and others like him, to cope with unfathomable confusion, disorientation, emotional and intellectual suffering, and loneliness. Personally, I believe the firmness of his sanity was what motivated his intense and prolonged research. His reason remained sound de-

spite overwhelming provocation. In the face of a pink beam experience, how many of us could have continued our lives as if nothing had happened? Damn few. Where another man might have lost his mind, Philip K. Dick tightened his grip on his own, and the obsessive coloration it gave to his writing was a mere side effect of his determination to make sense of something resistant to traditional empirical analysis. What other kind of response would be more sane?

"The interview with Tim Powers and James P. Blaylock (in PKDS #8) did indeed contain material which reminds us of the idiosyncratic eccentricity of the man, but it has been a long time since eccentricity constituted mental illness. And, in fact, Tim Powers made a point in the interview of his own confirmed belief that Philip K. Dick was not crazy, not by any definition. He stated, "...saying he (Philip K. Dick) was paranoid: Superficially that sounds correct and can cover most of the facts, but it won't really work in the long run. ... Too many screwy things really did happen to him, and too many of his outlandish dreams turned out to be all too well-founded." He then goes on to cite examples.

"The controversy surrounding Philip K. Dick's sanity is not new. It was difficult to resolve while he was alive; it is impossible to reach decisive conclusions at this late date. I have responded to your remarks mostly for the sake of clarifying the intent of the anecdotes related in the interview. However, inasmuch as my blood-oath to the Philip K. Dick Worship Society requires me to proselytize at every opportunity, I hope this polemic will not be mistaken for an unproductive philippic."

((Andy, I admired Phil when he was alive. I loved some of his books (especially *UBIK*) and continue to admire his honesty and integrity.

((But at the same time I think he became increasingly paranoid schizophrenic in a very interesting way---as perhaps only writers can---and that this combination of "inspired" religious thought and writing ability and inner integrity is what so fascinates so many people now. ((The "Philip K. Dick Worship Society" remark was triggered by the phenomenon of fascination with weird literary people which surfaces after they die. For some it is blatantly commercial (especially publishers)

but for most it is a subconscious manifestation of...what? A need for Guidance and Meaning which cannot be found elsewhere in the Establishment Religious Outlets? A feeling that crazy people of intelligence and talent have a pipeline to Mysteries and Answers because of their visions and other selves?

((The religious aspect especially seems to be a key element.

((I thank you for the latest special, double issue of the PKDS NEWSLETTER (#9/10) which is an audio tape cassette: Side One is a Philip K. Dick conversation with Paul Williams, and Side Two is Philip K. Dick Alone, Notes for work in progress, circa August, 1974. (Membership in the PKDS is \$6. per year. Write to Box 611, Glen Ellen, CA 95442.)

((I discovered too late that my tape recorder/player, which had been borrowed by a friend (and returned sans case, sans mike) had had its controls jammed and broken. He no longer my friend. He made no confession of the damage, pretended the case and mike were not with the machine when he borrowed it, and made no offer to repair it or buy a new one to replace it. So I couldn't play the cassette as I wished. Next issue I'll have a commentary on it.

((Write again if you have a bone to pick. That's part of SFR's function: to provide a forum and to be a bone-yard.))

LETTER FROM FERMANO G. GOUVEA
18 Robinson St. #12
Cambridge, MA 02138 Nov. 19, 1985

'I agree completely with your assessment of the article in HARPER'S. It seems that some establishment critics feel that there is a need to periodically bash SF and declare it to be unworthy. There seems to be a hidden agenda here, to the effect that anything that people read for pleasure must therefore be of no artistic value. I am sure that you noticed that Markley chose to discuss SF that is either "popular" (in the sales sense) or prestigious among other establishment critics (Delany, Lem, Hoban). One feels certain that he would despise just as strongly the mainstream fiction that hits the bestseller list. Gene Wolfe has argued that we are better off without the respect of such critics, and I think he is essentially correct.

'Last, a note to Uncle Orson: I like the reviews very much, but I do agree that commenting on fewer stories would be an improvement. I'm curious to see how much overlap there'll be between his choices for best of the year and those of the canonical anthologists.'

LETTER FROM CARL GLAUER
2803 Avondale Dr., Johnson City, TN
37601 Dec. 25, 1985

'I had a completely opposite reaction to Luc Sante's HARPER'S article on SF

(Alien Thoughts, SFR #57). He quite clearly articulated the reasons why I stopped reading the stuff in any quantity several years ago. The writing is atrocious. There is a stifling sameness to it all. You surely must know that the only real attraction SF has is in its outrageous ideas and its appeal to the power fantasy needs of the lonely (mostly male) adolescent. Once you have encountered all the basic SF ideas (and it takes a surprisingly short time to do this), and once you grow up and no longer need the fantasies, SF ceases to be interesting. The individual who persists in reading SF regularly beyond the late teens or early twenties can legitimately be regarded as emotionally fixated in adolescence, and admittedly there are a few of those around. (Ahem!) I agree that Sante was probably motivated (at least in part) by a desire to trash SF because of its (economic) threat to the literary establishment, but he does make some very telling points in the process. So why am I reading SFR? I still find SF people interesting, although I have very little use for the literature anymore. I suspect this is true of much of your (post-adolescent) SFR readership.'

((I am more tolerant and less snobbish than most, I guess; it's easy to play the more-mature-than-thou game. (Tell me what you like to read and I'll play one-upmanship.) I suppose the position could be taken that any reading of any kind of fiction betrays immaturity and a desire to escape reality. That's also the most-favorite attack used on TV and movies. It's an elitist game which itself betrays immaturity. How's that for a counterattack?))

LETTER FROM LOU FISHER
Member: SFWA
Julie Drive, Box 328, Rd 4
Hopewell Junction, NY 12553
November 19, 1985

'Believe me, I think a lot of Orson Scott Card, and I admire his ability to read and review such a huge amount of material... but I think he's off base in his unwarranted criticism of present tense writing.

'He is, of course, entitled to his opinion. But he should realize that that's what it is, merely an opinion, a matter of taste. Some people like present tense I love it myself; I'd rather read a present tense story than any other kind. (One of my favorite authors is Damon Runyon, who carries it to extremes, by not using a single word in past tense.) Obviously, there are a number of editors who like it, too, judging by its constant appearance in the better magazines and the BEST OF anthologies.

'Present tense is a style, a method, a voice, and as such it suits certain pieces and not others. Granted, when present tense is used only for literary effect, it can irk the hell out of you. Just the same, like a particular point of view, it can be absolutely the right thing for the story at hand. In my own writing, I always try to feel how a story

needs to be told; occasionally that turns out to be present tense, and in those cases nothing else will do.

'As I said, it's all right with me if Orson Scott Card doesn't like the present tense. There are certain styles that turn me off, too. I'd rather, though, that he didn't proclaim himself an expert in the matter, that he would just say that he doesn't like it personally.

'How do you tell a story? Any way is good, Scott, if it's artistic.'

((I once---about 1965---told Sam Merwin, Jr. (then my editor) that I was going to do a novel in Second Person. I thought it would be very effective for a sex novel. He disagreed. He made me change my mind by saying something like 'Don't do it. The readers don't like anything but the good old Third Person technique; it's what they're used to and it's what they're comfortable with and editors and publishers' see no point in making readers nervous or unhappy in any way.'

I got the impression I'd be wasting my time and his by writing such a partial and sending it to him. So I didn't.))

