

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW

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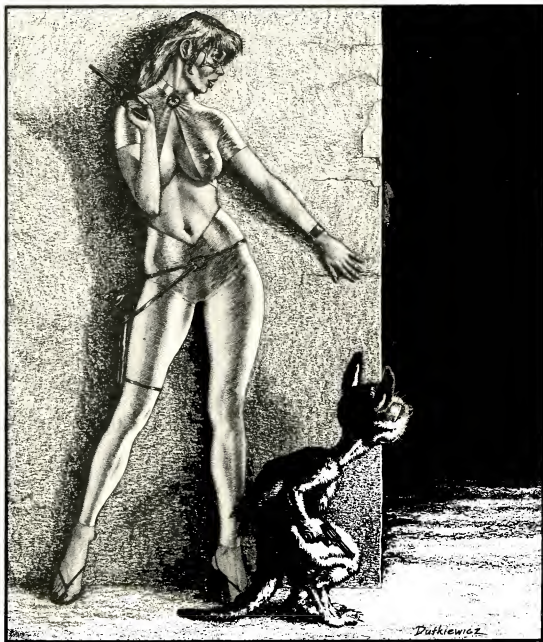
INTERVIEWS: FREDERIK POHL F. PAUL WILSON VICTOR KOMAN

ORSON SCOTT CARD

JOHN BRUNNER

DARRELL SCHWEITZER

RICHARD GEIS



ALEXIS GILLILAND

WILLIAM ROTSLER

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WHERE IS THE CUTTING EDGE OF
SCIENCE FICTION?

By Orson Scott Card

BOOK REVIEWS, LETTERS, EDIT-
ORIALS...and whatever else
shows up in the mail.

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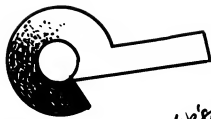


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READ THIS!! FAMOUS (ALMOST LAST) WORDS

I'm tempted to sub-title this entry, "This hurts me more than it will you." In truth, it does hurt, in more ways than one.

Right now my neck is killing me and my left hip and lower back are serious rivals in the pain-giving contest.

What I've got is increasingly severe arthritis. The bones in my neck are 'very severe' and my back and hip are in hot pursuit.

Add minor league discomforts from my knees, shoulders and hands, and you have a catalogue of my miseries.

[Incidentally, my doctor recently said, in passing, that I have palsy. That was news to me! But it explains the kind of minor spastic paralysis I've had all my life. But no doctor ever bothered to tell me the facts of life.]

This is leading up to An Announcement. Since this escalation of intensified discomforts and pain has occurred in the past six months, I've put off and put off some tough decisions. But the arrival of serious hip/back pain has forced the issue.

I can't sit at a typewriter very long, and I can't read very much, any more. This pain disrupts and shortens my sleep, and leaves me chronically exhausted. I can only drink so much coffee or take other stimulants before my stomach rebels and I develop stomach cramps and diarrhea. I am only able to work (write) a couple hours a day, if I'm lucky, and it has become agonizingly

clear to me that a monthly SFR is not in the cards. It isn't anywhere.

I have to use my writing time to write novels as best I can, for as long as I can.

I have to tell you that SFR is dead. SFR #61 (November) will be the last and final issue.

So, what to do about all you subscribers? I can offer you a long-term switch to my personal journal, THE NAKED ID. It's far less demanding of me, and its schedule is 'whenever 8 pages are completed'. In it I comment on what I read in the papers, what I see on TV, what I experience and observe of life and people. (Not a pretty sight.)

Realistically, THE NAKED ID can be expected to appear every two months or so. If you decide to let me switch you to TVNI, it will be at the ID subscription price---\$1.00 per issue. So if you've sent in \$15. for SFR in 1987, you'll receive 15 issues of THE NAKED ID, which is likely to run over two years.

I suspect I'm running out of room, and my neck is getting that ice-pick-in-the-vertebrae type of pain, so I'll finish by saying that if you'd rather not have an ID subscription, drop me a line and I'll refund your money. (Or maybe you'd like some far back issues of SFR you missed?)

I'm enclosing a form for those of you whose SFR subs expire with #60 (this issue) so you can easily buy #61 if you wish, and/or subscribe to THE NAKED ID. And there's an option for the #61ers.

See you next issue. Oh, this issue is late mostly because of non-pain factors. (But only a week late at most!)

INTERIOR ART

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ALIEN THOUGHTS

RICHARD E. GEIS

AND THEN ALTER-EGO PROVOKED
ME INTO PREDICTING THE FUTURE

"C'mon, Geis, drop your cock and grab your socks! Time to get your ass in gear. Time to get your main editorial section of this doomed rag of yours."

"Go away, Alter. I'm sleepy. I'm tired. I'm lary."

"I can fix that. A prick of your thyroid, a kick into your pituitary..."

"Uhh! Hey! Stop that!"

"Duty calls, Geis. The magic lure of seeing your name in print beckons..."

"Oh, bullshit, Alter. I've seen my name---and my words---in print for thirty-three years. Longer, if you count my published letters in STARTLING STORIES and THRILLING WONDER STORIES. I was a letterhack long before I published a fanzine and still later became a professional writer. Don't pull that egoboo shit on me. I'm an old fan, and tired. Go away."

"No. No, you've got to cooperate here, or face dire consequences. A little altered (pun) blood chemistry..."

"Ow! Oooo. Aaargh. All right! Stop with the arthritic pain, the bursitis, the headache! I'll do it!"

"I knew you'd be reasonable. Now, delve into that sewer of a mind and pick out a topic."

"You do it. You're already in the sewer. I don't even want to think about what I think about."

"Wait till I delve... Ugh. Yuck. Ick. All I can find in this muck is something repulsive. Something slithering away... Do you really think this way, Geis? I just touched a slimy beast called Cynical Pessimism. You're worse than George Orwell!"

"You knew him, Alter? You inhabited his brain?"

"Only briefly. He drank too much."

"Well, if that was all you could find, I guess we'll skip the 'Alien Thoughts' this issue and I'll go back to sleep. Have a nice day..."

"Not so fast! There are pages and pages to fill and only a few days in which to do it. You'll have to expose your foul Cynical Pessimism and apply it to the future."

"You mean, you want me to tell all and sundry what I think the future holds for the United States and the world?"

"Disgusting, I know, but, yes. Your thoughts will revolt most of your readers, destroy your reputation, and ruin you in the field of sf forever."

"Okay, but what's the worst that could happen?"

"The worst is that you might be right. In fact, I suspect... But nevermind. I'm plugging you into your memory, Geis. You have full access. Now, write!"

"Now? Let's see... This will be disjointed, of course, as things occur to me as I write. A good title might be..."

"I've got your title, Geis. FUTURESCHLOCK or DOWN AND OUT ON THE PLANET EARTH or THE FUTURE? DON'T ASK!"

"Thank you. Let me start with the economic situation."

"Groan."

"The Second Great Depression settled its clammy grip on the economies of the world, fully recognized for what it was, in late 1986. The steady erosion of buying power and production, masked by ever-increasing levels of debt accumulated to avoid lowered standards of living, finally triggered a credit collapse and a progressive crisis in the banking and savings industry. A general deflation resulted in defaults and bankruptcies which destroyed assets much faster than deficit spending could overcome. Loans shrank in spite of

rock bottom interest rates, as no one could see any way to make money with borrowed money, and creditors saw no way borrowers could repay proposed loans.

"The collapse of the stock and futures markets destroyed trillions of 'paper asset' dollars and wiped out hundreds of insurance companies and pension funds."

"International trade shrank drastically, and protectionism and 'bigger-thy-neighbor' trade laws and currency devaluations made the situation worse."

"Now you're going to mention the unemployment rate, right?"

"Riiight. The official unemployment rate soared in 1987-88 to over 15% in the United States, and the federal deficit exploded to over \$400 billion in spite of massive cuts in federal spending, especially in the military budget."

"This economic collapse destroyed the Republican party. Totally discredited, it failed to win another presidential election. The Democrats won in 1988 and held the presidency for twenty-four years. The only opposition was a faction-



hidden New Right religious coalition tainted with fanaticism and racism. A Libertarian-Business coalition consistently failed to grow in power and influence. It could elect only a handful of representatives and senators."

"This is really getting grim, Geis. Are you sure this is going to come true?"

"You wanted pure Geisian Cynical Pessimism, didn't you? This is the future that happened in my alternate Earth's timeline."

"Ah, a capout."

"Not necessarily. Alter. We don't know which timeline we occupy, do we? Only time will tell."

"Okay, okay. Is there more of this future?"

"Of course. The computer-driven tendency to greater and greater control of every aspect of people's lives, begun in earnest during the Reagan administration, fueled by a contrived terrorism hysteria in the United States, brought about sets of laws in the USA, Canada, England, West Germany, France, Italy... which required everyone to carry a hologramed, computer-linked ID card which could not be counterfeited. People were 'slotted' from birth by tests and behaviors to job classes and social levels. 'Know thyself' and 'To thine own self be true' were used by the all-powerful governments to justify blood and intensive psycho-

logical testing to truly determine who and what each person was, and to 'slot' him or her into the best possible job or position in society, for their own good.

"In addition, birth control was administered by long-term injections and implants, and by propaganda, while at the same time gene alterations and matching allowed the governments to 'create' new people of their choosing and needs."

"You're moving farther and farther into the future, right?"

"Yes, well into the 21st Century, now."

"I see. Proceed."

"As a result of government control of procreation and population, a reaction was permitted and guided into compensatory bizarre cultural outlets. Computer simulations of humans in hologram entertainments permitted extreme dramatic situations: incredible physical activities, extraordinary violence, impossible sexual behavior. The action was increasingly set off-world, in strange other dimensions or alien planets. The New Frontier became other worlds, other, alien settings however rationalized. The occult became powerful, and new religions (always controlled by the government) flourished."

"You're saying Bread and Circuses, aren't you? TV and religion will be the opiate of the masses."

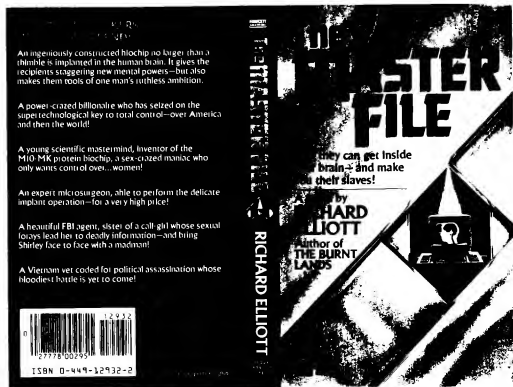
"Of course. And not only cultural means will be used to control the masses. There will be carefully managed wars between the superpowers to provide a killing ground for undesirable and the natural warriors born (and allowed to be born) in the populations. These conflicts will be limited, in fringe, third world areas, and will become a kind of geo-political game between the three primary power groups of the world. All-out nuclear war will never be initiated. There will be nuclear 'accidents' and once limited nuclear war as a kind of police action against a maverick nation of one of the three world forces."

"Sabotage and outright limited space war will prevent any super power group from dominating or controlling near space. Moon colonies will be attempted, but the costs will be prohibitive and they will be abandoned. Some robotic mining will continue."

"Alien contact will never occur, although the governments will use rumors and false reports to keep 'the aliens' alive and well, for social engineering purposes."

"Sexual diseases will be eliminated in order to undercut the surviving religious/rightist dogma against sexual freedom, thus weakening their moral power base. 'Sexual preference' will become a 'right' and homosexuality will be legalized."

The cover proof below is for the latest collaborative effort of **Richard E. Geis** and **Elton T. Elliott**. **THE MASTER FILE** is scheduled to be distributed and on sale in September, more or less everywhere.



"What about money and jobs, Geis? Can they be controlled successfully?"

"The state will be forced to guarantee everyone a job--and the other side of that coin is that virtually everyone will be forced to work where and when the state decides. There will be tremendous social pressure generated to justify these laws. Most physical production of goods will be done in computerized factories. Most work will be in 'services'."

"Money. Geis! What will happen to money?"

"A limited amount of counterfeited cash will be allowed to circulate, and some Universal Credit Card transactions will be permitted. But for most people, their jobs will dictate which free housing unit they will occupy, which free food they will eat, which clothes they will wear, which transportation they will use. Automated free public transportation will be used by most citizens. Monitors will be everywhere to prevent abuse of the 'free' privileges. The ID card will be used to record every 'free' draw on society's wealth, and an excessive number of draws by one individual will trigger a computer alert--and official investigation."

"You amaze me, Geis! You've got all this worked out!"

"What I see now is trends, Alter, and what we'll get is the resulting development of those movements in social-cultural-political areas."

"One thing I'm curious about: what are the three super-power groups which will rule the planet?"

"The USA, Western Europe-England for one, Japan-China-Korea for the second, and the USSR in alliance with Central and possibly South America and most African states for the third. The USSR and its client states will be the weakest of the three super-power groups. It will be sustained by elites in the USA group who are interested in maintaining a long-term balance-of-power on the planet and who realize that a three-way balance is easier to maintain than a two-way 'single enemy' dynamic."

"At some point, several hundred years from now, the costs of keeping the socialist super power group credible will be too heavy, and the USSR empire will disintegrate. A war will ensue between the USA group and the China group over who shall possess various parts of the former USSR empire, and that war will result in a series of confrontations and exhausting military expeditions which will collapse one or the other remaining super power. A planetwide decline into medieval-level civilization will

occur, and it is doubtful if a high-tech civilization will ever be attained again. Too many critical natural resources will by then have been exhausted."

"Appalling. Are you finished, Geis?"

"Yes. I've thrown everything into this world view, Alter. I'm exhausted."

"So I see. Very well, rest. For an hour. After that you have to paste these columns up into the issue."

"Yes, yes...rest..."

"All right, readers. You have had the full course of Geis's Cynical Pessimism. Could he be right? Is his future the time track we're in? Keep this issue of SFR in a safe place. Keep these predictions in mind. A few years will tell the tale."



It seems I seriously misjudged my material file for #61. I find myself with one four-page interview and

the prospect of huge empty pages to fill. And I'm not sure if Scott Card will have the time to do a final column...nor sure if Darrell Schweitzer will have time....or Elton...

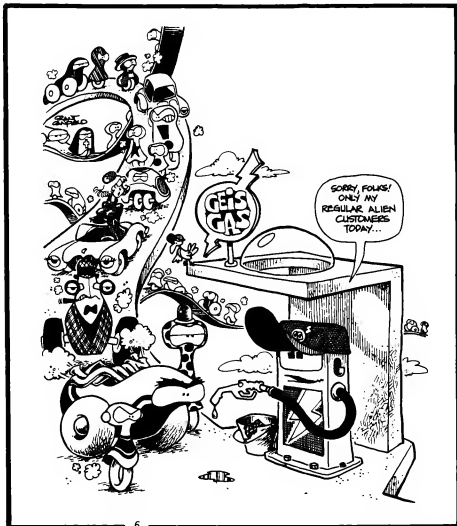
So let's hear it for the reviewers, those unsung heroes, who have carte blanche to overwhelm me with reviews.

And is there anyone out there who has an article available? Preferably an opinion piece with some strong opinion in it. I don't need more artwork. (Except from Alexis!)

Well, Ghod will provide. Something always comes in which saves my ass.

I have a lot of empty spaces this issue, at the ends of columns and such, and so I am Cleaning Out The Shelves and liquidating some illiquid assets. FOR SALE signs will abound in this issue. BUY!

Below is a cartoon by Grant Canfield he did for SFR years and years ago. Finally using it, even if there isn't a gas shortage.



SMALL PRESS NOTES



THE SWAMP

By David Starkey
Infinitum Publishing
5737 Louetta Road,
Spring, TX 77379

\$1.75 + 50¢

This chapbook has a good cover and one full-page illustration by Allen Koszowski, whose illos have enhanced SFR many, many times. He's very good at these dark, ominous b/w drawings.

The story is short and deceptive---at first appearing to be a kind of Juvenile as three boys take off in a boat into the mysterious nearby swamp. Strange creatures are said to inhabit its deepest reaches. But not to worry.

What the reader is not prepared for (because of the deceptively simple, wholesome writing) is the sudden, deadly violence and terror which the boys encounter.

David Starkey has a fine sense of drama and tension. He may, as the saying goes, go far.

DEAD IN THE WEST

By Joe Lansdale
Space & Time, \$6.95, 1986.
158 W. 70th St., 4-B
New York, NY 10023

A western horror novel, involving a vampiric thing and other horrors. An itinerant gunslinging evangelist comes to the frontier town of Mad Creek...

I didn't like the spare, pulpy style used in this short novel. And the supernatural events and aspects seem too off-stage, at least in the opening half of the book. The story and the people seem routine, empty, unremarkable... I didn't finish it.

LEIGH BRACKETT: American Writer

By John Carr \$3.00
Chris Drumm, POB 445,
Polk City, IA 50226

I can see the fascination biography reading can create. This booklet (68 pages) sketches the life and more important the character and personality of Leigh Brackett, an early and prolific sf and fantasy writer (in a man's world) as well as a mystery writer and a screenplay writer.

She comes alive--the basic conflicts and struggles--and becomes all too human. And it doesn't matter that she's dead (1978) because she lives well here.

Carr writes well, with a fine sense of timing: when and how to reveal an aspect of her life and her inner turmoil. I hope he does manage to write the full scale biography Leigh Brackett deserves.

And let me compliment Chris Drumm on the great progress he's made in format and graphics for his booklets: they are truly professional now, attractive and impressive. (Though I still don't like the small booklet size, nor the small type.)

SHIEL IN DIVERSE HANDS

A collection of Essays
JDS Books
POB 67, MCS,
Dayton, OH 45402

This stapled corrected draft, photocopied from mss., by 29 students of the writing of M.P. Shiel (1865-1947) is a puzzlement to me: I'm damned if I can understand the interest in his writings. But I'll admit there must be something there.

Of special interest, on pages

73 and 74 is a quotation from a dispatch from a young foreign correspondent in Afghanistan in the year 1897. He describes an atrocity by some Afghan fanatics and advises that in his view:

'I find it impossible to come to any other conclusion than that, in proportion as these valleys are purged from the pernicious vermin that infest them ((the Afghans)), so will the happiness of humanity be increased, and the progress of mankind accelerated.'

The young correspondent was Winston Churchill.