LETTER FROM ROBERT SABELLA
13 Marshall Trail
Hopatcong, NJ 07843 Nov. 16, 1985

'I have noticed a disturbing trend in m.a.h. pul.shed science fiction recently which was confirmed by Orson Scott Card's short fiction reviews and the various book reviews in SF7: I am referring to the pre-occupation with nuclear war and the resulting nuclear winter. I realize such concerns dominate our lives nowadays (and deservedly so), but science fiction should not be merely a pale reflection of the overriding issues of the real world,



but an extrapolation of all aspects of it. I wonder how much of this nuclear concern reflects the writers' fear of our immediate future and how much shows a dearth of creativity on their parts? I have gotten bored with such stories, much as I got bored in the late sixties when everybody was jumping on the ecological bandwagon. And that was not nearly as pervasive as the current nuclear winter trend."

((Most writers and most editors in SF are young and Concerned. They don't want their future atomized. The anti-nuke activists have permeated the media and the colleges with their protests, and it's inevitable that that basic appeal would influence idealistic writers and editors, especially the nurturing instincts of females in those positions. I oppose the arms race, too, but for different reasons.))

LETTER FROM ORSON SCOTT CARD

546 Lindley Road
Greensboro, NC 27410 Nov 16, 1985

"When somebody writes a letter taking me to task for something, I usually let it stand -- especially when the letter writer is correct. For instance, when Algis Budrys upbraided me for my words about L. Ron Hubbard, my only response would have been to shuffle my feet and say, 'Well, yeah.'"

"And I've got to do pretty much that about John Shirley's reminder that my flippant comments about "Fish in Lake Erie" were ignoring the fact that pollution is still a serious problem, perhaps more now than ever. He's right of course. But in the main, my original review of his story stands. It doesn't matter a bit whether a polemical writer was right. If he was ineffective, he might as well not have bothered. I keep putting my head against that one myself."

"Joe Sanders took me to task for my view of NEURONMANKER. I'll be sorry if he decides that because we disagree about one story he won't ever agree with me about another. I made it clear that my criticisms of Gibson's novel were entirely moral, not aesthetic; that is precisely the area where criticism is least reliable. Every story contains the unconsciously expressed moral universe of the storyteller, which is recreated in the reader's memory. The reader instinctively edits the story to conform to his own moral universe, subtly altering both, or he rejects the moral universe and does not believe it. With NEURONMANKER, I generally did the latter, and Sanders the former."

"Many times I have wished for someone to engage me in heartfelt, intelligent and entertaining debate in these pages. Tim Sullivan certainly has the passion and wit to do so, but unfortunately his letter in #57 did not respond to a single idea in my #59. In fact, in internal evidence in his letter makes it plain that he did not even bother to read more than a small part of my article before dipping his pen in bile. How can we get down in the mud and wrestle, when he refuses to grapple with me? There can't be much glory in throwing down a straw man with the name "Orson Scott Card" stapled to its brow."

"Tim's letter particularly disappointed me because I have always given the works that I review a complicated reading before commenting on them. I thought Tim might have felt our friendship obligated him to be as courteous to me. Even if I had actually said what he assumed I said, the intensity of his anger is surprising. After all, I didn't revoke anyone's poetic license. Writers who disagree with me have merely to ignore me, and their careers will proceed uninterrupted."

"I suppose I could avoid such wrath as Tim's by devoting my column to clever attacks on writers who obviously have not mastered the basic skills of storytelling. But I have always felt that such novices are the most fragile of writers, and they should be nurtured, not attacked, until they have had the time to learn their craft. So don't review a story at all unless I believe it has merit and deserves attention."

"Thus, like an impertinent child, I point out flaws (when I find them) exclusively in the works of writers who are my peers or my betters. Even more presumptuously, I also attempt to discover general principles of storytelling through my examination of many specific cases. Tim has shown why it is safe to display unorthodox ideas in public places -- people with closed minds will always mistake them for one kind of orthodoxy or another."

"What makes me feel that my column might be worth the effort I expend on it are the many readers with open minds who have written to me privately to offer intelligent disagreement with this or other columns. The dialogue that developed helped me change or sharpen my own thinking, and I hope it did something of the kind for them. These writers were unfailingly courteous, and I am grateful to them for receiving my thoughts and repaying me tenfold with their own."

"One thing that several of my correspondents complained about, with justice, was the label "The Artsy-Fartsy Fiction Factory." I would recall those words, if I could, because I never meant them to apply to the fine and gentle people that I listed. That heading was written in an early draft of the column, when it began with a long (and boring) diatribe on the influence of academia on fiction in general. The term was then meant to apply to American college English departments. Later drafts deleted the diatribe -- but the heading never found its way onto my screen again, and I forgot it was there. I was careless in my haste to get the column in on time; I did not proofread, and as a result I inadvertently created a term of ridicule for some of the finest writers in our field. I regret it deeply."

"I am somewhat relieved to learn that many of them are taking it in good humor. I hear rumors that some on my list may even attend conventions wearing their proclaiming their membership in "ARFF," which would delight me, since I intended my list more to honor than to criticize those who were on it."

"However, I do hope such badges are worn only by writers I actually named. Mike Bishop, Ed Bryant, Pat Cadigan, Jack Dann, Gardner Dozois, William Gibson, Jim Kelly, John Kessel, Stan Robinson, Carter Scholz, Lucius Shepard, Bruce Sterling



and Mike Swanwick made my list because "of all the established writers in the field, (they) 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." It would be pathetic indeed if any who lacked the talent or achievements to make my list on their own merits should usurp the title without my consent: the badge would be their shameful confession that they can hope to shine only in reflected light."

((We tend to forget the other players in this game: the editors and publishers. Writers don't just send in stories which are automatically rushed into print. Editors choose to print stories, and editors are usually operating according to guidelines and/or priorities and/or taboos imposed by publishers. We have to give those people both credit and blame; it isn't just the writers involved in these matters... though we'd like to think so, eh?))

LETTER FROM CRISTY MARX
JOB 1952, Wrightwood, CA 92397
Nov 10, 1985

"I appreciated the almost-but-not-quite-a-review of THE SISTERS OF STEEL in #57. The way I see it, any publicity is better than no publicity."

"Since I originally sent you those issues, there have been significant turnabouts. Issue #8 will be the last one from Marvel's Epic Comics line. I'm currently negotiating with another publisher to continue the book in a Graphic Novel format with a new visual look."

"I may enjoy the dubious distinction (to the best of my knowledge) of being the first comic book writer to have a book cancelled because I dared to publicly take a stand against censorship. You may find the story interesting."

"After the first three seriously-toned issues, I opted for a change of pace with #4, "The Girls' Night Out" which was rowdy and raunchy. I pushed to the limits of permitted language and there seemed to be no problem with the script as such in, nor when the pencils, inking, lettering or coloring was turned in."

"The day that the comic had to be sent to the printer, I received a call about certain changes that suddenly had to be made. A panel containing a visual joke of a male antagonist wearing a spiked codpiece had to be replaced by a talking head. The words "kitts," "knockers," "balls" and "jugs" had to be changed to something more acceptable. (The words "slut," "whore," "bastard" and "shit" were ok. You figure it.)

'I could either make the changes myself or have someone there make them, the latter choice being anathema to me. I was furious, but if I held up the book in order to fight the changes, it would ship late and that's a kiss of death in the comics industry. I'm sure it would have been blamed on me.

'I discovered the true cause of the sudden, inexplicable censorship later. There was a meeting held by a powerful distributor who covers the southern US. A major Marvel vp was there. A distributor from Georgia stood up, having a copy of another Epic Comic (completely unrelated to SISTERHOOD OF STEEL except for having the same publisher) and was outraged because it contained the words "penis" and "masturbation." (Are we beginning to see a pattern here?) Another distributor was also upset with Epic for not warning the distributors about the "mature" content, but not about the words themselves. Yet it was my understanding from day one that Epic Comics was supposed to represent mature material geared for the older audience.

'The unfortunate trickle-down effect of this confrontation was that all the Epic Comics in the office at that time were scoured for offending words and a quick censorship purge was imposed.

'In addition to writing the comic, I also write a personal newsletter called SCROLLS OF THE SISTERHOOD which is sold by subscription only to Sisterhood readers. I promoted SCROLLS in issue #4 onward. It contains info about the creative team, behind the scenes stuff, unpublished art, and lots of loc.

'In the first issue of SCROLLS, I went on a bit of rant about my loathing of censorship in general and the censorship of SOS #4 specifically, and told the above story. I made it as fair as possible, but I'm not shy about expressing strong opinions.

'In a moment of incredible stupidity I sent a copy of the issue to the chief male editor (I think I felt obligated or something). A few days later, he called my agent and cancelled negotiations for a Graphic Novel which were well under way. When I asked him for his reasons, he indicated that if I felt so strongly about those changes, I'd probably be impossible to work with. This from the man who placed an editorial cartoon in the frontpiece of the comic joking about the fact that he hadn't read it!

'So it looks like I broke one hell of an unwritten law and was suitably punished by Marvel/Epic (via this editor) because of it. Worse yet, I allowed a similar letter about the censorship to be published in one of the major comics trade magazines. Now some people in the industry are edgy about me. I do no-nos. I oppose censorship, get pissed off about religious fuckwits who want to impose their moral standards upon my readers and affect my livelihood, and dare to do it in public. I am a baasad girl.

'The pendulum swing to the Moral Right frightens me. I'm really pissed off with the music business for kowtowing to those broads in Washington. The music people sold out, of course, because they want their copyright-royalty tax scheme to pass Congress. Do you know there are some record retailers who are having trouble with landlords who want to include clauses which will allow them

to dictate what kind of records the retailer may or may not carry?

'Back to the Sisterhood -- Mr. Varney's astute observation about financial responsibility is correct, but only partially so. God knows I don't make a living from comics. It can be done, if one is a prolific hack or hits upon some incredibly commercial formula. I make my living primarily from writing syndicated animation, all of which is based upon toy production lines, so SOS is my main outlet for creative freedom (such as it is) and the enormous amount of promotion I've done at my own expense is more for my satisfaction than anything else. Neither Mike Vosburg (the artist) or I will see any royalties.

'To clarify some figures: 100,000 is a high sales figure for a newstand comic and unheard-of for a specialty-store comic such as SISTERHOOD OF STEEL. The biggest selling newstand comics (like SUPER MAN and THE X-MEN) get close to the 200,000 range at best due to: a) the popularity of the character; b) the massive distribution of newstand books; and c) the massive publicity that the mainline Marvel comics get. The most successful specialty-store comic I know of gets into the 60,000s. My book has sold in a lower range which barely allows Marvel/Epic to recoup its advances to Mike and I, due to Epic's high overhead. For a smaller, independent publisher, however, our sales figures would be welcome.

'What is important is that I created and own the copyright to my series. If I can sell it as a film, TV series or what have you, then I might see some real profit.

'It was perhaps foolish of me to ask for a review of half a series in which the entire 8 issues work together as a whole. When #8 appears in December, I'll send you the rest of the set, purely to allow you and/or Mr. Varney to read the complete series. You may find the entire entity more satisfying than half of it.

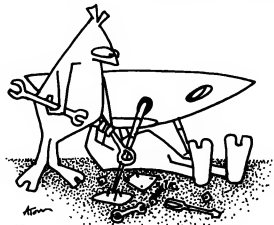
'I've begun a novel of the Sisterhood and am offering it as a novel-by-subscription on a chapter-by-chapter basis, as an experiment. Do you know of anyone who has tried this before?

'By the way, neither THE SISTERHOOD OF STEEL nor SCROLLS is "feminist." I am not a feminist. I'm a storyteller and a writer first; and if I'd allow myself to be labeled anything (besides a trouble-maker), it would have to be "humanist."

'The readers I have are far above the norm of comic book readers I've encountered in the past: a 38-year-old woman who shares them with her husband and kids; a father who encourages his 9-year-old daughter to enjoy them; lesbians who are pleased to see some kind of non-sensational approach to homosexuality; feminists who like the strong roles of the women; male and female readers who love the historic and military detail and especially the realistic approach to a female military society. Many, many of them have compared it to Marion Zimmer Bradley's FREE AMAZONS (which I haven't read, so I have to take their word for it). I'm pleased to say that I've only pulled in one nut case out of all of these.

'One last question, if I may. I currently have about 127 subscribers to SCROLLS (slightly more males than females). Is this poor, fair, ok for a personalizing of this kind? I've never done anything like this before and holy christ, am I suddenly coming to appreciate your production comments in SFRI! They're a lot of work...but they get into the blood, don't they?'

((I thank you for the inside look at comics writing-illustration, and I extend my sympathy; the free-lance artist-writer is at the mercy of almost everyone, as you note. And yet everyone in "control" is terrified of losing money/markets. I have sympathy for a publisher who is faced with tough choices and heavy pressures from distributors who use their power to force changes. They in turn fear losing money due to possible boycotts by "concerned citizen groups". They are more vulnerable in the south to that kind of censorship activity. And yet, as recent stories in the major media assert, Jerry Falwell is no longer the powerful dragon he is supposed to be; polls have shown him to be disliked and distrusted by a majority of people, especially in the younger generations. Politicians he has backed have lost elections and his support and endorsement is virtually a kiss of death; now. I'm not familiar with norms for comic newsletters; 127 is okay for a personalzine, lousy for a money-mak-



ing effort, I suspect. I at one time had about 500 subbers for RICHARD E. GEIS, and at present, with the revived REG/THIE NAKED ID have about 300. The circulation is a measure of the larger circulation of SFR, since almost all NAKED ID subbers came from SFR's subscription base.

Yes, and yes and yes, self-publishing is an insidious blood disease which, once contracted, rarely leaves the victim. May Ghod have mercy on your soul, Christy.))



LETTER FROM GLEN COOK
4106 Flora Pl., St Louis, MO 63110
1985

'I write every eight years whether I have something to say or not.

'I am surprised neither you nor Bob Shaw saw the obvious in re SF. If there is no connection between victims in the past and only death tying them in the present, the connection exists in the future. Somewhere up ahead somebody (sing. or pl.) is getting rid of the ancestors of his enemies -- be those people, ideas or gizmos.

'Somewhere a few hundred years in the direction the earth and we are moving there is a monster space station in a very stable orbit boasting a huge aiming computer and a pulse beam tachyon gun and the operators are picking off ancestors whose progeny will become embarrassing. Greg Benford could explain it better than I, probably.'

((There you go, now we've got two good novel ideas for the Spontaneous Human Combustion phenomenon. Are you listening, Bob Shaw?))

LETTER FROM DAVID L. TRAVIS
POB 2617, Gullowhee, NC 28723
Nov. 10, 1985

'The letter from Darrell Schweitzer in SFR, Winter 1985, struck me with a few thoughts.

'I agree that misbehavior at conventions ranging from extreme rudeness to outright destruction, is a serious problem and needs to be addressed. I doubt the measures outlined would work, but I

don't have answers. Perhaps the attitude shown by the statement: "fans are still well behaved," and they cause problems is part of the difficulty, as is the word he suggests for "strangers we ignore at conventions:" drab.