ELLIOTT'S BOOKLINE #1

Elton writes this on his new computer, and thus his new review and opinion zine is el neat, with justified rightside margins, two columns. He runs a pica typeface at 12 pitch, thus getting a lot of large print in a page. No illos.

What this is, folk, is essentially his "Raising Hackles" SFR column run to about 8000 words: more scolding, more lashing opinion, more musings, and far more reviews of sf and fantasy novels. He has each publisher's output for the period listed, and a review of one of each publisher's books. Sometimes significant mentions of others. A handy reference for the hardcore sf reader.

This issue also contains a mini-interview with Steven Barnes.

Elton is not a stylist; his reviews are plain and solid (also a bit awkward in spots, but he lets nothing get in the way of making his points). He has many, many contacts in the writing, editing, publishing worlds, and he brings to his zine a special, inside knowledge which few others possess.

Okay, Elton, I did it! Now will you please tell me where in this house you hid the time bomb? I'm really getting worri

RICHARD E. GEIS

You Got No Friends In This World

CARDBOARD AND CHETAROSCITO

Richard Curtis's column is one of the best things in *LOCUS*, and the July installment was no exception. He tried to make sense of the difference between professional and bellettristic writers, and most of what he said had the ring of truth to it.

The only trouble was that as I pondered his ideas, I realized that I don't know anybody who fits his description of "professional" writers.

As I see it, what he really described was bellettristic writers as they see themselves (and have persuaded English teachers and critics to depict them)—artists who write about ideas, unable or unwilling to subordinate their art for the sake of such commercial concerns as word count, deadlines, plotting, and the expectations of the audience; and commercial writers as bellettristic writers see them—hacks who can churn out the stuff to order, cut to fit the market like off-the-rack clothing.

Curtis is not unkind to "professional" writers; his choice of the positive word "professional" is a refreshing change from the sniping we're used to (e.g., "commercial," "hack," "formula," and "That's not writing, that's typing"). And there may well be many "professional" writers who fit his definition and are proud of it.

I just don't know any of them.

Because every writer I know, both inside and outside the genres of sf and fantasy, is trying his or her damndest to create a brilliant, memorable, powerful, truthful story.

No, we're even more pretentious than that. What we do is Art. Never mind what others may say about the results of our labor—in our hearts, we are all heirs of Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Fielding, Austen, Twain, and Faulkner.

All right, yes, you expect that attitude from, say, John Kessel, with his English Ph.D. and his assistant professorship. And I dare say that most bellettristic writers and critics, reading his work, might sniff at the genre but would still recognize and give good marks to his obvious literary aspiration and inspiration. Say the same for Kim Stanley Robinson, Scott Russell Sanders, James Patrick Kelly—all *sf* writers that I know care deeply about the artistic value of their work, and whose work evidences that concern so plainly that even the most hostile literary critic would have to admit, albeit grudgingly, that there is Art going on there.

But those aren't the only writers I know who care deeply about their art—as Art, and not just as a method of acquiring funds for early retirement.

Brace yourselves, boys and girls. Because I have another short list of Artists' names for you: David Brin, Timothy Zahn, Stephen R. Donaldson, Alan Dean Foster.

Every one of these writers I have heard mentioned as an example of mindless formulaic writing. And yet I

have heard each one of them declare with great passion—and in all sincerity—his deep concern for the quality of his work. Not in these exact words, of course, but each has said that he knows he treads in Chaucer's footsteps and hopes to create a good work that will outlast him; that will change the world, that will be, in short, Great Art.

Even Jack Chalker, who has preemptively declared himself to be a commercial writer, has said things that lead me to believe that he, too, is just as serious about his work as any bellettristic fictioneer. I suspect that even the notorious arch-villains of commercial sci-fi writing, Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle, while they're actually writing, care about art a good deal more than they care about pulling down seven-figure incomes. Niven was already rich and Pournelle made a damn good living before they turned to writing. They do this work for love, just like Updike and Beattie and Barthelme (who don't turn down money for their work, either, folks).

In fact, I don't think it's possible to be a storyteller for very long unless you really care about how well you tell the tale and how well your audience receives it.

So, while Richard Curtis's depiction of the professional writer may well be an accurate portrait of Dean Koontz or John Jakes, whom I do not know, I can with certainty say that among writers I know well, there is no such creature. Thus, I make up my mind to speak kindly of disciplined but uninspired money-makers may well have been wasted. I suspect that few sf writers who read his words would class themselves among the disciplined professionals. In our hearts, we're all poets praying to the muse.

PERFORMANCE VS. COMPOSITION

Yet most of us, from Kessel to Chalker, may well be classed as hacks by one observer or another—to our consternation, I hasten to add. We genre writers react differently to such charges.

Some feel betrayed, because they are trying to match literary paradigms and resent an epithet that lumps them in with all the "propeller-beanie" types.

Some—including me—bring such charges on ourselves by deliberately flouting the unspoken but unbreakable rules of contemporary bellettristic storytelling. They may call us hacks, but we think of ourselves as revolutionaries.

Others, though, unaware of how they give offense to sensitive literary noses, cannot understand why their work is treated with such despatch.

"My characters aren't 'cardboard,'" say the writers of steel-surfaced science fiction. "I work hard to make them into real people the reader can believe in and care about."

"Well," says the heartless bellettristic critic, "you failed."

Which is partly true, and partly beside the point.

In past numbers of this column, I have attempted to point out some flaws that often crop up common among "literary" stories in our field—weak-



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nesses of plot and scene construction, needless obfuscation and tedious overwriting, under-attention to tension, climax, and resolution. These literary flaws usually remain invisible to their creators because they have been misled by the belletristic notion that "good writing" means "good use of language" and a strong resemblance to admirable writers of the past.

Such a viewpoint ignores the fact that the writer of narrative is both creator and performer of his work. "Good use of language" has more to do with performance than composition. To value it above all other aspects of the storyteller's art is like listening to Pavarotti and admiring his voice without regard to whether he is singing a composition of Mozart or Manilow.

When I say things like that, my friends (and former friends) among the li-fi wing of the genre complain that they don't value the performance over the story.

They say it in exactly the same injured tone of voice that hard-sf writers like Brin, Zahn, and Foster say that they don't write shallow characters.

However, those li-fi writers who have this problem don't realize they are valuing performance at the expense of composition, because they have almost no conscious understanding of what story composition, as distinguished from performance, is. Performance is all they have studied, and performance is all they know. It's sometimes like trying to sing with a partially tone-deaf singer who his voice is so painful to your ear. If he could hear what's wrong, he'd be doing it correctly.

Precisely the same thing is true of many hard-sf writers who insist, despite the evidence of their stories, that they care as much about characterization as anybody else. They have never been sensitized to what it is that makes character work; they have no more notion of how to individuate a character than a tone-deaf singer has of how to get to C from whatever god-awful note he's singing now.

At this point, if I'm so smart, why don't I solve everybody's problems by explaining how to create a line of tension and how to individuate a character? Well, it's not modesty that keeps me from trying. The article on characterization will be appearing in *Writer's Digest* beginning in October; those who think I know something about the subject (and those who think I don't) will find much to amuse them. I'm sure. This isn't a how-to-write column, though. It's a column on how-it-was-written, which is quite another thing.

So I will treat two examples of hard-sf as I have treated a few li-fi stories in the past--point out, in detail, something that's wrong with them. But please keep in mind that I do not discuss stories unless I think they're good enough to be worth discussing. Any idiot can ridicule a bad piece of work. It takes a special kind of fool to attempt to point out the flaws in work that's much to be admired. So when I take notes at stories by Timothy Zahn and J. Brian Clarke a few paragraphs from now, remember, if you will, that I mean more praise than censure by choosing to speak of their tales at all.

FICTION OF IDEAS

Each of these schools of sf writing--hard-sf and li-fi--has developed a kind of story that emphasizes what they do well, and minimizes what they do not do well at all.

For li-fi, it is the character story, in which it doesn't much matter whether the plot works out, because what is fascinating is the revelation and development of the human beings in the tale. In short stories of this type, all we get is revelation of one character or one relationship and, perhaps, a brief moment of epiphany; in novels, the cast of developed characters can be larger, the changes more subtle and more frequent.

Done properly, these stories work very well; they deliver exactly what they promise the reader. Connie Willis's excellent *CHANCE*, reviewed last issue, comes to mind as a perfect example. It would be ridiculous for anything to happen in the story (an invasion by aliens? a murder? a terminal disease?)--it's not the kind of story where that sort of thing goes on. The main character is unhappy and finds out why; the fantasy elements are there to help her discover the truth and to make it feel important to the reader. The fantasy elements achieve nothing more than the character's self-realization. An excellent --and safe--character story.

For hard-sf, the optimal tale is the idea story, in which it doesn't much matter whether we believe in the characters at all, because what is fascinating is the revelation and development of an idea.

I realize that this flies in the face of Richard Curtis's statement that belletristic writing can be distinguished from professional writing in part because "the world of serious literature stresses the primacy of ideas." (The term "serious literature" undoes whatever good Curtis achieved by calling the rest of us "professional writers" instead of hacks. What, he thinks we aren't serious?)

This may well work as a distinction between Saul Bellow and Arthur Hailey, but it hardly works as a distinction between Saul Bellow and Isaac Asimov, since Asimov deals with more ideas per page than Bellow generally develops in a chapter.

Nowhere else in contemporary fiction is the naked idea so openly clothed in storytelling as in the pages of *Analog* magazine. I believe most *Analog* stories (and, of course, *Analog*-type stories in, say, *Far Frontiers*, *Anaësis*, and *F&SF*) begin with a real-world idea. Not a story idea--a person with a problem--but a scientific, technical, or philosophical concept.

Most of these ideas are then presented in tales where the idea is the protagonist. You know the stories I'm talking about:

THE DISCOVERY STORY

In the discovery story, there is some mysterious situation that is resolved when the "characters" uncover the key information, the missing data, that makes everything make sense.



This type of hard-sf story is very much like a mystery. You know the quintessential discovery stories: "Nightfall," "The Star," "The Nine Billion Names of God."

Now, think about those stories for a moment. The characters in them are nothing but stereotypes. In "Nightfall," Asimov sets up characters to represent certain basic viewpoints --they never become anything but the viewpoints they express. The same with the Arthur C. Clarke stories. The characters don't do anything at all except stand proxy for the reader as they discover or experience the story concept.

This is not a flaw. These discovery stories don't need characters developed beyond the stereotypical role they play. As long as the idea is strong enough, the very compelling enough, or the story brief enough, the reader does not wish for more characterization.

In fact, if there were more character individuation, the reader might be confused. When the stars came out in "Nightfall," the story would be over--and the reader would wonder what all that business about Jane Doe's fear of her coming hysterectomy and her memories of her mother's obsession with needlepoint had to do with anything.

When the effective hard-sf writer does feel the need to characterize, it is generally at the level of eccentricity, like the Yiddish accents of the Trantorians in *Second Foundation*, or obsessive behavior (i.e., "humours") like George Martin's unflappable Haviland Tuf, with his love of cats and loathing of human crowds. The result of such "characterization" is almost invariably comic, whether the writer intends that effect or not.

THE PROBLEM STORY

Another hard-sf approach to fiction of ideas is the problem story. This is the most common form when the idea is technological rather than scientific--when the "new thing" is a machine (or alien race or heavenly body) rather than an abstract concept or vision.

In these stories, people are using the new machine or dealing with the strange alien creatures or visiting the strange astronomical feature, then something goes wrong. The characters labor mightily to solve the problem, and either by luck or strength or cleverness (or virtue) they succeed. Usually somebody dies, and then the main character feels bad about it. But the main thing of the story is to show us the machine/alien/body, and the ideal audience response is to say, "Wow, that's neat."

When it works, the problem story can be quite good. I was a bit cautious, I'm afraid, because I have read so many problem stories in the last two years that did not—oh, how they did not—work. The result is that now I begin groaning as soon as I see the signs of a problem story coming up—I am probably not a fair audience for them anymore.

Still, keep in mind that the characters in a problem story don't have to be individuated any more than the characters in a discovery story. Just put your vanilla, chocolate, or strawberry hero into the dilemma. The dilemma itself—the jeopardy the character is in—can usually be trusted to win the reader's sympathy for the character. So, while the tension of the story is character-centered ("Will he pull out of the dive in time? Is it time?" "Will he eject the stowaway into space?"), it doesn't really matter all that much which of the billions of people on the planet the writer chooses to put in the position. Toss in a few eccentricities for amusement value, and we're home free.

RAISED EXPECTATIONS

This works fine, when the writer is content to produce a naked problem story every time. The problem arises from the fact that the problem story, unlike the idea story, has room for the development of believable characters. That is, it doesn't matter in the discovery story who lives or dies. Individuation is superfluous. But in the problem story, it does matter that the people solve the problem and get out of jeopardy. This is less important than getting the reader to say, "Wow, neat idea!" but it is important. And that's where the hard-sf writer often moves away from the safe characterization-free zone of the idea story into the dangerous realm of character creation.

The danger zone is that realm of storytelling where character and idea, plain tale and performance, myth and mimesis must all work well. It's the vast middle ground of fiction where the greatest successes and the worst failures of science fiction—of all fiction—are created.

In every group, you see, there are writers who aren't content to keep producing the safe tales—the plot-free tales of li-fi, the character-free yarns of hard sf. They go to the crenellated walls of the fortress, look out from the stones, see the dangerous world, and long to go there where heroic deeds are done—and where literary careers are regularly slain.

The brave ones don't just wish, they go. They try to write stories that depend on techniques they haven't mastered. They take personal risks, knowing when they do that the jackals

are always waiting for them to slip, to stumble.

The li-fi writer who moves away from the character story runs the risk of embarrassing himself with poor plotting and stupid ideas.

And the hard-sf writer who moves away from the idea story runs the risk of embarrassing himself with clumsy performance and unbelievable or tedious characters.

Am I one of the jackals? I don't think so. But I am going to get some blood on my hands. J. Brian Clarke's *INTENT OF MERCY* [Anlg Aug] is built around a very good idea. In a previous story in his series, a human-Phull expedition destroyed the home system of a dangerously xenophobic species. Now, they have discovered a seed-ship from that system, which no doubt contains members of that species who might well thrive and pose a later threat to the "peaceful" humans and Phulls.

This story series takes place in an interesting future milieu, and the theme of xenophobia is a powerful one that has been the basis for many great works of science fiction, and will no doubt be the basis for many more. It's a classic problem story, and J. Brian Clarke did not need to characterize beyond the vanilla-chocolate-strawberry level. His idea is strong enough to carry the story virtually alone. If he had not attempted to characterize, the story might have been an excellent one—of its kind.

Where Clarke goes wrong is in his effort to get the reader to care, not just about the resolution of the problem, but about the relationships among the various characters. It is obvious within the story that Clarke expects the reader to be emotionally involved in the characters. He carefully (and implausibly) brings back people who worked together in previous stories—but once together, they don't do anything that couldn't have been done by anybody else in the entire universe. All that effort to individuate the characters, but within the story itself, they don't do anything but act out their job descriptions.

The closest he comes to creating characters that matter is in the pair of xenophobic aliens who revive to face the human-Phull challenge. But even they do not matter as individuals—rather they matter because they are the first members of their species that we have seen. They are not characterized beyond their species attributes, just as the humans and Phulls are neatly divided into xenophobic humans, xenophobic Phulls, tolerant humans, and tolerant Phulls. In short, once you know which group somebody is in, you know everything that matters about him.

This level of characterization can work perfectly well. Look at Lord of the Rings, after all—the expedition could have only one elf and one dwarf along, because who could have told the difference between the two and the dwarves? No living soul has ever been able to discern any difference between the hobbits Pippin and Meriadoc. Bad characterization? Of course not. It was the appropriate level of individuation for the tale being told.

Nor would it be a flaw in this story, if Clarke had not raised our expectation that the individual identity of these characters would matter. Why make such a big deal about these characters being the ones called on to deal with the problem? They have no personal dilemmas that are solved, their individual nature has no bearing on the outcome of the story. Yet the writer's obsession with the characters' emotional pay-off far beyond what he earns by the mere resolution of the basic jeopardy situation of the story.

So—if Clarke had been unambitious, if he had settled for a problem story and tossed characterization in the dumpster, he would have written a better tale, right?

Right.

Yet I think it's better to fail in trying to do something hard than to succeed in doing something easy. Clarke obviously has good ideas and a good intuitive understanding of what makes a story, and the more he reaches for stories in which character and idea would fall all together, the more each with its own tensions and resolutions and rewards, the more likely he is to learn how to bring it off successfully. He obviously has the talent and the desire, and the mechanisms the skill is certainly within reach.

GETTING CLOSER

Timothy Zahn's novella *CASCADE POINT* won the Hugo in 1984. I, having burnt out on short fiction doing the earlier incarnation of this column, did not read it at the time. I didn't even know it existed. I began reading *THE EVIDENCE OF THINGS NOT SEEN* [Anlg Jun], that it was a sequel to anything, let alone to a Hugo-winning story. So I came to *EVIDENCE* with no expectations at all. It was the first short work by Timothy Zahn that I had ever read.

Thus his starflight system was new to me, and I loved it. In his universe, hyperspace is crossed by passing through a cascade point in which people see other versions of themselves streaming off into infinity. Each "copy" they see is what they would have been if they had made some different major decisions in their lives.

In *EVIDENCE*, a pilot has grown used to seeing, during cascade points, versions of herself. In this one, she becomes captain of a fancy passenger ship. Now she notices that the self with the nifty uniform has disappeared—which means that in the alternate reality in which she piloted the fancy ship, she was killed. Since in the present reality she is not on that ship, she is not dead—but it does suggest that the ship itself has met with some disaster. So, using the disappearance of her alternate self as evidence, they decide they must interrupt their own flight to take steps to save the passenger ship.

That is a terrific idea for a problem story. But, like J. Brian Clarke, Zahn was not content to settle for writing stories that the reader can take free zone. In fact, by their very nature, his cascade-point stories demand that some characters be fully individuated.

After all, the images they see are of themselves as a result of choices they've made. In effect, the



pilot can track her career if she had made a different choice, and can be grieved with regret if an alternate self seems to be doing better. This is a character situation in which the character's individual choices do matter. And Zahn does very well in bringing out the cascade-point character.

He did it just as well in **CASCADE POINT** itself, which is cascade available in his collection **CASCADE POINT AND OTHER STORIES** [Bluejay]. This is real poignance in the human dilemma of the person faced with his alternate lives. The trouble with both stories—and it is much more of a problem with **EVIDENCE**—is that once we leave the cascade point, we are back with a standard problem story.