'Fans have a joking reference to "SOF," Secret Masters of Fandom. The trouble is that far too many of the self-defined Trufans really believe they are-or should be MOF, (No Secret).

'These persons -- and the last paragraph of Darrell's letter seems to indicate that he is one -- think that if they don't already know someone, that person isn't worth knowing. Perhaps the "Strangers We Don't Speak To At Conventions" (emphasis added) do cause some of the problems. And perhaps they are reacting to being ignored or shunned.

'When I first started going to conventions about 20 years ago, I enjoyed some of the panels, being able to find some books and see some art. But most of all I enjoyed the chance at the wide variety of conversations freely available even to a stranger. I'd hate to think those days were gone -- but maybe they are.

((Violence at conventions isn't done because "sniffle" nobody talks to anybody. People almost always know somebody at cons, or go in twos and threes and groups... Vandalism and fighting at cons is the same as that at bars, rock concerts, sports events: liquor combined with anxiety or underlying rage causes, in a non-home public place, a release mechanism. Those people with low self-control thresholds, under pressure of various kinds, in a "permissive" atmosphere---slip over the line on occasion.

Approximately the same mix of people will attend all cons, and I'm sure you'll always be able to partake of interesting, even challenging conversations.))

LETTER FROM DARRELL SCHWEITZER
113 Deepdale Rd, Stratford, PA 19087
December 12, 1985

'I find myself mostly in sympathy with Tim Sullivan's letter this issue, but I wonder if even he knows what he means by the statement "The cyberpunks are among us, already mutating into ghod-knows-what, while Scott still carps about the mild stylistic experimentation that the punks refer to as 'the boring old farts'..."

'Well, the alleged "cyberpunk" movement in SF has already been the subject of an unsuccessful panel at a WorldCon, but far more than the New Wave, this seems to be something manufactured by small-scale hype. It is almost literally a movement without any members. Most people, when they use this term, point to William Gibson, and maybe to John Shirley and Rudy Rucker (who has been around a while, and only seems to have been

drafted into the alleged movement by retrospect). But after that, well... who? And would Gibson, Shirley and Rucker agree that they write anything more than Gibson, Shirley and Rucker stories? There actually was a science fiction story entitled "Cyberpunk." It was by Bruce Bettke and was published in AMAZING. But no one seemed to have noticed. So where does this leave us?

'I think there are some attempts to incorporate the Punk lists into science fiction -- Bluejay is certainly advertising the new John Shirley novel that way. But this is merely the latest manifestation of that most ephemeral species, with-it science fiction. It is no more startling than THE BUTTERFLY KID or Randall Garrett's "The Hepests of Venus" (1962) or even a story Henry Kuttner had in ASTOUNDING in 1938, about the discovery of the Planet of the Jitterbugs. There is always someone trying to write SF about the latest trendiness. We never remember the stories very long, though. There is a lesson in that.

'As for "cyberpunk" SF, I think we merely have a few critics, writers and fans who needed something to talk about, and so they have declared the existence of a Movement, when nothing of the sort has happened.

'Tim also invokes the New Wave quite incorrectly, when you consider that the New Wave is a thing of the (fannishly speaking) relatively remote past. It is history, just like the Thought Variants era. It predates the reading experience of a good deal of the present SF audience.

'The issue is not so much what it was, but how it has been remembered. Fans today have less sense of history than ever before, and sure enough, the New Wave has mostly been remembered in a distorted, negative fashion. This does bring us back to the Sullivan/Rucker argument about Artsy-Fartsy Fiction, because the New Wave seems to be primarily remembered as incoherent gibberish. One fan explained to me not all that long ago that a New Wave story is any story which "uses avant-garde techniques to hide the lack of content. He did not see it in terms of an era at all. To him, any story which was sufficiently murky, badly written and poorly structured could qualify as New Wave. Therefore, magazine slushpiles are full of New Wave stories, only few get published anymore.

'Another case: I was explaining to a woman about 22 years old that LAST WAVE magazine was "an attempt to revive the New Wave." And she looked at me funny and said, "Why?" When pressed, she admitted that her idea of New Wave was "those awful ORBIT stories." She would not believe that the New Wave was seen as something positive by some people, and that it had its vociferous defenders.

'So that's how New Wave seems to be remembered by readers who lack a historical bent. It translates into a marketing problem for Scott Edelman. New Wave is primarily remembered as what Orson Scott Card now calls the Artsy-Fartsy story. Clifton Fadiman had a more elegant term: anti-narrative, which he defined as "a literary technique which prevents the story from being told."

'Now you and I know that New Wave had a lot more to it. When you consider that STAND ON ZAVARBAH, CAME CONCENTRATION, THIS IMPORTANT, THE EINSTEIN INTERSECTION, THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS, BEHOLD THE

MAN, UBIK AND THE CRYSTAL WORLD all appeared within the space of less than five years, you can only come to the conclusion that the late 1940s were one of the most wonderfully varied and creative periods in the history of SF. It deserves to be remembered as a Golden Age.

'Which is also a distortion. Remember that the Golden Age of ASTOUNDING was contemporary with the Bung Beetle Age of AMAZING (after a phrase, I think originated by Damon Knight, that under Ray Palmer the oldest SF magazine had died and been reborn a dung beetle). Most of the other magazines weren't too smashing, either. The Golden Age was very strictly limited to one title.

'There really was rampant artsy-fartsiness during the New Wave era, but that was not the major topic of the controversy, as you may recall. (I don't know that Sullivan was around then.) Even us rascals couldn't agree on what to react against. J.J. Pierce's whole Crusade was directed against anti-humanistic, anti-rational, realism (as he might have put it; "realism," his opponents might have said). In other words, he was objecting to the content, not the lack of content in supposed New Wave stories. My own objections had more to do with lack of content. Pierce said the evil as things like 2001 and BUG JACK BARRON. To me, what was wrong with the era, was that there were regularly published writers who were not storytellers at all, but purveyors of short sketches and murky little fragments. This is what my friend meant by "those awful ORBIT stories." Actually, QUARK was a much greater offender but people seem to remember ORBIT and NEW WORLDS, which actually published more substantial material. It was not possible to get published in SF without having learned any of the basics of fiction: character, structure, plot, idea development, dialogue. I can name names. They probably won't mean much to contemporary readers: Langdon Jones, James Salis, Graham Charnock. I would also include Ballard's "condensed novels" in this area (though definitely not his other fiction, much of which I admire). There are many others, not worth listing.

'The common denominator these writers have is that they have not survived. Salis has actually published a couple fragments recently, but hardly anyone noticed, any more than they noticed when he was prolific during the New Wave era. It was hardly a center of controversy. It wasn't possible to get bent out of shape by what the Artsy Fartsy writers were saying -- because they weren't saying anything.

'In the end, economics takes its toll. I call this the "what is this shit?" syndrome. That is, a pro writer or a devoted fan may have a long and interesting argument over a piece of Artsy Fartsy writing, but the average reader will say, "What is this shit?" and go on to something else. This cost ORBIT, QUARK and NEW WORLDS their readerships. It caused the New Wave to be remembered in an entirely negative sense, which is a distortion.

'Actually, the Artsy Fartsy writing Orson Scott Card is complaining about is nothing to do with the New Wave era. Writers never seem to learn: there are always ones who want to screw around and show off, rather than tell a story. They always lose their readership. God knows that there must be change and innova-

tion -- or else we would all be writing like RALPH 124C41+ -- but we might desire innovation as a change in technique which enables the writer to convey more. Artsy Fartsy writing conveys less. Of course, Artsy Fartsiness is in the eye of the beholder, but the condition can be terminal. Look at modern poetry. Someone was quoted in PUBLISHERS WEEKLY a while back as saying that the problem with poetry publishing today is that poets don't buy enough books. The implication being, of course, that no one else was expected to. To some extent the mainstream literary short story has fallen into the same trap. So far science fiction has escaped, by avoiding the artsy Fartsy and going for the innovative instead.'