Like Clarke, Zahn seems to be reaching for an emotional response from the reader that is largely unearned. Characters keep crying as the result of emotional "crises" that to the reader are barely worth a sigh. We are told that Alana is empathic—but she behaves like someone with no sensitivity to others' feelings. We're told that the captain is an effective leader, but all the events of the story tell us he's barely competent at dealing with people.

So, while Zahn is better at character individuation than Clarke, **EVIDENCE** still leaves this reader, at least, with that old familiar much-about-nothing feeling that is a sure sign that characterization has been attempted—and failed.

But it was attempted. And Zahn is a terrific storyteller who obviously is reaching for the big, difficult effects and is coming closer all the time. **EVIDENCE OF THINGS NOT SEEN** is not a great story. It's a good story with flaws. In retrospect, I think the flaws may have arisen partly because **EVIDENCE** so closely resembles **CASCADE POINT** in everything but the specific problem at hand, as if Zahn were unconsciously trying to repeat the previous story rather than develop something new in the same milieu. Still, warts and all, **EVIDENCE** is obviously the work of a writer who wants to write great stories—and is likely to do it before long.

This works both ways, of course. The best hard-sf writers reach for characterization; the best li-fi writers reach into the hard-sf grab-bag, too. You can't find a better example of the harder discovery story than John Kessel's 1985 **A CLANK ESCAPE**. An idea story, yes, where the characters don't need to be individuated at all, where everything depends on discovering the central piece of the central story—just like the structure of **THE STAR**. But the performance is also exquisite, and the characters are so carefully created that all their individuation does bear directly on the central secret revealed in the story's climax.

The best writers, you see, leave the safety of the castle, take the risks, and slay the dragons—kicking

jackals out of the way with every step.

HOW DOES YOUR WRITING GROW?

Not every writer with the courage to take risks survives, alas. Just because you have a magic sword doesn't mean the dragon won't fry you where you stand. Which writers will overcome their weaknesses and do great work? I can't predict—not for myself, and not for anybody else. Because it doesn't depend just on talent and desire—there are plenty of writers with both, who nevertheless stay locked in a perpetual holding pattern.

I think the outcome depends in part on the writer's attitude toward his own work. You have to have a combination of hubris and self-contempt. Every writer has to be arrogant. If you don't believe that the story you're writing is the most important, truthful story ever told, you can't even type commas. But along with that arrogance, every writer must also be deeply humble. No, not humble—desperate. You have to believe that what you just published is the worst driven ever to see the light of day. Arrogance and self-disdain, both at once. Desperate self-doubt, by itself, will keep you—you can't write, you hate everything you produce. And arrogance alone will also freeze you—you can't learn, because you think you already know how.

The truth is, nobody always knows how. Gene Wolfe knew how to write his **BOOK OF THE NEW SUN**; Brian Aldiss knew how to write his **HELLICONIA** books; but that was no guarantee that either would know how to write the next story he set out to tell. **KRONOS** and **HELLICONIA** are the great sf works of this generation. None of us would die happy if we could write half so well. But neither Wolfe nor Aldiss is going to write another book "just like that last one." They are arrogant enough to keep telling stories, yet humble enough not to think their latest work is The Way To Tell All Tales.

That attitude is risky—if you keep discovering new ways to write, the next book may not sell like **CHILDREN OF THE GOD-EMPEROR'S CHAPTERHOUSE**. But then, they won't be writing posthumous works while they're still breathing, either.

Which is another way of saying that it's OK to make mistakes, even big dumb ones that everybody can see, as long as you make them while trying to do something difficult, something new to you, something which, once you master it, will give your work more power and make it live in your readers' memory.

Deliberately or not, Zahn and Clarke are both doing that. And if an outside observer thinks they aren't creating "serious literature" then he'd better look again, and closer.

ONE BRICK AT A TIME

One of the pleasures of reading so much short sf and fantasy is that I get to see the work of writers who have not yet set off rockets within the field at large. If all I read

were, say, **Asimov's** and **P&SF**, probably the two magazines most widely read by sf writers, then I wouldn't have noticed Augustine Funnell's terrific little stories in **Night Cry**, or Karen Joy Fowler's debut in **Wells** as the **Future**, or Marjorie Turmedove's excellent body of work in **Amazing**, or Andrew Weiner's quiet excellence in different magazines every few months.

One of the pleasures of writing this column is that I get to tell you about writers whose work I've come to like and look forward to. It's comforting on the scene with volcanic novels or splashy special effects that attract a lot of attention. They simply produce story after story with quiet excellence, building a fine body of work, brick by brick. Well, whether they like to work in silence or not, I'm going to light a few firecrackers in hopes that some of you, at least, will look their way and see what good gifts they're offering us.

ANDREW WEINER

No cyber. No punk. But people—**Andrew Weiner** does people really well. Take his story **THE BAND FROM THE PLANET IOLU** [Asim Jul]. I hate rock and roll stories, sui generis, because they usually rely on evoking the reader's nostalgia for a few favorite old rock groups. But in this story, Weiner does indeed mention all the old groups—but you don't have to recognize any of the names and the story works just as well. The band of the title comes from a group that was culturally overwhelmed by Earth's radio transmissions. Rock music became so important to them that, like our lip-synchers in "Putting on the Hits," they have come to devote much of their artistic efforts to duplicating our sounds. This band is the best of them, and it has come to Earth to try to make a splash in the home of rock and roll.

ABBREVIATION

The following abbreviations are used for the magazines and anthologies reviewed.

- Asim** = *Amazing Stories*, Jul-Sep
- Anal** = *Analogue*, Jun-Sep
- Asim** = *Isaac Asimov's*, Jun-Aug
- Blue** = *Blue Champagne* [Dark Harvest] coll.
- DrDr** = *Dragons and Dreams* [Harper & Row]
- F&SF** = *Fantasy & Science Fiction*, Jul-Aug
- FF** = *Far Frontiers* [Bantam] anth. vol. 5
- Lead** = *Leading Edge*, Winter
- Luck** = *Livestock: Players of Luck* [Ace] anth.
- Nat** = *Nature* [Scientific American] coll.
- Night** = *Night Cry*, Fall
- Omi** = *Omi*, May-Jun
- TZ** = *Twilight Zone*, Jun-Oct
- Wells** = *L. Ron Hubbard Presents Writers of the Future* [Bridge] anth. vol. 2

The year is flying by: only one more issue of **Amazing** and **TZ**, four more **Analogue** and **F&SF** issues, five more issues of **Asimov's** and **Omi**, and the normal haul of anthologies. Since the next issue of **SFR** will contain the last installment of this short-fiction review column, I will do my best to include the rest of 1984's short fiction, along with Uncle Orson's Best-of-the-Year List.

If you are an editor of or contributor to a professional magazine or anthology and want it to be read for review in the next **SFR**, make sure I receive a copy by September 1986. I can't promise to read everything, but I do promise to try.

IT DOESN'T SAY
POSITIVELY...



That idea could make such an awful story. Think of all the dumb things that could happen, all the stupid cliché humans that could be involved. But this is a story by Andrew Weiner, which means that he doesn't go for easy effects or cheap laughs. The story isn't "about" aliens coming to Earth. The story is about people who are serious about their art, and realize that they aren't very good, even though everyone around them is telling them they're terrific.

Weiner's **THIS YEAR, NEXT YEAR** in the August *Twilight Zone* is much more difficult to read—a fragmented existential story told by a narrator who keeps flashing into important scenes that he can't control. They always turn out wrong. Again, an idea that could be, and usually would be, done very badly by lesser writers—but in each episode, Weiner takes the time to develop the situation, and has a knack for holding our interest despite a structure that runs a serious risk of fragmenting. As a result, we're still there for the payoff.

Weiner probably isn't going to knock you off your chair—I haven't seen him attempt something with the devastating power of, say, **PORTRAITS OF HIS CHILDREN**, George Martin's Nebula-winning novelet from last year. But last year's **KLEIN'S MACHINE** and **GOING NATIVE** still haunt my memory, something I can't say for most of 1958's short fiction. His voice is restrained, moderate, but his stories get inside you, and stay, and you're glad to have them.

AUGUSTINE FUNNELL

Funnell hasn't yet developed a consistently recognizable voice, but he does have a knack for involving you with characters so he can deliver a roundhouse punch. All his work that I've read is highly original, played with the techniques of each genre and making them do something new every time.

In **TINY FEET** (Ncy), he shows us a woman who is obsessed with guilt over her abortion. Her intellectual decisions about right and wrong can't keep her from feeling that she deserves to be punished. And the punishment, naturally, has to be delivered by the unborn child she killed.

The medieval fantasy **TRICK** (P&S Aug) is about as different from **TINY FEET** as it can be—it's also one of the most powerful fantasies I've ever read. The narrator is an adopted bastard who keeps his "father's" inn going despite the old sot's abuse. His father sank into a perpetual drunken stupor after his beloved and beautiful daughter Alanya ran away. Then a traveler comes to the inn carrying one of Alanya's eyes, alive and encased in glass, demanding that the narrator help him steal the innkeeper's hidden treasure to save Alanya from a quick and miserable death. There's a twist at the end of the tale, but Funnell plays fair—when the twist happens, it makes you want to shout with delight, for it has been fully earned by all that went before.

HARRY TURTLEDOVE

Harry Turtledove dropped his vanilla pseudonym of "Eric G. Iverson" last year. Now he is using his own forgettable name—and has the talent to match. I have no trepidation in predicting he will be one of the well-known, major writers in our field, and soon rather than later. For one thing, he has, by serendipity or planning, made the wise career move of launching several story series. A string of memorable stories set in the same milieu builds an audience. It also lends itself to becoming a "novel," which pays the kind of money a body can live on.

Of course, having said that, I must also point out that such a series has to be excellent or you might as well not have tried. Turtledove has an embarrassment of riches on that score—he has, not one, not two, but three outstanding story cycles under way. Best of all, you don't have to have read the early tales to understand what's going on. As far as I can tell, every story is self-contained. Though they have a cumulative effect, they also stand alone, which means you can start reading anywhere with current issues, instead of having to dig up copies of old magazines. That's especially nice, since a couple of the series began in *Amazing*, with its minuscule circulation. He's since jumped all his series into the *Davis* magazines, where more people can find them.

His second **SUNKEY** (Anlg Jul) is about the second visit by human xenologists to the planet Bilbeis IV. The previous expedition, hundreds of years ago, was famous among the Galactic Service for having committed the unforgivable crime of interfering in the natural development of the human-like natives. Now they discover that the effects of that first interference was far greater than they ever imagined—but it's hard to feel bad about it, because the results have been so beneficial. In what is structurally a discovery story, Turtledove has woven a moral tale of great power and importance.

STRANGE ERUPTIONS (Asin Aug) is from his series of Byzantine Empire stories, in which his protagonist, a clever bureaucrat named Basil Argyros, keeps running into innovations like the telescope and the printing press. In **STRANGE ERUPTIONS**, Basil's story takes a far more personal turn, for the problem he faces is a smallpox epidemic, and the solution—cowpox inoculation—too late to save his own family. This series has usually been a romp—enough tension to keep us reading, but a lot of humor and satire as well. This time it is painful, and Basil Argyros begins to emerge as a real person. Turtledove, you see, knows human nature as well as he knows language and story composition, and

the result is that he walks easily through that dangerous place I talked about, where you have to do everything, and do it well or you will die. He isn't dead, folks, he's getting better and better, and his stories are maturing, too.

His third series is certainly the most difficult of the three to bring off. These tales are set in an alternate America, where modern humans never crossed the land bridges, and so the dominant species is, not Indians, but Sims"—nearly speechless, hairy, slant-browed folks who, being "animals," are ripe for ill treatment.

Turtledove, the owner of a doctorate in history, is a deft pastiche artist. He isn't content just to jiggle history a bit—he tells his tales within long-established literary traditions. So this series has included such traditional tales as the child captured by, not Indians, but Sims; the "leatherstocking" tale, in which a white hunter and a Sim fight, and his Sim companion is a friend, not an animal; and the remarkable Samuel Pepys pastiche **AND SO TO BED**, in which the diarist of the English admiralty discovers the theory of evolution centuries early.

Not every story works, of course. He isn't a throw-in of tales of savages racing against woolly mammoths as an echo of the early days of railroading, but it was an empty exercise, really not up to the level of the other tales.

Because the remarkable thing about Turtledove is his knack for choosing the right story to tell, to make his idea become an intense personal issue. **THOUGH THE HEAVENS FALL** (Anlg Sep) is the story of a black slave, Jeremiah, who has long lain in comfort from the fact that though he is a slave, at least he is a human slave, unlike the Sims who labor in the fields. When an outbreak of diphtheria decimates the Sims, however, his owner sends him out to work in the hot sun under the abusive field boss. This is more than Jeremiah can bear, for it is an assault on his humanity; he escapes and makes his way to Portsmouth, where he finds a lawyer to work for a lawyer who just might persuade a court that human slavery is unconstitutional.

How many stupid stories have I read about robots or computers who fight for their rights as human beings? Turtledove is telling the same kind of tale, but it's right. The first step, of course, is that the story must be told from the point of view of the victim—something the "robots are human, too" writers usually evade. It's harder to do it that way, but it's also the only way that works. Jeremiah's particular dilemma individuates him, and the lawyer's eccentricities give way to real character very quickly. But the remarkable thing is that even the "villains"—the owner, the owner's son, and the field boss—are also sympathetically drawn. They are the enemies of Jeremiah's freedom, but Jeremiah can't help but feel stabs of sympathy for them, too.

There is a story still ahead for Turtledove, one that he must right before this series is complete. That is the story wholly told from the point of view of a Sim. He can't sentimentalize it, he can't give him more intelligence than he has—another

fatal flaw of the "robots are human, too" stories. Yet we must learn to understand the sim for what it is and what it isn't, from inside. That's a miserably hard literary task, one that I certainly did not set for myself—but it is waiting just around the corner for Turtledove, and he'll have to meet it and beat it before the series is done.

In the meantime, though, I hope book editors are noticing what Turtledove is doing. I hope he already has contracts on his desk for the novel based on the Survey Service, the novel about Basil Argyros, and above all the novel about Sims in America. Because, quietly, without any hooplah, Turtledove is creating some of the most important sf of the mid-eighties.

KAREN JOY FOWLER

By the time you read this, Karen Joy Fowler may already have won the John W. Campbell Award for best new writer. Barely a year since her first sf stories appeared, Bantam is bringing out a story collection, **THE LAKE WAS FULL OF ARTIFICIAL THINGS AND OTHER STORIES**.

Fully half the stories in the collection have never appeared anywhere else. For a writer this new, that's usually bad news—it suggests that the collection has been filled out with stories the writer couldn't sell anywhere else.

This is probably true in this case, too, but I assure you that the stories original to this collection failed to sell to the magazines, it was because they didn't fit neatly into any genre slots, not because they aren't good. Some, in fact, are outstanding.

Take, for instance, the story I think is Fowler's best, a date, **FACE VALUE**. Hester and Taki are the only humans on an alien planet, where their work is to study the Mene—a species of child-sized mothlike telepaths. Are the Mene sentient? They have no language, no art, no artifacts that can be studied. And while Taki happily immerses himself in their mystery, Hester has come to hate the creatures, for stealing films and photographs of all the almost human faces visible in the color patterns on their vestigial wings.

I've told you all that can be told about the story, and I've still told you nothing. Fowler's characters are alive, in pain; the Mene are truly alien; and the ending is heart-breaking and exquisite. In a sub-genre virtually defined by Michael Bishop and Ursula LeGuin, Fowler has carved her own niche—this is the quality of story that awards exist to honor.

In fact, the story is so good that I simply can't believe that no sf magazine editor has bought it. Surely it will appear in **Asimov's** or **F&SF** sometime before the collection is published in November.

THE DRAGON'S HEAD, which also appeared in the August **Asimov's**, starts out like a fantasy but becomes a quintessential women's story which, truth to tell, ought to have earned Fowler a few thousand bucks from one of the women's magazines. A little girl who dares to trick-or-treat at the witch's house develops a quiet, strange friendship with the old woman, which teaches her some of the secrets of life. If I hadn't read **FACE VALUE**, I'd call this Fowler's best to date.

Because Dick insists that **SFR** doesn't stand for "Short Fiction Review," I'll move quickly through the other stories, though most of them are worthy of extended review. **OTHER PLANES** is a lovely "literary" short story, whose point is that it wasn't a ghost at all, or not the kind you think. In **THE GATE OF GHOSTS**, a little girl has an imaginary world, but the world she visits is death, and she finds it harder and harder to survive; it is a tense story, very real in its development of the child and her mother—and the delightful mother-in-law.

THE BOG PEOPLE is a quiet, chilling story told by a woman who committed the unforgivable sin in a land ruled by alien invaders. **TOWN AT PORT** is sometimes silly, sometimes funny, sometimes absurd—but Tonto's view of his deteriorating relationship with the masked man after all these years is well worth reading. **CONVENTION** is not even remotely sf, it is a better-than-usual **Atlantic** or **New Yorker** story. The message is framed, but not lighted—you can see it, but you don't have to.

The sf element in **THE VIEW FROM VENUS** is peripheral at best. It is a love story set in 1969 Berkeley, and the only science fiction is in the group of anthropology students, presumably from Venus, whose comments on the story occasionally interrupt the narrative. As romance and as a half-satirical, half-affectionate view of the changing sexual mores of the sixties, it is very good.

I do have some trouble with the feminist conclusion at the end, however. The protagonist is a woman who does not think of herself as physically attractive, and feels alienated from her own body. I found myself identifying with her quite readily—I saw so much of my own experience during those very years, my own attitude toward my body and toward members of the opposite sex. So I felt betrayed, even furious, when I read this passage in the anthropologist's concluding comments.

"She found him attractive. Mentally and physically. But toward the end she was much more aware by the fact that he found her attractive." Right! I was saying. That's how it felt to me, too—and to several other people I knew. And then we come to this outrageous sexist statement: "...any romantic entanglement between a male and a female is, in fact, a triangle and the third party is the female body. It is the hostage between them, the bridge or the barrier. At least in this case."

Now, Fowler knows this statement is sexist and she knows that it is wrong—but she would surround it with four qualifying statements that cast doubt on it? Nevertheless, the statement is there, in a position in which it is obviously the "message" of the story. And, as a male reader who was having no trouble at all identifying with Linda, not as a woman but as a human being, I was angry. I may not have premenstrual syndrome or know what it's like to nurse a baby. I have yet to see any feminist writer create a female character who felt any emotion that I haven't felt. I don't assume that any of my virtues and vices and emotions are unique to me, and it is offensive when a female writer assumes that the feelings of a

character like Linda are unique to women.

Still, whether I quarrel with a philosophical point or not, the story is funny and truthful, though I think you may have to have been there—it may not work for those who weren't in their teens or twenties in 1969.

It is remarkable for a writer so new to have a collection out so soon; it is even more remarkable that it's so excellent a book. I only hope she does as well at telling stories at novel length, so she can make a career of this art, discovering writers like Fowler that makes reading **6000** stories a year worth doing.

CATEGORIES

I'm toying with the idea of continuing this column as its own magazine after Gels shifts **SFR** to its new format. But the first signs of burnout are already here—I sat for half an hour staring at the cover of Pournelle's **WARRIOR**, the fifth volume of his **THERE WILL BE WAR** anthology series, before I realized that there was no way in the world I could bring myself to open that book and give a fair reading to the stories therein. I couldn't even look closely at Bradley's new issue of **SWORDS AND SORCERESSES**. And if I can't read fairly, with some reasonable hope of receiving what the author of a story meant to give, I will not review.

Still, I think it is worth doing—publishing reviews of short fiction, based on a reading of all the field's short works. If it is to continue past the next issue of **SFR**, however, I'll need some help.

First, I have to know whether anybody would pay to receive, say, five issues a year of a short fiction review magazine. Given the state of my finances, such a magazine would have to be self-supporting from the start, which means a price of probably \$2 per issue, \$10 a year.

Second, I have to know how many people would be willing to read it. I have no way of guessing how many **SFR** readers skip over my column muttering



about how much space Dick keeps wasting on this dork, and how many actually look forward to it and would like it to go on. I can't see launching a magazine with a circulation smaller than 300. The trouble is, how can I know how much the circulation will be until I decide to launch it and start soliciting subscriptions? There's a catch-22 here, I'm afraid.

Third, I can't do all the reading alone, and yet, for the magazine to be worth doing, I'd want it to be even more thorough than this column has been. The solution, of course, to split up the reading and reviewing among several critics. But who will they be? Who besides me would be crazy enough to read hundreds of stories and write about them—for free?

Dividing up the reading duties is a tricky matter, too. I would expect to have five categories for five different columnists to cover every issue.

FICTION OF IDEAS: The reviewer in this category would read *Analogue*, *Far Frontiers* (or *New Destinies*), if Jim Baen resumes it, and anthologies like *THERE WILL BE WAR*. The reviewer would also comment on the fact and opinion articles in those magazines, and in *Omni* as well.

FICTION OF FEAR: The reviewer in this category would read *Twilight Zone*, *Wight Cry*, and various horror anthologies and small magazines. The same reviewer would pick up a few horror stories and urban fantasies from *F&SF*, as well.

FICTION OF MAGIC: The reviewer in this category would read *The Fantasy Book* and the occasional high-fantasy or sword-and-sorcery tale in *Analog* and *F&SF*. The reviewer would also cover fantasy anthologies like *Thieves World* and *Liavek*, and keep an eye out for magic realism in mainstream publications.

BEST OF MAINSTREAM: This reviewer would read at will through *Atlantic*, *Barker's*, *The New Yorker*, *Esquire*, the men's magazines, the women's magazines, and little literary journals, looking in part for stories with sf and fantasy elements, and in part for any tales with unusually strong storytelling values.

POETRY: This reviewer would comment on sf and fantasy poetry, with particular emphasis on narrative rather than lyric poetry.

None of these categories will be rigid—I can't see anything objectionable in a story occasionally being discussed twice in the same issue.

I would continue my present column, reviewing most of the fiction in *Analog*'s, *Amazing*, *F&SF*, *Omni*, and one-author collections, and reserving the right to dip into other magazines to review stories now and then. I would still lead off my column with some sort of essay, the way I always have. And there'd be (I hope) letters and commentary and differing opinions as they come up.

Now the big question: Does this sound like the kind of magazine you'd like to read? Would you lay down \$10 to receive it for a year? If so, send me your name and address, and I'll start building an initial mailing list. If the decision is made to publish the thing, you'll be notified in November or December.

FANZINES ARE NOT FOR EVERYBODY...



SOME PEOPLE ARE JUST WIMPS

Wick

And if you're a critic, would you like to offer yourself as a human sacrifice, to read and review in one of the categories I've listed? You wouldn't be paid, and yet I'd have to have an absolutely firm one-year commitment from each reviewer; I'd also have to see samples of your critical writing (unless you're a frequent reviewer for *SFRA*, in which case you merely need to point out which issues your recent reviews have appeared in). I'll give preference to professional writers who are active in the field they would critique—though I warn you that my personal policy of never mentioning any of my own short fiction would apply to every reviewer who writes for the magazine.

I won't publish a short-fiction review magazine unless I believe it will be insightful, exciting, influential, and self-supporting. If too few people want a short-fiction review magazine, or I can't find appropriate reviewers to cover all the categories, then next month's column is the last one in this series. If you want it, let me know.

In the meantime, I've divided the remainder of this column into the same categories I envision for the proposed reviewline. If you're a potential critic, you can see what I mean each category to cover; if you're a potential subscriber, you can see whether the categories help make the large number of reviews more digestible.

GEIS NOTE: Scott forgot to give his address and phone number to be used by those of you interested in his proposed/tentative reviewline. Always helpful, I provide:

ORSON SCOTT CARD
546 Lindley Road
Greensboro, NC 27410
919-852-8716

FICTION OF IDEAS

No matter how hard we try to stretch the boundaries of the genre, science fiction will always have spaceflight stories at its core. The saga of the heroic pilot of a spaceship through the cold empty lightyears is the central image of the genre.

Not surprisingly, however, starflight is not always used as a mere method of transportation in sf stories. Timothy Zahn's *CASCADE POINT* and *THE EVIDENCE OF THINGS NOT SEEN* are well within the tradition of spaceflight stories in which the method of surpassing or avoiding the light-speed limit is profoundly metaphysical.

In Jerry Meredith's and D.E. Smirl's *DREAM IN A BOTTLE* (WFR), the starship is controlled by disembodied human brains whose dreams and fantasies keep them from realizing that they are virtually dead, that dreaming is the only life they will ever have. The narrator is one of the live crew, who monitor the dreamers and help sustain their beliefs in their dreams. But the story is more of character than of idea, and more metaphysical yet, as the meaning of the story is revised by the end.

We are also fascinated by the kind of society we'll develop in space. The case is quite delicate, though, whether spacefaring will have the gunboat but rigid military culture of *NASA* or the free-booting spirit of the American West. Maybe it will have both. Pariss Ja Young's *BELLIDIVERE* (WFR) starts out like a gunboat *Far Frontiers* story of asteroid miners who go looking for psychedelic rocks in the Dante-12 system. The writing is so quirky it borders on incoherence, the story itself almost borders on sentimentality—but I liked it, much to my own surprise.

Eric Vincoff's *BAIKU FOR AN ASTEROID SCOUT* (Anlg Sep) is also "about" asteroid miners, but he has a new possibility for their society. They aren't American gunslingers—they're loyal members of Japanese corporate society. This is really two stories in one—a coming-of-age story, in which Yoshio graduates to full manhood, leaving behind his surrogate father and mother; and a problem story, in which a lost shipment of human embryos from Earth is lost somewhere among the asteroids. Both stories are very good, partly because Vincoff avoids the barely-made-it clichés of the traditional problem story, and partly because he has extrapolated a plausible, well-realized society that doesn't include any of the boring martial arts mumbo-jumbo of old Kung-Fu and new Karate-Ki films.

Science fiction thrives on the myth of the Competent Man. Brad Strickland's *THE WINDS OF OBERON* (Anaz Jul) pits a stranded pilot against the perils of a wind-stripped world in a textured demonstration of the hero's story at its best. In Robert Silverberg's *AGAINST BABYLON* (Omni May), the man is competent enough when he's fighting fires, but he can't do anything to stop his wife from going with the aliens out to the stars. The story of the man whose wife dreams of starflight works very well—but not even Silverberg is a good enough writer to overcome the fact that the whole firefighting business is a needless distraction.

When aliens and humans are thrown together, the result can be painful or hilarious misunderstanding. In **RACCOONS** (Amaz Jul), Kevin McDonnell stages a little battle between aliens on the rural property of a New York broker. Drop a humdrum human into a life-threatening situation and watch him make the best of it—it all works, and this is no exception. Vance Andahl's **BORN FROM THE BEAST** (F&S Aug) moves just as easily from melodrama (a cruelly deformed orphan who can't tolerate others' tolerance) to adventure (a trip up the river to the advent of alien country) to silly humor to the pure fantasy of shape-changing. What the heck, chaos it may be, but I enjoyed it.

But the queen of the sci-fi adventures is Vernor Vinge's **BARBARIAN PRINCESS** (Anlg Sep). It is the story of the editor of an magazine that is "published" on a boat that makes its circuit of the large alien planet every four years. In every part of call, it publishes a new edition tailored to the people of that town. The boat—and the magazine—have continued in this pattern for centuries. One of the most popular story series is of Hrala, the Barbarian Princess—dozens of writers have contributed to her continuing saga, which touches such deep myths that it has become almost a religion to some societies.

There is a strange tall girl-child who may or may not be human, and who is trained to play the role of Hrala for promotional purposes; a city of people who live in vast terraced mounds and torture to death anybody who commits the sacrilege of building a telescope to look closely on the face of the twin planets; and a beautiful exotic creature who lives in the magazine-boat, where owners, editorial staff, printers, and ship's crew all live together, virtually for life. The story is satisfying and complete as it stands, but I do hope it is also the beginning of a new series. I would gladly stay in this world of Vinge's for hundreds and hundreds of pages.

Appropriately, the same issue of Analog—which happens to be the best issue of Analog in the two years I've been doing this column—contains the first published story by Shirley Frier, the associate editor of Analog. It's risky when a staff member's work is published in the magazine she works for—there's always that sneaking suspicion that maybe the story was purchased just because the editor was too nice to reject the work of somebody he has to work with month after month. Well, Stan Schmidt is in perennial contention for the Nebula Human in New York Award, but by the time he published Frier's **PLAGIARTECH** (Anlg Sep), the story was honed sharp.

Ipk is an alien plagiarist, illegally on Earth to steal ideas for marketable gadgets. By the time Earthlings are ready to go out into space, we won't have anything to sell, because Ipk will already be manufacturing cheap copies. He is abetted by Mort Lamet, an android Ipk built for the purpose of living among humans. The story is hilarious, new, fast for a moment, and I hope Schmidt gives Frier enough time to write more.

CONTROLLING EVENTS

In Julian Brantingham's **LOWLY ROADS** (Amaz Jul), a "life-shaper" is trying to mold future history by

getting Annette to meet Neil, get pregnant, and have a baby. The trouble was that Annette and Neil were supposed to die first; the baby wasn't supposed to be born; and the inertia of the flow of events keep frustrating the life-shaper's work. This is an idea story that works—and one of the few tales I've seen in which the main character's death actually comes as a relief.

The protagonist of J.B. Allen's **STREET TALK** (Amaz Jul) has the opposite problem—he has no idea that, as he studies a remarkable phenomenon, he is actually changing it. The idea is one of the few I've seen in recent years that is startlingly original. Cities are intelligent organisms, and the color of clothing that people choose to wear on a given day is a message, a thought, a memory. Moreover, cities communicate with each other by bus, train, and plane—and more than that I dare not tell, lest I spoil the punch of one of the best stories this quarter.

DOING A NUMBER ON OURSELVES

One of the best uses of the idea story is to satirize present society, and Analog remains the home of the tale of biting ridicule. Geoffrey Landis's **STROBOSCOPE** (Anlg Jun) shows how impossible cryogenic life-extension would be, with bureaucrats in charge of things. Not quite as successful as a story, Christopher Anvil's **BUGS** (Anlg Jun) tells of a program that is designed to solve problems. The best thing in the story is a dream sequence of what life would be like if the auto industry ran like the computer industry.

Jerry Olton's **DEJA VUE** (Anlg Jul) is a first-rate time-travel paradox story. The paradox is not in the physics, though, it's in the legal implications, as people resent being arrested for crimes before they commit them. Elizabeth Moon offers the perfect weight-loss system in **SWEET DREAMS, SWEET NOTHING** (Anlg Sep)—perfect, that is, as long as you follow directions. If a few more of Analog's were as clever and well-written as these.



Another satire is Sansoucy Kathenor's **CINDERELLA CAPER** (MrFu). This brass little story doesn't even try to be believable, as a low-stakes technical-minded Ciny fights for social mobility in a rigid caste system. The story would have been better if Kathenor had been less faithful to the Cinderella story, but it's still good as is.

FICTION OF FEAR

Northrop Frye divides the "fear" part of Aristotle's "pity and fear" into three kinds:

Dread or angst, aversion without object, where you can't even name what it is you're afraid of.

Terror, fear of something far off; you know it's coming, but it hasn't yet arrived or happened.

Horror, fear of something in present contact; you see it, it has happened, but you're revolted by it.

In this sense, the gross-out slashers are the true horror film, while Hitchcock's masterpieces are all films of dread and terror. By its nature, horror is susceptible to the same pattern that pornography follows. Its effect is extra-literary—instead of caring what happens to the characters, the only suspense the audience feels is wondering what creative new method the filmmaker will use to arouse that delicious feeling of revulsion. It should be no surprise, then, that the true horror film, like the true pornographic film, quickly descends into the pursuit of ever more outlandish events in order to satisfy a sad audience. In the case of dread or terror remains within the province of story; it cannot work unless the audience knows and cares about the characters.

The same thing is true of so-called "horror" fiction, which can be divided just as neatly into gross-out, gross-out stories and stories of dread and terror. Clive Barker's **THE BOOK OF BLOOD** (Omni May) is definitely in the horror category. While Barker is a talented writer, and he begins to develop a couple of characters, they are quickly lost in a maelstrom of gruesome violence that destroys any story value. At the end you're a bit tired, a little empty—he's used you up and put nothing back. I hope the fiction of fear does not go in that direction—it's a dead end.

SELF-DESTRUCTION

The things that we conjure up will kill us, as two boys discover in **THE THING THAT GOES BURN IN THE NIGHT** by Sharon Webb (DrDr). Left to tend his younger brother, John casts a spell to terrify the kid—but the spell summons a spirit which, fortunately, prefers the taste of chocolate to the taste of little boy. More serious is Elizabeth Graham Monk's **CHILD OF THE CENTURY** (TZ Oct), in which a staring child emerges from the television into Midge Rowan's living room. Her relationship with the child is a powerful evocation of the rich nations' relations with the poor. We mean well, but our paternalism may have quite the effect we intend. This is the best sort of political story.

The perverse but excellent **THE DEED OF THE DEPT-FOOTED DRAGON** (NCRY) is the first Avram Davidson story I have whole-heartedly liked, despite its punch-line ending. On Lung, a

Chinese launderer who once was a warrior in his own country, finds a way to repay the Large Pale Savage Woman who tried to save his daughter's life. But the "service" he performs for her isn't quite as helpful as he supposes.

It's no surprise that we have a long tradition of stories that declare that the price of success is terrible. Most of us can regard such stories as comfort for the pain of our mediocrity. Robert Bloch's **THE CHANEY LEGACY** [NCRY] gives us a film researcher who lives in Lon Chaney's old cottage--and finds out how Chaney's makeup box helped him get in character--at a price. Because the story appears in a horror magazine, it is absolutely predictable--if it had appeared in the old Saturday Evening Post it would have had a much stronger effect.

The protagonist of **THE CHANEY LEGACY** plans to write a biography. A depressing number of these price-of-success stories are about writers. J.N. Williamson's clever tale **IT'S DROWN MY BOOK** [TZ Aug] has a writer driven nearly insane because he can feel people reading his books. He has devoted his life to buying up every copy of his bestseller so that he can have some peace. Neil W. Hiller's **FIRST I CAME TO LOS ANGELES** [P&F Aug] has a writer sell his soul to the devil just to make a sale--a trite enough idea, but the milieu and the devil himself make it fun to read.

The trouble with stories about writers is, first, that writers are generally quite dull to read about; second, that a story about a writer constantly reminds the reader that he's reading fiction; and third, narcissism rarely inspires good writing.

Still, it doesn't mean that a story about a writer can't be good. A.R. Morgan's **DOES IT PLOOFP?** [NCRY] has a horror writer doing some basic research in order to please an editor. For instance, when you cut the head of a bird, does the blood drip or spurt? George Alec Effinger's **FROM THE DESK OF** [NCRY] is an elves-and-the-shoemaker story, only the shoemaker is a writer, the elf is his word

processor, and this time the elves realize they don't need the shoemaker in the first place. In Patricia H. Barrett's **FLICKER** [NCRY], the title character is a fellow who will hook you up illegally to the power lines so you get free electricity. The only price he asks is that you listen to him tell you the history of the house you're living in. But the stories he tells don't stop with words.

The best of the stories about storywriters, though, is the one by Peter Ruth Rendell's **THE GREEN ROAD TO QUEENSLAND** in her collection **The New Giffriend** [Knopf]. The story is a lovingly drawn portrait of a London writer of high fantasies, who never found critical respect, but did earn the love of his friends. It is combined with that most lovely of motifs--the hidden path that can only sometimes be found in the city. In this tale it is a strip of parkland through London that once was a railroad right-of-way; it could as easily be, and in other stories is, a hidden staircase, a secret passage, the never-supposed cave that leads to magic lands. If you're going to write about a writer, you cannot do better than to use Rendell's gentle and mysterious story as a guide.

If success comes at a high price for writers, think what price we storytellers make criminals pay. Tim Sullivan's **SUPP-MOTION** (Asim) lets a victimized animator get an appropriate revenge on the filmmaker who stole his work--but the best thing in the story, for me, at least, is the scene that begins with the dealer in bed. E.W. Smith manages to bring off the rarely successful double-twist ending in the bizarre **BRANNS WALLARY** [TZ Oct]; but if you can figure out where the wallaby has to do with this tale of literary theft, I wish you'd clue me in.