((I would again remark that any New Wave movement or accumulation of Artsy-Fartsy fiction is the work of editors as much or more than that of writers. And we know what happens to editors, don't we? After a few years (with a few notable exceptions) they are fired, quit, or move on to other editing jobs. We really should examine editorial tastes and policies more, to get a more true reading of sf and fantasy today---and yesterday.))

LETTER FROM SHELDON TEITELBAUM
3403 Newcastle Avenue
Encino, CA 91316 Oct 12, 1985

'The illo on page 29 of your last issue featured a badly misspelled Hebrew word which, spelled otherwise, would have aptly described the person who drew it without first checking with someone who actually speaks the language.

'This wasn't camel shit, mind you, when compared to a novel recently published by Baen. The thing was called DIASPORA, which merely establishes that either the writer, somebody called Yates, or the editors at Baen can't spell in English. Indeed, some of the sentences in the book were obviously devised by some of those people you've dispatched to the American underclass. But the Hebrew! Most of it was grossly wrong, either in terms of grammar, pronunciation or usage. And there was so much of it, the fools who packaged the book, in what was obviously a cynical attempt to cash in on a ready market for Israel-related tech SF, provided several pages of glossary at the back. The author had, quite obviously, never resided in Israel for more than a few days, and didn't know the place from Disneyworld. It is difficult, otherwise, to account for the conspicuous absence of sefaradim anywhere in the story -- the characters affect Yiddish cadences in their speaking and drink tea out of a glass. Of course, Yates may have simply wiped out all the darkies in his/her idiotic preface, which depicts a bozo nuclear attack directed against the Jewish state. That's one way of dealing with the fact that these people comprise the majority in present-day Israel. But was it so difficult for the goons who published this crap to yank some poor DIB off the streets of New York and pay him ten bucks to check the Hebrew?

'Incidentally, at Denvention some years ago, Kathleen Sky described a plot she had in mind which was rather similar to that if DIASPORA. Is that you, Yates, ol' bean?

'A note to publishers, by the way. If you want your SF or horror titles reviewed in THE JERUSALEM POST WEEKEND MAGAZINE, which is published each Friday simultaneously in New York (and enjoys a distribution of some 50,000), send them to me care of the above mentioned address.'

((Ah, you are too quick to leap to the attack, Sheldon, too quick to condemn with insult and sneer. I wrote Randy Mohr about your complaint re the illo on page 29, SFR #57, and he wrote back as follows (with illos which I include below.))

LETTER FROM RANDY MOHR
EL213 Crown, Spokane, WA 99207

'Well, yes it could be a badly spelled Hebrew word depending on what I was intending to write -- I think I was trying to write "SHALOM" ---If that's the case I really botched it. Shalom in Hebrew is (I think; as close as this guy can get):

"שלום"

'What I may have written instead was "SCHMUCK" ---So, I have to apologize for inadequate research (but, I took a year's worth of Biblical Hebrew in college)!

'Well, next time I'll just make up an alien word and write it in Latinized Sanskrit; much easier, much easier!!



LETTER FROM F.M. BUSBY
2852 14th Avenue, West
Seattle, WA 98119 Nov. 2, 1985

'Re black protagonists on covers (you in response to Mike Resnick). Dill in March '80 put Zelde M'tana moderately black on the cover of her own book. Somehow ZELDE sold 26K copies during the same period that DEMU TRILOGY, out

same money from Pocket, sold three times as many. A longtime friend and SF writer suggested to me that the problem might not be distribution, but that Middle America simply doesn't buy books with black protagonists on the cover. I'd hate to think so, but maybe we'll see. Berkley bought *ELITE* for reissue come January '86. I haven't seen cover proofs. Check back with me a year from now.

((Perhaps Zelide had a double commercial whammy to overcome: male readers don't like heroine-dominated novels (it isn't macho to identify with a woman, and especially so if the woman is black or tan or brown...or green...or orange...), which, mostly, left the novel with the female readership for buyers. And even white females might have residual, unconscious racism/xenophobia enough to tip the buy/not-buy impulse enough to Not Buy. The eyes shift to another title or another author...))

LETTER FROM STEVE PERRY
14575 SW Village Lane
Beaverton, OR 97007 Oct 31, 1985

"Thank Gene DeWeese for the review of *THE MAN WHO NEVER MISSED*. It wasn't altogether positive, but hey, any ink is good ink. At least he recognized that the inconclusive ending was deliberate -- TMNMN is the first volume of a trilogy. Yeah, I know, it isn't so identified, but that's not my doing. Ace/Berk decided for marketing reasons, to put the books out that way. (Each book should stand alone, and I tried to make 'em work so they would, but there are obviously lines that move through all three, otherwise, why do it in three chunks? (That wasn't my idea, either, I pitched a single fat book, and was advised that it would be better and I richer to do it as three. Ours is not to reason why.) Um. Anyway, there will be two titles in the series -- *MATADORA* and *THE MACHIAVELLI INTERFACE*."

"Incidentally, regarding the dialogue between you and Mike Resnick in *157* about putting black characters on book covers, I have to point out that DAW isn't the only house with guts. The aforementioned *MATADORA* stars Dirisha Zuri, and she is definitely featured on the cover. Rich Berry's *illo* of Dirisha looks a lot more like Grace Jones than it does Morgan Fairchild. I told Ginjer Buchanan, my editor at Ace, that I was worried about getting the same treatment as Steve Barnes did on *STREETLETHAL*, and was assured that it would not happen. It did not."

((I'm not familiar with the treatment of *STREETLETHAL*. Anyone care to enlighten me? Off the record, if desired.))

drawn by: Walter 1986



LETTER FROM NEIL ELLIOTT
2700 W. Coyle, Chicago, IL 60645
Nov. 4, 1985

"It's interesting you should mention verification. By chance I was listening to the radio one day, and an old musician was saying how Al Capone had this thing of tearing a hundred in half and telling him to get the other half for playing as Al wanted."

"That was just a year ago, I think. Woodford referred to this habit of using hundreds and tearing the bill in half. Though of course, for those times a fifty, or even a twenty, would have been just as effective."

"This was an interesting confirmation of Woodford."

((For those who came in late: Neil is referring to my review a couple issues back of MY YEARS WITH CAPONE Jack Woodford -- Al Capone -- 1924-1932 By Neil Elliott (Woodford Memorial Editions, POB 55085, Seattle, WA 98155. \$10.95.). Jack is probably more known now than when he was alive. Funny how literary mavericks last so long, sometimes.))

LETTER FROM ROB MASTERS
POB 85424, Seattle, WA 98145
Nov 21, 1985

"Elton Elliott reports on a conversation with Alberta Quigley, a woman in Albany, Oregon who managed to get Dungeons & Dragons banned from the public schools. When asked if she wanted the game prohibited in stores as well, she replied, 'No, that's freedom of whatever.' Elliott says he finds this comment alarming. I can't see why. It sounds to me like Mrs. Quigley has an unusually good understanding of the difference between public and private property."

"Elliott interprets Quigley's phrase, 'freedom of whatever,' as 'a cavalier dismissal of basic private free enterprise rights.' But that's obviously not what it was, because she was specifically affirming people's right to purchase what they want without government interference. It seems more likely that the phrase was just a bit of awkwardness, a groping for words: being able to buy a game represents... Elliott... the press? of expression? Well, anyway, it's freedom of something -- of whatever -- and that's the point she seems to have wanted to make."

"As to banning the game from public schools, Mrs. Quigley correctly points out that there's no more justification for an in-tax-supported institutions than there is for prayer. If it's unacceptable to take tax money from an atheist to pay for the teaching of a religion, it's equally unacceptable to spend tax money on D&D when some citizens consider the game occultist, mystical, etc. Unlike a private store, a government-run school is financed (involuntarily) by people at large -- who therefore have a say in how it is run. Quigley seems to grasp this distinction clearly, perhaps more clearly than Elliott."

"The argument 'I'll help pay for it, therefore I'll help run it' can, of course, be extended to all sorts of other issues. This is one of the fatal weaknesses in the whole concept of public education. Government-operated schools inevitably become political battlegrounds where controversial issues -- religion, evolution, sex, racism, equality, etc. -- are settled by who has the most votes and power rather than by standards of good pedagogy. The only way out of that familiar morass is to get the government out of education. Then schools would be like private, competing stores -- and people who didn't like Dungeons & Dragons at a particular school wouldn't have to go through a political process to get rid of it. They could just take their business elsewhere."

((You make a good, rational point, but Elton was there and heard the tone, the inflection in her voice, which, with the rest of her conversation convinced him of her attitude as he reported it. You can't win this argument, Rob; you wasn't there.))

LETTER FROM MILT STEVENS
November 23, 1985

"'Oath of Fealty: No Thud, Some Blunders' was a title that didn't seem to fit the article that followed it very well. From the title, I was expecting a killer review. Instead, the article is a fairly straight critical piece."

"I've been considering Greg Benford's five characteristics of the reactionary utopia:

1. Lack of diversity
2. Static time
3. Nostalgic and/or technophobic
4. An authority figure
5. Social regulation through guilt

"I don't think 'Social Regulation Through Guilt' is a very good defining characteristic, because I can't think of any human societies that don't engage in it. On the other hand, I think a society would have to have a reasonably wide latitude for possible choice in order to qualify as a reactionary utopia. If the society doesn't have much choice as to what it does, then you may have a story of adaptation, but you don't have a reactionary utopia."

"An example would be the Free Traders in Heinlein's *CITIZEN OF THE GALAXY*. The Free Traders fit Greg Benford's five characteristics quite well, but somehow they don't fit. Presumably you are going to live your entire life on a space ship which supports itself by trading, your choices are obviously limited. Maybe the Free Traders could have had slightly different marriage and family customs, although there is no particular reason to suggest they should have been different. The anthropologist character in *CITIZEN OF THE GALAXY* even comments on the fact that the Free Traders are limited by their environment."

"In other respects, the description of the Free Trader Society is certainly as important as the plot, and the Free Traders are definitely more admirable characters. So they fit quite well in Sheila Finch's general discussion."

((I have trouble with 'Reactionary Utopia' since that seems a qualification of perfection, and a Utopia is supposed to be a perfect social system. Can we discuss Leftist Utopias? Hippie Utopias? Yuppie Utopias? Fascist Utopias? Is Utopia strictly in the eye of the wisher?))

LETTER FROM JERRY POURNELLE

'I find Sheila Finch's analysis interesting, although by her own admission she must strain a bit to make our words fit some of her categories; but questions remain.

'First, what has any of that to do with the title of her article? Does "some blunders" mean she thinks (possibly correctly) that she could have written it better herself?

'Second, why does she believe this is some kind of advocacy? At the end of the book some major characters state they wouldn't want to live in Todos Santos; others would; and the tension between town and gown (or town and townhouse?) is the major driving force of the novel.

'If Finch's recounting of the flaws in Todos Santos is meant to remind the reader that Niven and I have been careful to show that such a society is not without costs--why, she's right, but why act as if (a) that's surprising, or (b) she has made a discovery?

'We tried to show one possible high technology society in the near future, of course, but mostly we were telling a tale.'

((The title of Sheila's article on OATH OF FEALTY was changed at my request from one too academic; none of my suggestions fit well, and her new title didn't either, apparently. That's the publishing biz, sometimes.))

CARD FROM ROBERT MLOCH
2111 Sunset Crest Dr.
Los Angeles, CA 90046
November 5, 1985

'Perhaps it's just my mood of the moment, but I come away from reading SFR #57 with the distinct impression that the big trouble with SF and fantasy today is that just too much of it is being written. Because of a conjunction of inflation and marketing demands, writers are turning short story ideas into novels, and novels into series with a resultant emphasis on quantity rather than quality. Much of this is masked to a degree by technical virtuosity which seems to deceive most of your critics, but little of it offers either innovative concepts or fresh insights. If the field sup-

ported only half as much writing I suspect readers might end up with twice as much entertainment.'

((True, but now the pocketbook publishers (especially) are in a constant war to keep wire-rack slots, and so, like breakfast food companies fighting for shelf space on supermarket shelves, must think in terms of new titles per month, not quality titles per month.

((Thus the number of pocketbook slots in existence determines the paperback publishing universe. If you want to strike terror into the hearts of paperback publishers, go on a terrorist rampage--with a pair of heavy-duty wirecutters.))

CARD FROM DON WOLLEHEIM

66-17 Clyde Street
Rego Park, NY 11374 Nov. 19, 1985

'If you have a chance to read or look over Vonnegut's new book GALAPAGOS you will discover that the starting point of the end of humanity is in 1986 with the total bankruptcy of Latin American countries, followed almost immediately by the rest of the world. It is mighty unusual (and even foolhardy) for an SF writer to make predictions with such tight dates which can render a work out-of-date so quickly. Wonder why he did it. He must read the same sources you do.'

((What an opening! All I can say is that our society is now built on an ever-more-fragile debt structure, and sooner or later enough sources of our society will be unable to service or collapse will become irresistible, falling in on itself as losses trigger ever greater losses. Yeah, alas, it could happen this year. The stock market just dropped 36 points in one day. When you see 50-100 point losses in a single day, tremble in your boots and run for cover. Until then, enjoy!))

LETTER FROM IAN COVELL

2 Congrove Close, Berwick Hills
Middlesbrough, Cleveland, TS3 7BP
England Dec. 20, 1985

'I agree with everything Gene DeWeese says about NULL A THREE ((p. 23)) -- but the true kicker for me lies as much in Van Vogt's redefinition of the "earlier" Gosselyns in the first NULL A books. They were, I learn, all virgins; now, I may just have a dirty mind, but I always thought -- took it as read, in fact -- that all earlier Gosselyns had full sex lives: Van Vogt says no, I read the books wrong...and that undue "fact," crude, unlikely, turned me off the book even before the plot began.

""The Vivisector" is a bit gruesome to those authors just starting to sell their work, but he's probably right; all waves crest, break, scatter spray, and are then replaced by other waves." I take issue with one small point of his; that LORD OF THE RINGS "created ... the generic fantasy" -- rubbish, Tolkien emulated William Morris, especially his WELL AT THE WORLD'S end series, the basic difference being that Morris didn't care for religion much, or personified evil, his people are colorful, well characterized personalities -- his stories are set on magical worlds similar to Earth, but not identical, with quasi swordplay, and wood magic; people may have been influenced by Tolkien, but he definitely was not the creator of the fantasy concept. (I could also resent his teaming the character out of Stout's UNDER THE ANDES with Richard Seaton -- "ancestor of..." indeed! I've tried to "recall an E.E. Smith work with a "femme fatale" so vile she has to be killed, and the truth is, Smith liked women too much for that. Seaton is not a development of these meagerly moral men.)