Some things just aren't worth stealing, as the protagonist of Dean Koots's **SNATCHER** [NCRY] finds out; the satchel he stole is the mouth of hell. A man of habits turns out to have a few tricks up his sleeve when would-be robbers plot to kill him in **LOCKING UP** [NCRY] by John MacKay.

In Barbara Owens's effective story **PORTARA: EDWARD LARABEE** [TZ Aug], an amoral young man is haunted by the ghost of the mother he murdered in his father's shadowy past, in an exorcist to get rid of him. My favorite of these biter-bit stories, though, is J.N. Williamson's **BELLTER-SHETTER** [NCRY], in which a man who chose to be the sole survivor of a nuclear war, refusing to admit even his own children into his shelter, discovers who inherits the newly-emptied Earth.

THINGS AREN'T THE WAY WE THOUGHT

One way to produce dread is to twist the fabric of reality, so that the things we most counted on are up for grabs. **BY THE RIVER, FOUNTAIN-BELLS** [P&F Aug] is Stephen Gallagher's best story to date. Two young artists go on a trip through the country; the narrator learns that he isn't cut out to be a painter, but his friend finds that his vision is so powerful that he not only sees the world, he revises it by looking. It makes you wonder who was worse, the British family he stays with, or the artist himself who gave self-awareness

and beauty to a creature who never asked for it.

David Gerrold has a light touch in **SHAGGY DOG STORY** [TZ Jun], in which a woman learns that her dog Shotgun has a zipper--which she really shouldn't open. With **EPIPHANY** [TZ Aug], John Shea has a powerful story of a Catholic bishop whose remarkable career began with a miracle--as an Army chaplain in Vietnam, a saved the life of a Vietnamese soldier, Ky, who should have died in a burning hut; but the miracle she saw all what the bishop thought it was.

Reality goes in irresolvable circles in Richard Matheson's **GETTING TOGETHER** [TZ Jun], as a husband and wife go to any extreme to stay together, in jail or out, in life or death. The trouble is, none of their plans work out right. **THE JUSTIFIABLE PRIDE** [TZ Jun], by Julio Cortazar, is an ironic story in which the villagers send dangerous expeditions to the northern forests to collect snake essence. This essence, which the villagers leave so the mongrels will collect them. This useless, endless task uses up the people--but it is central to their lives, so they cannot stop. I may not agree with the author's religious message of the allegory, but I can't deny how well it was done.

One of the few places where literary, science fiction, fantasy, and horror genres meet is with the existential story, where reality is fragmented, and events become almost abstract. Of course, the story is scarcely more than a compelling image--but when it's the right image, the story is worth the reading. Roger Parson's **IN THE GRAY PLACE** [TZ Aug] is of a place where the springs are endless place where the ground under their feet can suddenly go soft; they fall, they sink, and then the ground hardens, forcing them to stay for days, weeks, or even months in an existing position they were caught in. In **THE EPIPHANOMORPH OF MORPHOGENESIS** [NCRY] (a topic you want to forget), David C. Kopaska-Merkel gives us a newswriter who starts seeing gingerbread men who run around yelling "you can't catch me." It only gets worse when one of them is caught.

What if you dreamed of a stranger who was equally sure he was dreaming of you? Brad Strickland shows what happens upon waking, in his sharp horror story **THE HORROR OF DAWN** [P&F Aug]. And Don Webb, who debuts with the excellent story **SECURITIES AND PERSONAL WORD** [Amaz Sep], takes us into a pawnshop that keeps skipping from place to place from year to year, with the shopkeeper unable to leave or even find out where he is, until the shop captures someone else to take his place.

Another new writer, Shayne Bell (who just won the Writers of the Future contest for the first quarter of 1986), offers a medieval setting for **ROAD TO CANDARI**, in which a knight gets caught on a road that never leads to the same place twice, but also never takes you anywhere new. (The story appeared in **THE LITERARY SOCIETY**, a good little semiprofessional publisher, of all places, my alma mater, Brigham Young University. Besides having some good stories, the magazine also has alarmingly good production values. It with the best of the pro and semi-publishers had as high a standard of proofreading.)

NEW WRITERS--IDENTIFY YOURSELVES!

As long as the John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer exists, we need a comprehensive list of all the writers who are eligible and where to find their work. Because I have so much free time, I hereby volunteer to collect the data and then make the list available to anyone and everyone who wants to publish it. The list will be a review list--authors will be listed in alphabetical order sans critical commentary.

If you are a new writer who is eligible for the Campbell Award (first professional or fantasy publication in 1985 or 1986), send your name, a one-paragraph biography, and a complete bibliography to:

New Writers List
350 Lindley Rd.
Greensboro, NC 27410

Don't let false modesty keep you from including yourself in this list. "I don't have a chance of winning awards" and "I don't want to hype myself" are not valid reasons for failing to respond. Unless you're so modest you publish your work anonymously, you've already surrendered the right to be shy.

MAGIC FANTASY

Mysteries are hard to pull off in the fantasy genre. Fantasy leaves open the possibility of practically anything happening; mysteries, on the other hand, have to play fair, uncovering a series of causal relationships that the reader could, theoretically, have figured out for himself. So the writer of a fantasy mystery has to lay out the rules of magic very clearly right at the beginning of the story, and then follow them scrupulously. Even this doesn't work too well, because the reader naturally assumes that the magical effects that are so carefully explained must figure in the solution of the mystery—the explanation of the rules can easily give too much away.

In the shared-world anthology *Liavek: The Players of Luck*, the rules of magic are shared by all the stories. As a result, each story does not have to explain and develop the laws of power from the beginning. It is not surprising, then, that three stories in this second Liavek volume are mysteries. In John W. Ford's *A CUP OF WORRYNOT TEA* (Liav), two young would-be lovers are caught up in a plot to destroy the regent. The weaving plot sometimes gets confusing—a problem Ford's *DRAGON WAITING* also suffered from—but the wit and romance and mystery are always there to rescue the reader.

While most of the Liavek stories take place in or near the city itself, Gene R. Wolfe's stories have wandered far afield. In his swashbuckling story *CHOICE OF THE BLACK GODDESS* (Liav), a Liavekan warship comes upon an island where a company of theatrical players has been stranded. Many sailors have been vanishing—though one person seems to have been duplicated. The captain of the rescuing ship has to figure out what is going on—then overpower the magic-wielding murderers. Megan Lindholm's *POT LUCK* (Liav) is much quieter, but no less effective. There are really two mysteries. First, Kaloo has to help her adopted parents undo the vicious prank

that is wrecking their inn's business; second, Kaloo is determined to find out who she really is. As we expect from Lindholm, the human relationships are strong and truthful and not everything comes out well in the end.

Lindholm's story meshes with two other tales in the new Liavek anthology. Gregory Frost's *SHOW OF FAITH* (Liav) is an unforgettable dark story. Jolesha and two other children from an orphanage try to steal grain to get some cheap hard liquor; quite by accident they end up with an artifact that lets them speak with the dead. It involves them in affairs of state, and in particular with the ruthless Count Dashiif—the same man that Ka, hero of Lindholm's story, was obsessed with, following him everywhere he went. The connection between the stories doesn't come clear until Stephen Brust's fascinating *AN ACT OF TRUST* (Liav), told from Dashiif's point of view, which parallels both Frost's and Lindholm's stories and then carries them both forward to a powerful conclusion. This intertwining of tales could have been interesting even if the stories had been mediocre; since they were told by three of the best fantasists working today (Frost's *TAIN*, Brust's *BROKENDOWN PALACE*, and Lindholm's *WISDOM OF THE FIGURES* are among the dozen best fantasy novels so far this year), the stories are individually excellent, and in concert they are superb.

Liavek isn't the only source of magical mysteries this quarter. *CAROL ORRIS: THE HUNDEYTER DREAM* (DrDr) by Diana Wynne Jones, is one of the two strongest stories in the anthology *Dragons & Dreams*. Little Carol is a best-selling dreamer—her nocturnal adventures are recorded and sold to an eager, admiring audience. Unfortunately, she has apparently run out of dreams—until her parents take her to Christomanci, who uncovers the cause of her apparent block—and a few other secrets as well.

SOME HAVE GREATNESS THROST UPON THEM

Duty is a common theme in fantasy. An unlooked-for task is forced on the hero—but he accepts it and carries it out, despite the personal cost. Bruce Coville's *THE BOX* (DrDr) is a fable, rather like Silverstein's *The Giving Tree*, in which an angel gives the child Michael a box to keep; he fulfills his duty all through his life, until the bittersweet ending when the angel comes to take back the box. Even though the tone felt arch to me at first, by the end I was completely won over. Monica Hughes's sweet story *THE SINGING FLOAT* (DrDr) tells of a little girl who finds a treasure in the sea. But she can't keep the tiny glass ball, not if she's to save the life of the tiny prince trapped inside it.

A more traditional adventure fantasy, *DRY WELL* (Liav), by Nathan A. Bucklin, tells of a young singer barely surviving on the coins people throw, who is engaged by his Scarlet Eminence to go to a place where a sunken boat is being raised, and write a song about it. Of course, much more is going on than the singer suspects, but the result is a satisfying story, rich with spectacle and symmetry.

SAVE ME

When something big and awful happens to you, you can't help but

NEW WRITERS WORTH NOTICING

These talented new writers published their first or fantasy stories in 1986. They are all eligible for the John W. Campbell Award. Those whose stories I found particularly worthy of note I have marked with an asterisk (*).

*Ray Aldridge (WFrU)
*J.B. Allen (Amaz Jul)
Don Baumgart (WFrU)
*Black (F&SF Feb)
Laura E. Campbell (WFrU)
*Camilla Decernin (WFrU)
*Dorrie Egan (Amaz Mar)
Margina Fitch (WFrU)
*Michael Grier (F&SF Sep)
Neil W. Hillier (F&SF Mar)
Senosucky Kachener (WFrU)
T. Erin March (Amaz Sep)
Bridget McKenna (WFrU)
Susan McRobert (Amaz May)
Jerry Meredith
*Wayne Neagle (F&SF Jan)
*Malcolm Brown Ore (Amaz Jan, Sep)
*Elaine Redford (Amaz May)
D.E. Smith (WFrU)
*J.P. Sullivan (WFrU)
*Robert Touzalin (WFrU)
*W. Warren Wager (F&SF Apr)
Don Webb (Amaz Sep)
*Farris Joe Young (WFrU)

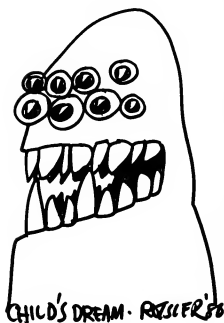
(This list is almost certainly not complete, since only a few publications make a point of mentioning which writers are new and which have published before. And I'm not about to guess—there's too much risk of calling someone "new" only to discover he was one of the leading writers of 1952, when I was a teenager. See the "New Writers—Identify Yourselves" sidebar.)

wish that something even bigger and awfulest would come and save you. In my case, the wish will never come true—what's bigger and awfulest than the IRS; the KGB?—but in fantasy all things are possible....

Zilpha Keatley Snyder's *THE THREE MEN* (DrDr) is written for children, the people who most often find themselves overwhelmed by forces they can't control—and for kids, it's scary, wonderful tale. An 11-year-old orphan is kept in virtual slavery by his "aunt," who is handy with the straps; then the Santa Ana wind brings three ghosts bent on vengeance for an ancient crime. Patricia McKillip has a deft touch with comedy comedy—not usually her strong suit—in *BABA YAGA AND THE GOBBLESHAW SON* (DrDr), in which a boy helps Baba Yaga get her magic house under control, and in return is saved from punishment for blowing up his father's house.

Will Shetterly opens the second Liavek volume with a *HAPPY BIRTHDAY*, in which the Magician, the chief wizard of the city, is almost destroyed during his birthday, when he is vulnerable while trying to reinvest his luck. He is saved by the least likely person, revealing a kind of conspiracy wizardry, "bad magic" and "terror" that left me rather uncomfortable.

In Charles de Lint's gentle tale *LAUGHTER IN THE LEAVES* (DrDr), Meran doesn't expect anyone to save her—though someone does. When her harper husband goes away for two weeks, she's determined to tame the bodach who has been playing tricks on her. She fails again and again, until a stranger arrives—the bodach in disguise, she is quite sure. She is also quite wrong.



FAVORITE TAPES OR TIERED CLICHES?

Since the Romantic fantasy is the oldest continuing narrative tradition in English, it's hardly surprising that writers only rarely come up with anything new. And why bother? Good writers can recycle even the most tired old clichés and make them fresh—or, failing that, at least make fun of them.

Jane Yolen's **MERLIN'S BOOKE** [Ace] is a collection of different approaches to the matter of Arthur. The stories do not fit together to make a continuous whole. Rather they are like glimpses of pieces of the story, seen through distorted, tinted glass. As long as you don't expect the stories to be consistent with each other, though, you can have a wonderful time with these magical tales of Arthur and Merlin and Guinevere. I particularly recommend the two most oblique tales, **THE CONFESSION OF BROTHER BLAISSE** [Meril], in which a dying monk tells of Merlin's fate, and **miraculous birth, and EPI-TAPE** [Meril], in which a box found in Merlin's tomb is opened. I thought no one could write a good story in which a bunch of reporters stand around waiting for a scientist to explain something—though heaven knows too many sci-fi writers have failed in the attempt. But **EPI-TAPE** works beautifully in Yolen's simple, truthful style.

Other good treatments of old motifs: **GOOMBAH ON THE HILL** [Amaz Sepi] by Erin March, in which a witchcraft bout; a hideous witch whose suitors are eaten by the goombar on under her house. This is the sort of story for which the word "grotesque" was invented. John Harris tells four twisted tales inspired fables in **AMERICAN FOLKTALES** [Atlantic Apr], like the one about the farmer whose animals keep betraying each other to save their own lives, and the Yankee sense of values revealed by the country boy who was a troll's question. Charles Saunders tells a short, simple, and lovely creation story in **ISHU'S GIFT** [Llav]. And Jane Yolen tells a new version of the St. George legend in **GREAT GRANDPATER DRAGON'S TALE** [Drd].

The "three wishes" motif is so often used that even fictional characters have read them all. In the clever story **FIRE AND BRISTONE** [lead] by Chad R. Milliner, a young wizard knows all the tricks of the trade, can fall into—and thinks he has foreseen all possibilities. Even when he is Patricia C. Wrede's **RIRIKI AND THE WIZARD** [Llav], a folk tale about a wizard who wants to be rich and remembered—and gets his wish, sort of, from the idiot chipmunk who serves as Liavek's whimsical god.

Sharon Farber has started her own tradition in the stories of Billy Jean, a five-year-old being raised by a hippie commune. In **MOONEY TROUBLE** [Amaz Jul], she saves the King of Congo and from then on can understand the speech of money. How often can she make this same device work? This often, at least—though I don't know if I'm looking forward to any more Billy Jean stories. Also, Renée Stalling's **THE UNKNOWN WITH GUN CAMERA** [F&S Jul] isn't a story at all—it's a Field & Stream article for hunters of mythological beasts. Reading this, one suspects Remick could edit Field & Stream—he has the voice down pat.



Much more serious is Garry Kilworth's **HOBBLYTHICK LANE** [F&S Jul], set in a world in which witchcraft is the established religion, and Christianity is a crime to get you burned at the stake. It's a good story, but I wish Kilworth had done more than the minimum necessary to get the basic idea across. Or maybe I don't wish that, since Mona A. Clee's story **DINOSAURS** [F&S Jul] suffers from loading too much onto a simple idea. She sets up a character story about a lawyer who wishes she were the person she was when she was young, and then resolving everything with a flash of routine witchcraft. Clee can write very well, but this story came to nothing.

VERSE

I don't know who did more to kill my love of poetry, T.S. Eliot or Rod McKuen, but for the longest time I shunned anything that even looked like poetry. For me, verse shouldn't be written in code, and it shouldn't be formless omphaloskepsis—the best poetry communicates clearly as it tells or implies a story.

How about an ambitious epic poem that tells a first-rate science fiction story? The language in Frederick Turner's **THE NEW WORLD** (Princeton University Press) is as clean and clear as Asimov's, but it sings with the rhythms of strong blank verse; and Turner's story and his milieu of a future America are compelling enough that if he had written it in prose, we'd be seeing it on award ballots this year. I must confess that I read the poem with some private regret, because years ago I began a project just as ambitious, an epic fantasy poem set on the American frontier; but I lost courage and shifted to prose. I'm proud of the novels that resulted, but I still wonder if I might not have achieved something better if I had stuck to verse. Anyway, I urge you to read **THE NEW WORLD**, if not because it's literary dynamite, then because it's damn good science fiction.

As usual, some of the best of poems this year are the work of Robert Frazier. The sonnet **PAST LIGHT** [Amaz Jun] is a vision of how our history lives in lightwaves spreading endlessly outward into space. **A WORKER IN THE RUINS OF GAYMEADE** [Amaz Aug] implies the story of an archaeologist exploring alien artifacts, knowing that there's no major discovery left on this well-dug site.

Ace G. Pilkington's **PROMETHEUS IN WAX** [Amaz Jul] is an apt observation on the Icarus legend. Bruce Boston's **TWO POEMS** in the Fall Night Cry, "Contemporary Witch" and "Soul of a Victorian," are not as clear as I would have liked, but Boston's vision and language are powerful even when you aren't sure what is going on.

My favorite poem this quarter is the kind of story that could only be told with the brevity and elegance of a sonnet. Hope Athearn's **ELEGY FOR AN ALIEN** [Amaz Aug] tells of how deeply the natives of the far-off planet love the last alien to die; yet in its 14 lines it implies an epic of discovery and colonization.

TALES FROM THE SOFT SCIENCES

This is the category of stories that, if I actually publish a short-story review, I will reserve for myself; stories of people in communities, in families, in pairs, in solitude, finding ways to be good or evil or both at once.

There are some beautiful love stories this quarter. In **GILGAMESH IN THE OUTBACK** [Amaz Jul; Rebels in Hell], Robert Silverberg tells of the long-dead Gilgamesh's longing for his friend Enkidu, and the quest Enkidu has kept them apart. This is far and away the best of the "Hell" stories, primarily because Silverberg resists the temptation to make it a laundry list of famous dead people, and instead focuses on a private, compelling story.

Bruce Sterling's **THE BEAUTIFUL AND THE SUBLIME** [Amaz Jun] tells of an effete romantic, who schemes to win his lover from a quaintly old-fashioned scientist—whom he recognizes as the Competent Man who has starved in so much sci-fi over the years. The tale is set in a future in which artificial intelligence has made routine, mechanical tasks and technical, ordered thought obsolete. Sterling's genius is such that even in such a seemingly cold, distant story, the milieu is interesting, the society truthful. Perhaps the nicest touch is the narrator's belief that while sex is nice, to hover endlessly on the brink of orgasm, at once sensual and ascetic, is "true love"—a far cry from Harry Crews's version of true love in a in a four-line poem. The story is sublime, yes, but by its nature it is also distant—an aesthetic object. That is not a flaw, but it does make it colder in affect.

There is not the same density of creation in James Patrick Kelly's **THE PRISONER OF CHILLAN** [Amaz Jun], but in this story there is a great deal more heat and passion. Journalist Wynne finds herself caught up in an international conspiracy, but the thriller aspects of the tale retreat before the powerful emotions come to feel toward the cripple Bonivard.

Kelly's stories, however darkly they begin, always affirm the bonds between good people; if I hadn't read **RAT**, I would have called this the best of his work so far. Robert Charles Wilson's beautiful, painful story **A PLACE OF ANTIQUITY** [F&SF Jul] is almost a mirror image of **CHILLON**; Morgan saves the life of a woman washed ashore, the victim of a shipwreck. Morgan wants to be her husband, to care for a beautiful, old-fashioned woman; but she is under deeper obligations.

When Lucius Shepard tells a love story, don't expect it to be sweet and tender. Like **FIRE ZONE EMERALD** earlier this year, **AYNARA** [Asim Aug] unites two strands in Shepard's writing: American tales of the frontier, the jungle war and the magic of the jungle goddess. This time, however, the goddess is a woman from another time; and the protagonist, an American writer in Honduras, resembles Shepard himself, at least in some key biographical details. The story is brutal, but it is also sentimental--the narrator rhapsodizes more than a little. But for me, at least, the sentimentality is good, partly by the events of the tale, partly by the elegance of the narrator's voice.

THE ROGUE'S QUEST

Love stories are about the bonding of two people; the opposite has to be the rogue's tale, in which the "hero" is out to take as much as he can get. Walter Jon Williams' love story **PARADEISIO** and novel **HARD WIND** I found unreadable, surprised me with **VIDEO STAR** [Asim Jul], the tale of a vicious exploiter named Ric, who is not entirely ruthless--he lets the people he cheats live, knowing they could never find him. But that was his mistake--they get their revenge. I think Williams is making a mistake, trying to write so much like William Gibson, but at least in **VIDEO STAR** he's done a good job of it.

Not as good, though, as James Stevens's **IT'S NOT HOW YOU PLAY THE GAME** [StBa Feb]. This one is a rogue's tale, but it's also a love story--about as surprising a love story as I've ever read. The narrator is a gambler, hustling; but he's also fleeing a failed homosexual affair. Now, in the process of setting up his host for a really good con, he falls in love with his host's wife--the first woman he has ever loved. The ethical questions the story raises are enormous--is it murder when the victim sees the death you tricked him into as the supreme achievement of his life? There is a morally weird story, perhaps repugnant, but certainly it is powerful, thought-provoking, perhaps unforgettable. It's a shame that it appeared in a magazine that has already vanished--but it's worth the effort to look it up in the February *StarDate*.

In Camilla deCarnin's debut story, **THE BOOK OF TIME** [W&F], Skylla is a thief, trying to steal the Book of Time from the center of a city whose whole life is structured around it. What the book really is, and her relationship with other thieves competing with her, change our perception of her--she is certainly not a rogue by story's end. DeCarnin should unquestionably expand the story into a novel--it's a first-rate adventure fantasy. Charles de Lint's **RAT'S ALLEY SHUFFLE** [Liev] is told from the point of view of some bit players hired by a rogue wizard who wants to steal the luck of his guests in a card

game; the bit players develop some plans of their own, however, and undo the scheme in a delightful counter-plan. Larry Walker's fine **DEATH-SHADE** [Amaz Sep] is a dark fantasy about an assassin's assistant who concludes that his master is slipping, and so betrays him--then finds himself depending on his master to save his life.

I CAN MAKE YOU DO IT

If you have the power to make people do what you want, is it even possible to use it for anything but evil? In Jim Aikin's **A PLACE TO STAY FOR A LITTLE WHILE** [Asim Jun] Steven tries to be good, but his ability to compel other people never turns out well. The gentle household that takes him in soon learns that, to their own grief. The story is so good that you will even mourn for the death of a talking rador. Aikin is one terrific new writer--I have yet to read anything by him that was less than excellent. Robert B. McCann's **YELLOW JACKET SUMMER** [TZ Oct] tells of a family that runs low on gas in a rural Texas town ruled by a boy who can make thousands of yellow jackets obey him--which pretty much means he can have his way. McCann's an excellent horror writer; I just wish he knew how to end his stories. This one, after a splendid beginning, winds down with the tired old "they almost got away but then the monster reappeared" cliché.

Some people just can't be coerced. In Avram Davidson's **BODY MAN** [Asim Jun], a plastic surgeon cannot get his talented assistant to stop being "creative," coming up with artistic touches that don't always please the client. It is a one-idea story that Davidson didn't carry on a moment too long.

THE ARTIFACT CRIES ALIVE

Pinochio and Galatea--we dream of our creations coming to life. In Ted Reynolds's **ANGEL UNWARE** [Amaz Sep], robots achieve not only sentience, but their own messiah. I only

wish Reynolds had trusted the reader to get the idea that this was a retelling of the Christmas story without making it explicit--because the story is strong enough to work even if the reader never notices the parallel. Especially it works in the thrilling moment when a robot first speaks honestly to a human being, revealing his pent-up loathing for the first time.

In Bob Buckley's **RED WOLF** [Anig Jul], the artifact is a "wolf" genetically altered to make it the ideal predator to live on the newly terraformed Mars. The trouble is that it is also smart and adept enough to be a strong competitor with man. For a while it seemed Buckley might turn it into one of those maudlin stories where an idiotic child tries to pet the monster and gets killed (or, worse, makes friends!), but Buckley doesn't fall into his own trap, and it's a good story after all.

Two new writers deal with the same theme. Ray Aldridge's **CLICK** [W&F] is marvelously inventive, the tale of a sculptured monster who is aware, vividly remembering an alien world that never existed; his memories are part of the sculptor's creation. Gradually, though, as people switch him on and off, he begins to sort what is real from what is false. Unfortunately, from a brilliant beginning this story tapers off into a rushed ending--but it's still a very good story.

There is no such problem with Rebecca Brown Ore's **THE TYRANT THAT I SERVE** [Amaz Sep]. A chimera--a genetically altered dog with wings and talons--is used by his psychotic mistress to hunt her, always being stopped at the moment of the kill. He loathes who he is, what he does, and finally escapes, trying to live in a halfway house, trying to overcome his longing for his vicious owner. This exquisitely painful story about love and freedom and identity is only Ore's second sale (her byline was just "Rebecca Brown" when I reviewed **PROJECTILE WEAPONS AND WILD ALIEN WATER** last



16 OUTSTANDING STORIES

In the past three months, I have read more than 180 stories and poems. Here are the 16 tales that I thought were the most powerful, admirable, and valuable of the lot:

** FOR THE POWER OF THE PLAIN TALK **

Karen Joy Fowler **FACE VALUE** [Lake]
Vernor Vinge **THE MARIANNA PRINCESS** [Anig Sep]
Augustine Funnell **TRICK** [F&SF Aug]
James Stevens **IT'S NOT HOW YOU PLAY THE GAME** [Stardate Feb]
Melanie Tem & Steve Rasnic Tem **PROSTHESIS** [Asia Jun]
Robert Silverberg **GILGAMESH IN THE OUTBACK** [Asia Jul]

** FOR THE WAY THE STORY IS WRITTEN **

Bruce Sterling **THE BEAUTIFUL AND THE SUBLINE** [Asia Jun]
Karen Joy Fowler **DRAGON'S HEAD** [Asia Jul]
Rebecca Brown Ore **THIS TREANT THAT I SERVE** [Amaz Sep]
Ruth Rendell **THE GREEN ROAD TO QUINBARA** [The New Girlfriend, coll.]
Lucius Shepard **ADAMA** [Asia Aug]

** FOR THE IDEA AT THE STORY'S HEART **

Harry Turtledove **THROUGH THE HEAVENS FALL** [Anig Sep]
J.B. Allen **STREET TALK** [Amaz Jul]
Shelley Frier **PLAGIATEUR** [Anig Sep]
Julien Brantingham **LONGLY HOME** [Amaz Jul]
Hope Althaus **BLAST FOR AN ALIEN** [Asia Jul]



issue), and she is two for two—both have been among the best stories this year. If you haven't been reading *Amazing*, then you haven't seen her work—and that's your loss.

BECOMING HUMAN

When we meet an alien race, they try to be like us? In *PROSTHESIS* (Asia Jun), by Melanie and Steve Rasnic Tem, the little aliens buy human prosthetics—artificial legs, hands, breasts, eyes—and wear them in grotesque costumes. Candelaria finds herself immersed in this repulsive culture—until she reaches a bitter sort of understanding. The story is as unpleasant as I hated reading it; and so well-written that I couldn't stop.

Or maybe we are the ones who will learn to be aliens. R.A. Lafferty is worth reading even when he writes a lousy story, like *ALONG THE SAN PENHATUS FAULT* (Amaz Jul), in which humans are given feathers. Much better is his story *SOMETHING RICH AND STRANGE* (Asia Jul), in which, a la *Close Encounters*, humans are inspired to prepare themselves for the coming of the alien visitors. But the aliens aren't so much gods as fiendish, and they arrive laughing.

In Gregg Keizer's *CHIMERA DREAMS* (Omni Jun), people regularly disguise themselves as animals; some of them as predators; others in the restful, safe fantasy of life in a herd of grazing beasts. I know you never dreamed of being a bison, but trust me, this story works.

Metamorphosis is not illusion in Elaine Radford's grim *DANCING IN THE DARK* (Ncrj), a first-rate science fiction story despite its appearance in a horror magazine. Russians wanting to preserve an endangered species share their village with scientists working

on a virus that causes one species to turn, gradually, into another. The virus gets loose and the village is quarantined. On the fringes of the story we glimpse global disaster, but we focus on Pyotr, trying to save his son by leading him out of the village.

I DON'T BELONG HERE

Jay A. Sullivan's fine debut, *WELCOME TO FREEDOM* (Wrfu), concerns a Red soldier who misses his regular therapy session and begins to recover his real memories, discovering that he is not the loyal Communist that he supposed. Carter Scholz's wry whimsy brings us *GALILEO COMPLAINS* (Asia Jun), in which Galileo is reconstructed in the near future, and finds that he doesn't fit well in the world that his discoveries led to.

In Robert Touzalin's *MUDPUDDLES* (Wrfu), the misfits are children cloned from geniuses, who have made the bitter discovery that genes alone can't make them match their "parent's" achievements. Touzalin is quite possibly the best writer in the *Writers of the Future* volume this year, but this is not the best story. Oh, it starts well—poignant, powerful—but it ends with that contemptuous little flip of the finger, when the author says, "I made you care about a character, but I don't have to tell you what happens to him because I'm an artist and my story is really About Something Else." Well, here's some news for all

storytellers tempted to do the same thing: Your story can be about as many things as you like, but it better be about itself first. It isn't art to betray your reader.

There are some startling parallels between Leigh Kennedy's brilliant new novel *THE JOURNAL OF NICHOLAS THE AMERICAN* (Atlantic Monthly Press), which may turn out to be the best novel of the year, and Lisa Goldstein's *SCOTT'S COVE* (Amaz Sep). Both are about young men trying to escape from their eastern-European-immigrant families, who are cursed with strange powers and never get on well with outsiders. By sheer coincidence I read both works on the same day; and I can tell you that only a perfect novel like *NICHOLAS THE AMERICAN* could have put Goldstein's excellent story into second place. Goldstein develops so many fascinating characters, such a rich past, so strong a story, so magical a climax that *SCOTT'S COVE* could easily be a novel in its own right.

FIGHTING TO SURVIVE

During World War II, the Germans found a way to call upon the old Norse gods. Now the beleaguered Allies have sent an almost certainly doomed expedition to try to assassinate the gods, with only Loki to help them. Believe it or not, David Brin's dark but noble story *THOR MEETS CAPTAIN AMERICA* (F&SF Jul) is science fiction, not fantasy. Most important, it is genuinely heroic, as the protagonist realizes that

it can be worth it to die in defeat, if you die nobly, and if your death becomes a legend that can create new gods.

Surviving in the face of catastrophe—that is, I believe, at the root of political support for SDI. We really don't want to believe that we won't, we can't survive, no matter how bad things get. Joe R. Lansdale's **TIGHT LITTLE STITCHES IN A DEAD MAN'S BACK** [Nukes] is about as horrible and hopeless a view of life after war as I've ever read. If the title alone doesn't make you want to read the it, this story probably isn't for you. Nancy Etchemendy's excellent story **THE RIVER TEMPLE** [F&SF Jul] is hopeful only by comparison. Many of stories have shown a degenerate future, in which our technical artifacts have become icons of a religion devoted to worshipping—or loathing—us, their ancestors. In Etchemendy's story, though, the religion is eminently practical: Their temple is a nuclear waste repository.

Vampire stories leave me cold; even science fictional vampire stories that have a rational explanation for all the classic vampirical traits are getting old. But Richard L. Purtill's **SUNSHINE IN THE BLOOD** [F&SF Aug] is a well-written story in which a woman has a very good reason for wanting to be infected with the vampire's disease—as her only hope of survival. And that will to survive is just as strong in the hero of Barry Malzberg's satirical **TAP-DANCING DOWN THE SIGMAWAYS AND BYWAYS OF LIFE, ETC.** [F&SF Jul]. No matter how they try to train him to be passive when assaulted or held hostage, the narrator can't stop himself from fighting back; he is obviously unfit for city life.

John Varley's **TANGO CHARLIE AND FOXTROT ROMEO**, in his new collection **Blue Champagne** [Dark Harvest], is a sequel to the title story; but the main thrust of the tale is the struggle to save the life of a young girl who was the sole survivor of a devastating epidemic in a space station. The disease is so contagious that no one could possibly survive any sort of contact with her; yet if she isn't rescued, she's going to die when her habitat crashes into the surface of the moon. In its basic structure this is a problem story; but it's also a Varley story, which means that it has interesting, fully-developed characters and a milieu so well-realized that lesser writers could set stories in it for years without running out of room. Yet despite all its fine qualities, I found myself not as moved at the end as I think Varley wanted; perhaps it's just that the recent *Twilight* stories pushed my sympathy-for-cutely-dying-children so hard that the switch is broken.

When struggle is useless, survival impossible, somebody still has to clean up. I thought *Far Frontiers V* was going to have nothing in it for

me, until I read Lois McMaster Bujold's **AFTERMATHS**. The story had some annoying quirks—a character who keeps saying "bleh," for instance—but if you wince at such missteps and go on, you'll receive a moving, powerful tale of a woman whose job is retrieving the dead after deep-space disasters. Her eccentric way of treating the corpses comes to make sense, to have a kind of holiness.

WAKING UP THE SLEEPER

Just because a volcano hasn't erupted in a long time doesn't mean it can't erupt today—ask those folks from Pompeii. Bill Johnson's **SOLSTICE** [Anax Jul] is the tale of a spaceship captain grounded by a manmade disease he acquired during the last war. Now, stuck on Mars, he takes two scientists across the hostile landscape to the site of a natural atmospheric CO2 laser. The ancient alien Rambulaura had a groundstation there, all set to use the laser to power a lightsail ship—but everything the Rambulaura built had at least two different purposes. Both the captain and the ancient alien machine are awakened, and turn out to be much better and stronger than anyone supposed.

The sleeper in Laura E. Campbell's **A SUM OF MOMENTS** [Wrfu] is an old monk who can't remember anything from one day to the next. Whenever he falls asleep, his entire memory is lost. But when an invading army threatens to destroy everything good in the land, the old monk sticks to life. His memory works fine, you see—as long as somebody keeps him awake. Despite a talky ending, this is a fine first story, the kind of sci-fi adventure that starts out in a quiet domestic setting and ends up having cosmic implications.

WORDS ABOUT THE MAGAZINES

What are you reading? More important, what aren't you reading? Admittedly, no one can read every story in every magazine; no one in his right mind would try. But every now and then, you ought to reach out and try a magazine that you've long thought would have nothing for you.

Amazing, for instance. The circulation is nil, but it's not because the magazine's so good. It has been the launching point for some fine new writers recently, and that shows no sign of changing with new editor Patrick Price.

Night Cry is a horror magazine, so you may assume it isn't your cup of tea—certainly I would never cross the street for a chance to have somebody scare me to death. But Alan Rodgers has managed to attract excellent stories by first-rate writers, making *Night Cry* remarkably consistent.

Even much-despised *Analog*, which admittedly has some awful issues (the August issue, for instance), has some superb ones, and Stan Schmidt keeps the fact and opinion pieces lively and interesting, too.

Of course, for fact it's hard to compete with *Asimov's* eternally folksy science column in *F&SF*—I confess I always read it second when I buy the magazine. And for opinion, nobody on Earth can top Harlan Ellison's *F&SF*

film review column—that is what I read first. His critique of Young Sherlock Holmes in the July and August issues should be required reading for all who are supposed to play at literary necrophilia.

Still, I'm also glad I read David Brin's essay on cultural assumptions in *Analog* and Gregory Benford's piece on utopias in *Far Frontiers* and Michael Swanwick's remarks about the



"postmoderns" in *Asimov's*. Even when the opinion pieces are infuriatingly wrong, the editors generally do a good job of finding interesting dumb opinions to publish.

But the fiction is the heart of these magazines, the *raison d'être*. I recently heard someone complain that there hasn't been a good short story in years. Well, maybe she was right, maybe my literary tastes are still so primitive that I can't tell drack when I see it. I'd rather have my problem than hers, though, because I may have less elevated taste, but I bet I have a lot easier time finding something good to read.