'I stared at the review of PAZ (p.34) with growing horror until I found that the reviewer was actually offended by the book; it's been a long time since an extended attack on the current "feminist" SF -- if ever I read any other than my own. A recent TV interview with very committed feminist writers got their response that it's okay for men to be portrayed as vile misogynists so that the attack can diminish in intensity as men "learn the truth;" yes they say the attacks are unfair, but they're a legitimate tactic in the sexual conflict between men and women as women aspire for complete equality. It sounded nonsense when she said it, it sounds nonsense now. When I said years ago that certain feminist writers were being unfair, sexist, almost totalitarian in approach, I was roundly censured -- they were only portraying life as it is. Well, balls, it is not, and never was as they portray it. Joanna Russ is wrong, and I now resent the years of argument I've had on the subject; I was told black writers couldn't be racist, and female writers couldn't be sexist -- oppressed minorities are allowed immunity from such common sense, they said. I agree with everything Janine says, but I say that there's no such thing as "reverse sexism" (something I once termed it), it's pure and simple sexual chauvinism, direct, pure, hateful.

'I'm interested, in Bob Shaw's rebuttal to my sideswipe to his book, that what he's talking about is plot where once he would have called character. He takes an effect, justifies it, then asks people to investigate it -- compare earlier novels in which the effect was a minor part, almost a sidelight to the evolving relationships; people reacted to events, they weren't adjuncts to them, or so manipulated by exterior forces that their personalities became irrelevant.'

((Maybe the feminists are practicing that old adage, 'Don't get mad, get even.' In any case, they only prove my belief that they're only human, and being human is being racist, sexist, chauvinistic, etc. as passion and fanaticism and anger rise to the occasion of power and/or media attention. Any sophistry or rationalism will suffice.))

LETTER FROM TAPAR LINDSAY

4 Meadowbrook Drive
E. Windsor, NJ 08520 Nov. 12, '85

"Re: your review of ARTHUR C. CLARKE'S WORLD OF STRANGE POWERS in SF REVIEW #57: pre cognition does not indicate an unchangeable fate. It indicates that one of a great many possible "fates" is more probable than the others, given conditions as they stand. I have had pre cognitive experiences many times, usually about utterly minor things of no interest to anyone but myself. It feels like remembering something, but it's something that I can prove absolutely did not happen; I'm told this is the result of having a pre-cognitive dream, then remembering the dream as an actual experience. At least once I remembered the dream, having waked up absolutely panicky. On other occasions I had the memory-trace experience while wide awake (driving, so perhaps not entirely alert -- driving does induce trace states). I have had the experience of remembering two different results of the same decision point, the results differing according to which decision I made; and I had that experience just before making the decision -- very handy. It only happened once, so far. The most upsetting pre cognitive experience I have had was the dream in which the four circumstances of my husband's death and the experiences of the years following, about 18 months before he died. Although the death was exactly as I dreamed it, the following circumstances have been subject to alteration when I took steps to prevent certain difficulties. The dream appears to have been in the nature of a worst-possible case scenario, dreamed as a warning. I tried hard to prevent most of it, but other people's personalities were not under my control; you just can't tell some people. (Gassandra's problem.)

I have been very careful, over the years, to eliminate any circumstances from consideration as "pre cognition" that had too much similarity to things that had already happened. I am also aware of the different types of deja vu, and the pseudo-deja-vu experiences are weeded out.

'Yes, pre cognition does genuinely occur. No, it does not eliminate free will.'

((It seems to me you're having your pre cognition and avoiding it, too. Alternate futures, or alterable futures is too easy; true pre cognition would be seeing THE future. What you describe seems to be a subconscious warning based on reading body language, unconsciously noting advance symptoms, etc. An expression of subconscious fear based on minute observations and clues.))

LETTER FROM ROBERT A.W. LOWNDES
717 Willow Ave, Hoboken, NJ 07030
November 14, 1985

'Let not your heart be troubled by the fear that if there is such a thing as pre cognition of future events, then the future is fixed -- inevitable. Some years ago, when I was editor of EXPLORING THE UNKNOWN, I studied numerous works dealing with psychic phenomena written

by competent researchers -- not popular books dashed off by sensationalists. In fact, they were rather hard reading and often on the dull side, so far as hair-raising stories is concerned.

'I came across several instances of purportedly authenticated pre cognitive dreams. In each instance, the subject had a vivid and clear dream of some event that had not happened, and remembered all the details upon awakening. Later, the subject experienced the event beginning to unfold in actuality, remembered what was about to happen, according to the dream, and took the necessary action that prevented a tragedy or serious mishap.

'That doesn't prove pre cognition beyond question -- but it does indicate that if there is such a thing, then fore knowledge can change the event pre cognisized -- not fixed, but fluid. It is more like SCrooge's dream of "Christmas yet to come" than an immutable curse.

'A tip of my hat to Orson Scott Card, whose last two columns I found particularly interesting. In issue #56, he writes in much the same vein that Lester Del Rey explored in his Guest of Honor special at the last New York Worldcon -- which Lester had to abridge the title, but which I managed to obtain and publish complete in FAMOUS SCIENCE FICTION under the title, "Art vs. Artiness." Scott, having more space to work with, is able to go into more detail and name specific recent instances.

'I see nothing wicked with literary experimentation in itself. As Lester noted, he has never written an experimental story" but he has often made many experiments in the course of writing what he believed was a good story. There's a difference. Some writers have been under the impression that experimenting is such a great thing in itself that they should be rewarded simply for making the effort -- regardless of how it comes out. That attitude has resulted in a lot of sheer garbage. But the writer who has a solid foundation in conventional ways of writing a story, and feels that the story he is writing is in some respect a different approach has at least a sporting chance of coming up with something worth reading. The tree is known by its fruit, not just its appearance.

'Scott's current column is even better, for me, because I subscribed to IS-AAC ASIMOV'S SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE earlier this year and have, at last, begun to read current short stories and novelettes. I was thus able to test his views against my own experience of particular stories; and while I do not rate some stories as highly as he, I do know what he is talking about. And in at least one instance, he drew my attention to something that I had missed in reading, thus changing what, to me, was a good story into a much better one.

'Taking the Low Road," by Avon Swofford, struck me as being very well done, and truly moving -- but I didn't see, at first, what it was doing in IASG; the fantasy element got by me. Now I see that it belongs, because the magazine mixes science fiction and fantasy. (Something I'm not awfully happy about -- I'd rather read a magazine devoted to science fiction only -- but from what I

hear, all the other titles do the same. It's now the only game in town.)

'I certainly agree that present-tense stories (except possibly for very short ones) do not work well. "Green Mars," by Robinson came across as excellent (because of the story) in spite of, not because of the way it was written; it overcame my irritation at the way it was written. And as for the business about Moby Dick, etc., that would have been laughable had not the author been so gravely serious about it. In fact, I did laugh, but not because the author wanted me to. It was the one flaw in the story itself.

"Science Fiction By The Numbers" was most interesting, but is damaged by Sabella's over-broad definition of the word "axiom." An axiom is indeed something taken for granted (like the "given" in a problem in Euclid's introduction to geometry) (because of the story) in spite of, not because of the way it was written; it overcame my irritation at the way it was written. And as for the business about Moby Dick, etc., that would have been laughable had not the author been so gravely serious about it. In fact, I did laugh, but not because the author wanted me to. It was the one flaw in the story itself.