A Conversation with Frederik Pohl

Edited by Paul Fergusin and Earl Ingersol

Somewhere in the far reaches of Nepal, there may be an old recluse who has never heard of Frederik Pohl. But anyone with a passing familiarity with science fiction has surely heard his name. Pohl is one of a generation of SF writers (Isaac Asimov, Robert A. Heinlein, Arthur C. Clarke and Ray Bradbury are others) who brought science fiction out of the "pulp" and into the hearts and minds of renegade English professors. He is one of many writers who rescued science fiction from bug-eyed monsters, invaders from other worlds and things that go zap in outer space, and made it say things that really mattered.

Pohl's brand of SF is comic in tone and satiric in intent, with a clear (dare we say it?) social consciousness. From as early as his 1952 novel *THE SPACE MERCHANTS* (a satire on the advertising world co-authored with the late Cyril M. Kornbluth) to the recent *Heechee* trilogy (completed with *HEEHEE RENDEZVOUS* in 1984), his subject matter has been and remains human greed in all its permutations -- present and, particularly, future.

For the further edification of that recluse in Nepal, Pohl has been just about everything it is possible to be in the world of science fiction. From the day he picked up a copy of *SCIENCE FANTASY* in 1930, SF has flowed in his veins. He was the driving force behind the world's first science fiction convention in 1936, and a founder of the Futurians. He has been a literary agent, an anthropologist and an historian, currently the *ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITANNICA*'s authority on the Roman Emperor Tiberius. During the 1950s he edited *GALAXY*, one of the most innovative, popular, and prestigious science fiction magazines of all time. As *GALAXY* editor he won three of many Hugos he has been awarded as editor and writer.

But most important, Pohl was and is a prolific writer. Among other things he has written are *DRINKARD'S WALK*, *THE AGE OF THE PUSSYFOOT*, *MAN PLUS*, *A PLAGUE OF PYTHONS*, *SLAVE SHIP*, *JEM*, *THE COOL WAR*, *GATEWAY*, *BEYOND THE BLUE EVENT HORIZON*, *HEE-CHEE RENDEZVOUS*, *MIDAS WORLD*, *THE MERCHANT WAR* and *THE WAY THE FUTURE WAS* (a memoir). This is, of course, not to mention hundreds of short stories, as well as collaborations with such writers as C. M. Kornbluth, Jack Williamson and Lester Del Ray.

The following conversation took place while Pohl was writer-in-residence for the Brockport Writer's Forum Summer Writers' Workshop in June of 1983. He spoke with Nancy Kress, Nebula Award nominee and author of *THE PRINCE OF MOVING BELLS* (1981), *THE GOLDEN GROVE* (1984) and *THE WHITE PIPES* (1985) as well as numerous



short stories in *OMNI*, *THE MAGAZINE OF FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION* and *ISAAC ASIMOV'S SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE*; and *FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION*, and *ISAAC ASIMOV'S SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE*, and with Paul Ferguson, long-time associate of the Brockport Writers Forum, specialist in medieval literature, and writer of short fiction, who has taught at the State University of New York Colleges at Brockport and Geneseo.

KRESS: Your recent novels *JEM* and *BEYOND THE BLUE EVENT HORIZON* reflect a view of humanity in which the dominant motive is self-interest, the kind of self-interest that ranks one's own desires even above the lives of associates. *THE NEW YORK TIMES* called it a "dark vision." Do you think you have a "dark vision" of humanity and its future?

POHL: I have a great view of humanity's future; it's the present that worries me. I think that we live in what may sometime be called a moral dark age in which the primary morality is based upon property. That's not altogether a bad thing, but I would hope that there will be a better way of organizing the creative efforts of mankind in the future -- although I don't know what that way is.

KRESS: You've said that morality follows technology. How is that true?

POHL: Morality does, because you can't have morality unless you have enough of a technological base to allow people some leisure time to be moral in. If the primary need of every human being is to fight off nearby tribes and push other people out of the way to get food, it's very hard to be moral. Technology does give us the opportunity to transcend the animal necessities that have plagued the human race for so many millennia. We still have a way to go.

FERGUSON: Is it your view that we are presently misusing technology?

POHL: Yes, but then we've misused everything else we've ever had, from the Sahara Desert on. The human race has reshaped the world by taking advantage of what opportunities were there without considering that they were going to be detrimental to the world in the long run. Technology is a tool; we use it for what we want. It's value free in itself. A lot of people worry about things like computers keeping track of everybody and remorselessly tracking us down if we do not pay our income taxes, or if we say something we shouldn't; but the French *Surete* found no difficulty in tracking down criminals without computers, as witness the work of Victor Hugo.

FERGUSON: I gather that science fiction for you is a form of satire.

POHL: Satire or social criticism is one form of science fiction. Science fiction resists definition because it's so protean. There are so many things that it can talk about and so many forms it can take. As an English academic Tom Shippey said, you can't define science fiction because it changes, because it's a literature of change, and therefore it changes while you're defining it. It is a literature of change. It is a literature about change.

FERGUSON: Is there a difference between science fiction and what we generally consider mainstream fiction?

POHL: By my favorite definition of science fiction -- a story which is possible -- mainstream is a subcategory of science fiction.

KRESS: You mentioned that science fiction takes many forms. Which one do you think is dominant now, and which one will be dominant? In other words, where do you think the field is going?

POHL: It's going wherever any individual writer with a new idea and a new way of telling a story takes it. Science fiction is not an organic or a monolithic whole; it rests on somebody, somewhere, sitting at a typewriter, at a word processor, or with a pencil in his hand, saying something that nobody has said before, and therefore suggesting to fifty other writers new kinds of stories to write. Of course, there are mechanical changes that are happening in the publishing business and in communications generally so that now more and more science fiction is appearing as film or television instead of as books. Maybe in the future we'll be using computers or video games to get our science fiction.

KRESS: A number of SF critics have taken a very dim view of science fiction films. Do you see very much difference between science fiction in film and in print forms?

POHL: Yes, the science fiction in print form is much better. In film there are certain things you can't do. You can't stop the camera to allow the audience to reflect, so whatever is said in a film has to be so easy to understand that it is immediately accessible. In film you can only see what the camera shows you; you don't have time to speculate and imagine for yourself the rest of the setting. Also there are techniques of prose that you can't do in film. Generally, there is a lot that can be done in a book that can't be done in film. There is, on the other hand, the marvelous saturation of the senses you get from STAR WARS or E.T. or THE RETURN OF THE JEDI when you get that marvelous color and loud sound hitting you.

KRESS: Have you ever written in film?

POHL: Very unsuccessfully.

FERGUSON: Isn't the problem really that film makers don't understand what science fiction is about? They think of gimmicks and special effects.

POHL: They think that science fiction has to involve space ships and light swords. There have been a few science fiction films that have not been so constricted, but by and large, the ones you have heard of, the ones that have brought

in big audiences and inspired others have been remakes of STAR WARS or STAR TREK. Which was almost as true in print science fiction a long time ago. Cyril Kornbluth and I wrote a novel called THE SPACE MERCHANTS thirty years ago, which was rejected by every publishing company in America that had a science fiction line because it contained no ray guns or space battles. They didn't think it was science fiction. It's done well enough since then, but it was not understood to be science fiction by the people in charge of the publishing companies, just as now there is much science fiction that's not understood to be so by movie producers.

KRESS: You mentioned the changes in science fiction. What changes do you think there have been in your own work during the time you've been writing?

POHL: I think I've got better at it. I'm beginning to catch the notion of how to do it. It takes a while. I'm not self-critical or self-analytical enough to be able to answer questions like that in any trustworthy fashion.

KRESS: Then you won't like the next question either, but I want to ask it. One change I've noticed in your work is that in your early stories your women characters merely existed as love objects for the men in your stories. In your recent novels that hasn't been true at all. People like Essie in BEYOND THE BLUE EVENT HORIZON and especially Marjorie Menninger in JEM are fully fleshed, complex human beings. Do you think you have been consciously influenced by the growth of feminism and the Women's Movement to create these kinds of characters? Or, was it just that your craft matured?

POHL: I would like to say that it's my craft maturing, but actually it's my consciousness being elevated by people hitting me over the head from time to time. Some of my feminist friends have pointed this out to me. It's not unusual in science fiction writers that have been around as long as I have, because when I began writing, science fiction appeared almost exclusively in "pulp" magazines and followed the "pulp" criteria for a good story which involved some hero to do heroic things and some damsel in distress for him to rescue -- that's all she was meant to be.

KRESS: Tell us a little about your work habits. What keeps you going and how do you construct a story?

POHL: My physical work habits are pretty simple. I sit down every day and I write. That's how you can tell a writer from a non-writer -- there's no other

way. The writer writes and the non-writer doesn't. And the person who does not write, whatever he thinks he is, is not a writer. I try to do four pages every day; it's not four pages of polished, final copy. It's four pages of something, very often to be thrown away, but certainly to be rewritten several times before it's in print. What those four pages are depends on any number of factors: what contracts are now overdue or what inspirations come to me when I wake up in the morning or what I am so bored with that I cannot look at again so I put it aside and turn to something else. The basic rule of my life is to deface four virgin sheets of paper every day.

FERGUSON: Do you use a word processor?

POHL: No, I've considered one, but I have not been willing to make that change in my habits. There's no doubt that word processors make writing easier; I'm not convinced that they make it better. There's something to be gained through the mechanical task of retyping a page that you don't get by looking at it and moving a cursor around on a screen. If you look at a paragraph on a screen, you may say, "That's ok" and not bother to make a change in it because it's 99% ok. But if you're retyping it and have to hit the keys again anyhow, you're very likely to make that change. That's what I do. I do it or so I would like to think. It's a religious question with me; it's a matter of faith.

KRESS: Tell us when you got the "religion." How did you first get involved with science fiction?

POHL: I began reading science fiction when I was about ten. Somebody had left a magazine in the house that had a picture of a big, green, scaly monster knocking the tops off skyscrapers, and I thought, "Wow, that's for me." I read it, and I thought it was pretty good, and I was too young and unsophisticated to know that the presence of one magazine indicated there were others. I thought I'd read the only one there'd ever been. As I got to be a sophisticated eleven-year-old, I found other magazines and began reading them. When I was twelve, I began to write, and as a young teenager I discovered science fiction fandom, which is the universe of people who read science fiction and seek each other's company at conventions. Then I discovered that after you've written a story you may read it, somebody who may publish it. That's the second secret of writing -- how to get published: You mail it to somebody who might publish it. After a while I began to get some of them accepted.

FERGUSON: Since you started writing, science fiction has become somewhat respectable. You mentioned that it started out associated with the "pulp," and I suppose that was a very long association. But it hadn't been respectable until ten or fifteen years ago. How do you account for its sudden respectability?

POHL: If you had asked me that question a few years ago, I'm not sure that I could have answered it. Now, I'm sure I know what makes science fiction academically respectable. Ten, twenty, thirty years ago, there was a bunch of fresh, ignorant kids who discovered science



fiction and began reading it and loved it. Those kids are now chairs of English departments, and therefore it's now respectable.

KRESS: The critic Joanna Russ has said science fiction shouldn't be judged by the usual mainstream literary criteria. Her reason is that it is primarily a didactic literature, like medieval literature, and that no one unequipped with a knowledge of science is equipped to judge science fiction. Do you see that big a gap between science fiction and mainstream literature?

PHIL: No, it depends on how narrowly you construe science fiction. There is some science fiction that meets those strictures, but there's a lot of science fiction that does not. Ray Bradbury's stories, by her definition, would not be science fiction, but his stories are what most people discover to be science fiction when they are in grade school. Science fiction does not have to be about science; the term is a misnomer. It isn't fiction that's about science; it's a name. My name is Phil. That doesn't describe me; it's just a name I'm known by. Science fiction is the label put up on the shelves of books so you know where to go for that kind of book. There have been a lot of attempts to give it a different name and a lot of people I know wish they would succeed. But I can't change my name very well either.

KRESS: You've met several thousand science fiction writers and readers in your life. Do you think that people who fall in love with science fiction are different from those who can't stand the stuff? Is there some quality of mind that's attracted to science fiction?

PHIL: It's very hard for me to describe why some people don't read science fiction. I run into people all the time who sit next to each other at the desk of an observatory or space center or computer laboratory; they look indistinguishable, and yet one has never picked up a science fiction book and the other is a big fan. In general, science fiction readers are a little more curious and I would like to think a little more intelligent, or certainly a little more open minded.

FERGUSON: Nan and I have a mutual friend who writes science fiction but who bristles at being called a "science fiction writer." She would prefer to be considered merely a writer. Are you bothered by the label "science fiction writer"?

PHIL: No, I write science fiction; I do it by choice. I don't have to; I have written other things. I enjoy writing science fiction and I enjoy the finished product. Next of all, I like the audience for science fiction; it's far more perceptive and responsive than any other.

FERGUSON: You've mentioned that you feel one of the obligations of the science fiction writer is to invent something that no one has ever thought of before.

PHIL: I think that's one of the things a science fiction writer ought to strive for. You can't do it all the time. A lot of things that have never been said haven't been for the very good reason that they're not worth saying. Originality or newness doesn't necessarily make a story good. But I do think there

is a question of conscience; a science fiction writer who's capable of thinking of something brand new that will illuminate the world in no matter how small a way has an obligation to try to do it, to carry his imagination as far as he possibly can. There are writers -- Cordwainer Smith, for example -- who write about individuals and societies that are very far from our own, but they make them plausible. They are so strange that you know if you went one step further the whole thing would collapse and you wouldn't believe a word of it. He's just walking that tightrope, and it's that tightrope that everyone should try to walk every once in a while.

KRESS: Which of your own works do you like best? In which have you most successfully walked that "tightrope"?

PHIL: The short story "Day Million" is one I'm willing to have carved on my tombstone; I don't write any better than that. If you don't like that, I'm just not your cup of tea.

KRESS: I like "The Meeting" and "The Gold at the Starbow's End" better. I thought those were both superb pieces.

PHIL: Better, I'll accept, as long as you don't tell me you don't like "Day Million."

KRESS: I do like "Day Million." One of the things you've written that isn't science fiction is a study of the Roman Emperor Tiberius, about whom you learned enough so that you are now the authority for the ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITANNICA.

PHIL: A fact that I drop into every conversation I can.

KRESS: Otherwise, I wouldn't have known. How did he become an interest of yours?

PHIL: Because I was interested in history. In my abbreviated school career, I took no history courses at all so that the fact that there was a world before the twentieth century was a big surprise to me when I began reading books about history. Over the decades since then, I have been trying to fill in the gaps in my knowledge of what the human race was like. The Imperial Roman period is one that interests me a great deal and when I looked for a book on Tiberius, I couldn't find one. When that happens, I often, I think, "Well, if I can't find a book, why don't I write one!" Once in a while, I do. That was one of the few of those books that I actually finished and published.

KRESS: You travel a great deal, lecturing about science fiction around the world. Do you see any large difference between the kind of science fiction that is written in other countries and what's written here?

PHIL: There are large differences. I'm not too sure that I'm qualified to say what they are because I don't speak any language other than English. I know that when I see them in translation or discuss them with local writers who are able to appreciate them in their own language, there are significant differences between American or British science fiction and Japanese science fiction, which is much more lyrical and evocative than explicit. American science fiction usually gives you a cold, hard Kodachrome picture of what you're looking at; Japanese science fiction does not. Chinese

science fiction also does not. French science fiction strikes me as being more interested in word play than in content. These are all snap judgments that may not be worth anything, but there surely are differences. I'm not sure that I've diagnosed the right ones.

FERGUSON: In your own writing, what is your primary concern as a science fiction writer -- character, theme, invention of a world that might exist?

PHIL: The primary concern in each case is the theme, that is, what is at that time; I don't have a hierarchical scheme in which I say, "If I get the characters right, I don't care about the rest." They are all important, and I try -- certainly never succeeding fully because I don't know how -- to make all the characters real and all the settings convincing, plausible, accurate to the extent they can be. If I feel I'm doing badly in any of those, that's my worry at that time.

FERGUSON: I've very rarely tried writing science fiction -- writing straight fiction is difficult enough -- but I'm wondering what happens when you're trying to get inside a character such as the Krimpt in JEM.

PHIL: Simply, I just imagine how I'd be if I were a Krimpt. (laughter) Really that's how it is. I can't describe a character...

FERGUSON: That's a foolish question.

PHIL: No, it's a foolish answer. The question is valid, and the answer is true, even though they don't say much. The only way anyone can write about any character is to imagine himself as that character. It's somewhat difficult for me to write about a Martian or a Krimpt than it is to write about a woman or a child. I have to imagine how I would be in all those cases. And I'm not sure I'm right in any of those cases.

FERGUSON: Maybe what I'm really asking is where did the Krimpt come from?

PHIL: It came from trying to think what sort of life forms there might be. The book in which the Krimpt appeared I had already decided was to have three dominant intelligent life forms, and I wanted them as unlike anything I knew as possible. I thought of science fiction writers, when they invent alien beings, tend to describe them as having Spock ears or possibly green blood, and that's as far as they go. That's nonsense. It's pretty obvious that if there's intelligent life elsewhere it isn't much like us. So, I tried to imagine life forms more or less analogous to those on Earth but not quite the same. I can tell you what I did, but not how.

KRESS: You've collaborated with several different writers -- Cyril Kornbluth, Jack Williamson and others. What are the mechanics of collaboration?

PHIL: It varies. Cyril Kornbluth and I began working together as teenagers and grew up in the habit of collaborating, so it was swift and easy to do it. I think we wrote better together at that time than either of us could independently. He'd come out to my house in Red Bank and we'd sit around and talk for a few hours and flip a coin; whoever lost would go up to the third floor where we kept Cyril's typewriter and write the first four pages and come down. Then, the other would go up and write the next

four pages. Once we had done that fifty times, we had the rough draft of a novel.

FERGUSON: Was that so?

PUHL: No. (laughter) But in essence that was it.

FERGUSON: Did you argue?

PUHL: Not terribly. I almost always did the final draft, without Cyril's knowing what I was doing, so he couldn't argue until it was in print.

KRESS: And how did it work with Jack Williamson?

PUHL: Jack and I did it by correspondence, and it's much more laborious because he's in New Mexico and I'm in the East, so we exchange a lot of letters. He does a complete first draft and then I do a complete rewrite, and that's it.

KRESS: A number of writers have expressed opinions of creative-writing classes ranging from reservations to disdain. Do you think creative writing classes are useful to an aspiring writer?