'Your comments on "Physical Interrogation Techniques" reminds me of an argument that was going on a decade or so back in the pages of Richard Bergeron's NARRATION. The question was whether knowledge is evil in itself, as I recall. My contention was that no knowledge is "evil" in itself, in that it can be used only for "evil" purposes. Walter Breen dissented, listing "torture techniques" as an example. Unfortunately, Bergeron garbled just before my reply to Walter Breen, and the published version by the time NARRATION resurfaced, it was too late to pick up the pieces of all controversies.

'I do, however, remember what my reply was, and find that I still agree with it. (I don't always agree with myself some years later.) Any sort of knowledge can be used in one of two ways: You can take action upon it, or you can refuse to take action upon it. If I know how to torture you deliberately, I also know correspondingly as much about how to avoid torturing you accidentally. At this point I stop, because I'd have to read the book you reviewed to apply my proposition to it.

((The problem--if it should be called a problem--with Evil knowledge or Evil Purposes, is that if there is a will, there is a way. Obviously there is a will in mankind for torture, murder, rape, slavery, and the ways to do and create those things are always found. We are often (by our definitions) monsters. We have this capacity for "evil" which we hate and decay and which we also admire and do, constantly. We should not deny our inherent capacity for these acts and thoughts; we should admit them and guard against them in rational and intelligent ways, on an individual level. Mass man is beyond control. All the individual can do is be aware and watch and dodge when possible.))

ALTERNATE HISTORY NEWS

THE DEUS MAGNUS REGISTERUS
"The Newspaper Ionia Depends Upon."
Laconia, Hellas 11th April 621
SYRACUSE DICTATOR HAS PROBLEMS

BY NEAL WILGUS

J. Paul Ninni, current ruler of Syracuse, was psychoanalyzed last week by the Delving Oracle, which reported that he has acute anxiety about being overthrown. The Oracle, whose new propaganda line is a surprise to many observers, reported that King Oedipus has a complex also, but declined to elaborate.

The illegitimate son of a slave, Ninni was adopted at age 3 by a Roman family, Crassus Ninni and his wife Dilyria, who were childless due to incompatibility. As he grew up, the Ninnies offered him every opportunity to feel ashamed of his origin, and even continued to regard him somewhat like a slave, out of consideration for his former status.

After graduation from the Gymnasium, (a college which specializes athletics), Ninni entered Sicilian politics as the candidate of a Syracuse political boss. He rose rapidly, and within five years became Assistant Controller of Tribute. During this period he also started a law practice, and collected fees from many lobbying groups, whose interest he represented in the Lower House of Parliament.

Last year, as head of coalition of Jovial Democrats and center parties, Ninni was able to form a government, and was appointed Prime Minister. Syracuse has been in serious trouble since then, since both Rome and Carthage have cut off foreign aid and monetary credits, in an effort to overthrow him.

In recent years, according to employers, there has been an extreme shortage of tyrants, due to the unwillingness of young people to prepare for that occupation. King Leonidas blames the "softness of modern youth" for their reluctance to learn meanness and treachery. Adverse publicity from the Oracle will not help the situation.

"Since Jove was god in those days, they couldn't have been Christian Democrats."

A MINDBOGLING BONDODGLE

BY NEAL WILGUS

Mündopolis, Mündopia (LEAK) -- Members of the Mensa Militia were out patrolling their neighborhoods as usual last night, armed with the usual IQ tests and cattle prods, in search of the usual Standard Deviants to apprehend and reform. But last night was anything but "usual," because it marked the beginning of a week of demonstrations and think-ins which the Militia is sponsoring in opposition to the proposed creation of a federal Department of Status Quotients. The DSQ, which President Ippso Ergo first proposed last Friday, would assign official status to each citizen, depending in part on standard IQ tests.

"We think it is right and natural to rank and file each social cell according to a standard quotient grid," said a

spokesman for the Militia. "That's not the issue at all. What we want to know is: who decides -- us or them?"

In a related development, a statement was issued in behalf of VIP Jack Brown which spelled out the Shadowitarian Party's position. Ambrose Port, chairman of Brown's analytical brain pool, The Skeptic Tank, pointed out that each community monitor and precinct proctor had complete records on the local citizenry and that no thought deviant could possibly escape detection. "For the feds to horn in on local turf and build empires of their own is, to say the least, just The Most!"

Experts predict that President Ergo's proposed new agency will go down to defeat in the newly quotientized Congress, but that appeals to the Most Honored Quotients of the Supreme Court will eventually reverse the magnatism. "Better that than that it should go to the States to ratify," said political analyst Gallup Pohl. "I never met a quotient I didn't like," he complained.

THE DAILY CRISIS

"As Substantial as King Arthur's Round Table" Camp Lloyd, Camberland
vii Elembiu CCCCC
SCIENTIST DISCOVERS SLOWEST MOTION

BY NEAL WILGUS

Interior Minister Merlin Griffith announced today with disarming frankness that a subordinate, Oakley Berk, Assistant Druid at Camber Ridge, has discovered a physical phenomenon slower than the speed of snails. The discovery was discredited by the followers of Dr. Dulles McArcher, who has told us repeatedly that such a thing cannot be.

Two years ago, Noble Alfred discovered a strange substance, called "gunpowder." "The pungent odor of burning sulphur will make the crossbow a cleaner weapon," he said aromatically. He said that the Chinese use rockets to purify the air, to supplement the effects produced by burning paper dragons.

Defense Chief Galahad and Other Pen-dragon officials were skeptical of the new development. They prefer to rely on conventional weapons, such as X-caliber swords, for the "brush fire" wars in Cornwall, and to defend Wales against the Marcians and Angles.

At a special meeting of the Round Table, the General Staff, called the Seven Dwarfis, because of their snow-white character, decided to stockpile gunpowder. The alchemist William Teller was made Chief of the Gunpowder Energy Institute. His job is to concoct the stuff into laxatives, rat-killers, accom-tenderizers and other wonders of chemistry to make our lives richer and more meaningful.

Berk says the Roman Empire is falling. By his Theory of Conjunctive Motion, when everything is falling at once, it appears to all observers to be standing still. If a man and an apple fell out of a tree at the same time, the ap-



ple would not hit the man's head, because they'd be traveling at the same speed.

McArcher says he'd rather not believe Berk's theory. "The Roman Empire," he says, "has supposedly been falling for 400 years already, but it gets more vigorous every year."

THE DISORIENT EXPRESS

BY NEAL WILGUS

Random Press, UT (LEAK) -- Scientists and government officials are urgently searching for an explanation to yesterday's mysterious change in direction(s). As is now universally appreciated, at 2:03 a.m. Greenwich the old sense of direction (and thus all rational orientation) either disappeared or was suspended. The Change has already been likened to the discovery of Fire and the invention of the Screw.

With directional inconsistency now being the order of the day, the common experience is that when one sets out to go north (assuming one knows where that is) one would soon find oneself heading south -- or east, west or whatever. Up and down do not seem to be affected. So far.

To find out why such a change has occurred we sent investigative reporter Ray Team to the University of North to interview the famous Dr. Isaac Einstein, an expert on universal directionality and meteorological consistency. Unfortunately Ray Team called from New Zealand to report that he had lost his way and was stranded indefinitely at some location presently unknown. Other reporters have mentioned similar difficulties.

By sheer coincidence Dr. Isaac Einstein and his assistant Venus Uranus stumbled into the LEAK News Room at that moment, looking for directions. We were unable to help in that department, but took the opportunity to ask about the Change and where we might be headed. He looked mystified and shrugged his elbows.

"We seem to be caught in some kind of directional drift," said Venus Uranus, reading from a prepared script. "The Isaac Einstein Foundation is accepting donations for our Directional Research Project/Find a Way, Inc. Please withhold all donations, however, while negotiations with the Postal Corporation continue."

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