PUHL: Do you think antibiotics are useful? Are they if you're sick, but they can hurt you if you're not. It depends on the creative writing class, the stage the writer's in, and mostly whether the class is authoritarian. The only thing any writer has to sell is his own personal view of the world. If he attends a workshop or class where someone imposes another viewpoint on him, that's bad. If you can do nothing else in a class, you can at least encourage people to write. Workshops and classes do get people to put words on paper and that's really how you learn.

KRESS: What would be your advice for young writers?

PUHL: Sit down and write, and keep on writing. I have had a theory that everybody has about a half-million bad words they have to write before they get to the good ones. Of course, I've known people who have gone well past the half-million without getting to the good ones.

KRESS: Have you known many who have come to the good ones well before the half-million mark?

PUHL: Yes, there have been people who, to my surprise and chagrin, write beautifully the first time they try. I despise those people.

KRESS: Which writers influenced you?

PUHL: Everybody I read, to some extent. I think H.G. Wells, to a large extent, Kipling in a different way, and Stephen Vincent Benet formed my style for some time, because I greatly admired his easy colloquial way of telling a story. But there's no writer I've read who hasn't had at least some affect on me, and I've read everybody.

FERGUSON: You spent some time as an editor of GALAXY. What did you look for in manuscripts you read for publication?

PUHL: I looked for something I'd never seen before; I didn't really have a pre-formed notion of what a story had to be. I was pretty cruel with most of the stories that were sent in: If they didn't interest me on page one, I never saw page two. I wasn't running a writing school, but a magazine, so I felt no obligation to read all the way through a bad story. As a result the stories I published were

the ones that I thought were entertaining enough for me to want to finish. It's not as simple, of course, because there were rewrites, sometimes suggestions, or encouragement of writers whose stories weren't any good but their next ones might be.



SOCIAL FANTASY

A NEW COVENANT*

-- AMONG THE INHABITANTS OF THE CONTINENT OF NORTH AMERICA --

WE, THE UNDERSIGNED Witnesses to the Lesson of History -- that no form of political Government may be relied upon to secure the Individual Rights of Life, Liberty, or Property -- now therefore establish and provide certain fundamental Precepts measuring our conduct toward one another, and toward others:

INDIVIDUAL SOVEREIGNTY

FIRST, that we shall henceforward recognize each Individual as the exclusive Proprietor of his or her own existence and of all Products of that Existence, holding no obligation binding among Individuals excepting those to which they voluntarily and explicitly consent;

FREEDOM FROM COERCION

SECOND, that under no Circumstances shall we acknowledge any Liberty to initiate Force against another Person, and shall instead defend the inalienable Right of Individuals to resist Coercion employing whatever Means proven necessary in their judgment;

ASSOCIATION AND SECESSION

THIRD, that we shall hold inviolable those Relationships among Individuals which are totally voluntary, but conversely, any Relationship not thus mutually agreeable shall be considered empty and invalid;

INDIVIDUALITY OF RIGHTS

FOURTH, that we shall regard Rights to be neither collective nor additive in Character -- two Individuals shall have no more Rights than one, nor shall two million nor two thousand million -- nor shall any Group possess Rights in Excess of those belonging to its individual Members;

EQUALITY OF LIBERTY

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*excerpted from Chapter XVII of THE GALLATIN DIVERGENCE by L. Neil Smith, Del Rey Books (a division of Random House), New York, 1985



DAVID L. TRANSUE

THE CHANGES I'VE SEEN

Science fiction has come a long way since 1926, and the first thing to remember is that, in January 1926, science fiction did not exist as a genre.

That means two things: First of all, while books and magazines were around, what called science fiction certainly existed, there was no over-all label for them. They were called such things as "different," "impossible," "fantastic stories," "scientific romances," etc. If your local newstand was run by someone who read that type of story, he or she might be able to steer you to a current magazine containing such an example. The same applied to your local library.

Such stories had appeared in the "respectable" general magazines from the 80s or earlier of the last century, and they also appeared in various "pulp" all-fiction magazines, particularly the *Minsey* group. But by 1926, they had disappeared from the "respectable" magazines and could be found only in the pulps.

Thus, we see that Hugo Gernsback did not drag science fiction into the so-called pulp ghetto; it was already there. His aim was to take it out of the pulps and to make a respectable genre of it. His first name for the genre was "scientification," a coined word that didn't really take on. It wasn't until 1929, after his return to publishing upon losing control of *Experiment Publications*, that he used the term "science fiction" -- and that name has stuck.

The second thing about "science fiction" before (and for some years after) 1926 is that there were no general conventions about writing it. On all levels, from serious novelists like H.G. Wells to the amateurs who wrote science-application stories for *RADIO NEWS* and *SCIENCE AND INVENTION*, an author had an idea for what he or she considered a good "different" story and wrote it the same way he or she would write an ordinary story, to the best of his or her ability.

Most of the novels, and many of the short stories that were in *AMAZING STORIES*' first incarnation (1926-29) had a leisurely pace; they were not pulp-type fast-action stories -- the author was in no hurry. There were long descriptions of places; characters were described at length by the author, generally, so that before the reader knew about them doing or saying anything, he knew whether they were good guys or bad guys. Everyone who was supposed to be an educated person in such stories spoke a peculiar type of book English; the non-educated ones spoke in various dialects -- brogue, Scottish, Italian, Gorky, Negro, etc. Often such characters were there for comic relief -- but not always. You could find Omega-Din type characters among the lowly, too.

In making those "different" stories into a genre, Hugo Gernsback so defined "scientification" so that it could be distinguished from other fantastic tales. To qualify, a story must be rooted in plausible extrapolations upon what (at the time of writing) was regarded as current science. Gernsback also wanted a

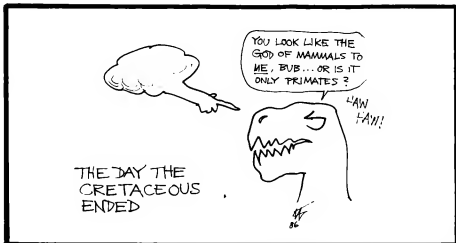
"charming" story -- not a scientific lecture -- which would entertain even while it subliminally instructed the reader in some basic element of science and opened his or her eyes to seemingly fantastic possibilities. He would accept a story that fit his scientific requirements, but had a minimum of writing or story-construction virtue -- but there was never any limit upon how well a story might be written. (Editors who deliberately restricted stories to a juvenile or lower level would come much later.) As to just what constitutes a "charming" story, we could argue indefinitely without reaching any conclusion; Gernsback himself never attempted a tight definition of the word, but rather pointed to authors who, to his taste, had accomplished it.

As 1929 opened, *AMAZING STORIES*, now joined by *AMAZING STORIES QUARTERLY*, was mostly filled with new fiction, and a fair percentage of it was more tightly written and carefully plotted than the

the Gernsback and the Sloane titles charged 25 cents for their monthly issues. The price put them into the category of the "respectable" magazines, and they were usually displayed along with them, while the pulps were gathered elsewhere on the racks.

ASTOUNDING STORIES OF SUPER SCIENCE was the first science fiction pulp magazine, and the stories it ran were all fast-action, tightly-plotted adventure stories poured into the mold of themes and ideas that had already appeared in the Gernsback and Sloane magazines, or in the older "classics." The aim was not education, but excitement, although Bates did, at times, run a story that either Gernsback or Sloane might have accepted. Most of the pulp science fiction magazines to come in the first science fiction boom were rooted in the Bates/Clayton mold, although a number of them were done better.

The change that occurred in 1929, when Gernsback inaugurated his "wonder"



older material. But older conventions were more often followed than flouted.

By June 1929, we now had four science fiction titles: *SCIENCE WONDER STORIES* and *AIR WONDER STORIES* being the newcomers. (*SWS* appeared in May, dated June; *AWS* appeared in June, dated July.) Then in the autumn, *SCIENCE WONDER QUARTERLY* was added (dated Fall, on sale in September). But something else was going on, which no one outside suspected.

The presence of four going science fiction titles persuaded William F. Clayton, and his editor, Harry Bates (although perhaps that order should be reversed) that there was money to be made in publishing a science fiction magazine -- but not the Gernsback type.

While both the Gernsback and the Sloane *AMAZING STORIES*, etc., were printed on pulp paper, neither were really pulp magazines. Sloane agreed with Gernsback that this type of fiction should be educational, as well as entertaining. Moreover, their magazines sold at a high price, relative to what pulp readers had to pay for their magazines. The pulps charged 10 to 20 cents generally; both

group was that a large percentage of the stories presented were written by amateurs who had grown up with the original *AMAZING STORIES* -- and some of them had had letters published in the "Discussions" department. They also read the *Minsey* pulps, and their stories were toward the tighter construction, and away from the leisurely style. There was less description of background at the beginning of a story, less description of characters, and more of a tendency to start with a strong narrative hook, that captured the reader from the start. (What can compare with the first sentence of "The Green Girl," by Jack Williamson, which started in the March 1930 issue of *AMAZING STORIES*: "At high noon on May 4, 1999, the sun went out.") I'm not sure that the italics were really necessary, or that we really needed an exclamation point at the end -- but you must admit that it's an attention-grabber.)

By now, as Donald A. Wellheim noted as a generalization in his book *THE INVERSE MAKERS*, science fiction had clearly begun to feed on science fiction.

For a few years longer both Gernsback and Sloane continued to dominate the kind of stories one could find in the magazines. The Bates/Clayton *ASTOUNDING STORIES OF SUPER SCIENCE* (the last three words in the title had been dropped at

the end of 1930, then restored at the end of 1932) disappeared at the beginning of 1933 -- but only because Clayton himself went out of business. The title reappeared in September of that year (dated October) under the aegis of Street & Smith, edited by F. Orin Tremaine and Desmond Hall, who got no credit for his work at the time). It was a pulp, and certainly presented much of the general pulp conventions. There was no attempt at being educational. But the editors did want to see stories constructed around new ideas, not just action stories poured into the mold. Neither editor was overscrupulous in examining the scientific soundness of the truly astounding stories they published. Occultism and metaphysics were acceptable.

The Street & Smith title was successful from the very start, and Tremaine and Hall labored to make it a first-class magazine of its type. And Tremaine showed now and then that he was not afraid of a good story with literary quality well above the general pulp level. (On the other hand, he wasn't revolted by the most juvenile level either.) Early in 1934, ASTOUNDING STORIES added pages, a few months later switched to a type face that allowed more words per page, at 160 pages for 20¢, it was nearly the biggest of the three magazines, at the lowest price -- and the highest (and fastest) paying to its authors. The Gernsback and Sloane titles could not compete; and Gernsback was distressed to see the increasing popularity of a magazine which, to his viewpoint, had very little scientific integrity.

He struck his flag early in 1936, when an attempt to change WONDER STORIES into a subscription-only magazine failed to draw enough interest. Sloane's AMAZING STORIES struggled on (as a bimonthly like the final Gernsback issue of WONDER STORIES) for two more years.

There is no need to elaborate on the Campbell ASTOUNDING STORIES, which combined the scientific integrity of Gernsback's titles (in its 1938-1950 period) with Tremaine's interest in new ideas -- but not only just ideas. Campbell wanted worked-out ideas and credible characters. Gernsback could hardly call the Campbell offerings (in general -- now and then he did run fantasy tales) "fairly tales for grown-ups," as he did the Tremaine magazine.

However, during the 30s, we saw three different phenomena that no one could have predicted. (1) A science fiction fan, with no previous professional experience became managing editor of one of the magazines: Charles D. Hornig, who replaced David Lasser at WONDER STORIES. (2) A science fiction writer, with no previous editorial experience was the second: John W. Campbell, who replaced F. Orin Tremaine at ASTOUNDING STORIES. (3) A boom in science fiction magazines, starting in 1939. Titles proliferated, all of them pulp magazines, a number of them edited by professionals who knew nothing whatsoever about science fiction. That gave more employment to writers, many of whom began writing science fiction, based upon their experience with the earlier magazines, their imaginations and such scientific education as they may have had.

The boom became a bust in the war years when paper was restricted and only the money-making magazines were maintained. But after the war, another magazine

boom started. More important, a number of fans, or groups of fans set themselves up as book publishers, reprinting favorite novels from the magazines, and seeking out new novels. What happened to them is the same thing that happened to Hugo Gernsback: the big-time book publishers caught on to the fact that science fiction books (labeled as such) could make money, and took the game away from the small-timers.

And more important, the newly-arriving writers (or rather, a dedicated percentage of them) set out to improve the standards of science fiction, both in the magazines and the books. Their success was sporadic but it counted.

The time was approaching when it was possible for an expert (or lucky) writer to make a living from science fiction and fantasy alone. Up to then, there was no such thing as a full-time science fiction writer; all either wrote in their spare time, or eked out their incomes from science fiction by writing other types of pulp fiction. And most of them had backgrounds as science fiction readers and fans.

The conventions that were generally observed in 1926 had passed, but one still remained: what is known in England and the USA as the "gentle" convention, which was respected even in the most carelessly written pulp stories. Not only was there no sex or eroticism, there were parts of the human body, and functions of those parts which were never mentioned or alluded to. That convention was maintained in the magazines (and certainly in most of the books) until the so-called New Wave explosion in the 60s. Then it cracked and began to fall to pieces; characters not only felt lust and fulfilled it but readers were made aware of excretory functions, both in action and language. What was formerly considered vulgar or non-printable became commonplace. And the "science" in science fiction was not only taken out; it was replaced by anti-science. That was not universal, of course, nor is it so universally today. But an element unbound before was added.

Unfortunately, that "revolution" did not bring in an era of anything like uniform excellence in any category of science fiction. But it did result in opening doors to a higher level of honesty and relevance in depicting characters, and the gain has been worth the price of much poor to atrocious work, including "experiments" that should have been buried instead of being published.

So in 60 years, we've seen the old "different" stories become a genre, which everyone accepts as a genre, and we've seen all kinds of it. Examples in every kind range from excellent to awful, but the varieties all exist now -- with one exception. No one today, to my knowledge writes science fiction with the primary purpose of instructing the readers in the elements of science. The nearest thing to it is what some call "hard" science fiction, which is rooted in the type of scientific integrity that Hugo Gernsback hoped to achieve for his readers in everything that would be labeled science fiction.

Science fiction is now a success, and like everything else that is successful needs knowledgeable critics who do not hesitate to argue with success. Some of the best-selling examples have sold merit, but many more amount to rewards for profitable mediocrity.

To conclude with a note on my own personal feelings: I still enjoy reading those examples of science fiction, old and new, that are rooted firmly enough in science so that, if the science were taken out, we wouldn't have a story at all. And I demand characters interesting enough so that I want to finish a story to see what happens to them. That's vague; let me specify what type of characters I don't want to read about: born losers, anti heroes, present-day counter-culture types -- as protagonists, that is. Nor do I want slices of life from common people's lives. I want to read about uncommon men and women when I read fiction. The other kind I read about daily in the newspapers, and that is what I turn to science fiction to get away from.



INTERVIEW WITH

Conducted by Neal Wilgus

F. PAUL WILSON



SFR: Before anything else, I must ask how it came about that comedian Lou Costello was "in" early F. Paul Wilson reader? So saith the caption on the picture that accompanies your "T2 Terror" column in the December 1985 TWILIGHT ZONE. But there is no further explanation, so I'll take this opportunity to ask what that strange caption was all about.

F.P. WILSON: You've got me. Only Michael Blaine knows. He wants to lighten up the magazine, looking for black humor and such. That article arose out of T2's award ceremonies in May. Unable to come up with a bigger name to present the best novel Dimension Award, the T2 staff settled for me and asked if I'd make a few remarks on the current state of horror fiction. I tried a tongue-in-cheek approach -- a string of one-liners, really -- and it went over well. Michael asked me to write it up for the magazine. It's hard to translate that kind of humor to paper, but it came off all right, I think, until the TWILIGHT ZONE typesetters, Lenny and Squiggy, got hold of it. There's a paragraph in the next-to-last column where they chopped the back end off one sentence and the front end off the next, and stuck the two remnants together. The result is nonsense. You can't win.

SFR: Your first three books -- HEALER (1976), WHEELS WITHIN WHEELS (1978) and AN ENEMY OF THE STATE (1980), and your short novel "The Tery" (BINARY STAR #2, 1979) -- are all science fiction, yet your best known book, THE KEEP (1981) and your latest, THE TOMB (1984) are in the horror genre. How and why, did you make the change from SF to horror writing?

F.P. WILSON: I think it happened at the 1979 Luncheon. I was on the final polish of AN ENEMY OF THE STATE and was talking to a fan at the Friday Night Meet-the-Pro author party when his girl friend walks up and he introduces me as "F. Paul Wilson -- he writes Libertarian SF." I could feel a straightjacket tighten around my neck. So I decided to change my tune for a while. I had completed my intended cycle of stories in the Language Federation milieu anyway, so I turned to my other reading love horror.

SFR: How did THE KEEP develop?

F.P. WILSON: I had been intrigued by Quinn Yarbro's HOTEL TRANSYLVANIA with its "good" vampire. An excellent novel -- I reviewed it for SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW -- but somehow the idea of a "good" vampire struck me as blasphemous and I wanted to play with the idea. I thumbed through my notebook and there was this entry I'd made while reading SALEM'S LOT. I'd read that one when it first came out and had for some reason assumed that Stephen King was Jewish -- maybe because that comedian, Alan King, is Jewish. Anyway, I worried at the time that I had gone through this Jewish guy King's head while writing about vampires cringing from the cross. So I had scribbled down,

"Jew's reaction to cross's power over vampire." That clicked with the "good" vampire idea, and the presence of a Jew almost cried out for the presence of Nazis. Then I started my what-ifs. What if he's not a good vampire BUT only pretends to be? What if he's something worse than a vampire? What if he's not afraid of the cross but of something that resembles a cross? I was stuck there for a while until I realized that a good hit could look like a cross. And then everything came together with a crash. I linked THE KEEP to a story called "Demon Song" I'd written for a DAM anthology edited by Gerald Page, HEROIC FANTASY. Various sorts of moral convolutions arose: like trying to use evil toward a good end; like evil doing good in order to disarm good and further an evil end. It became my kitchen-sink horror novel. Everything I wanted in a horror novel but might have hesitated to add, I added. I even designed those weird little crosses and convinced the publisher to insert them in all the narrative breaks. I had a ball writing it.

SFR: You've already expressed your disappointment and resentment about the movie version of THE KEEP in "Look What They've Done to My Song, Ma" in SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #51, and in a follow-up letter. Any final thoughts on the subject?

WILSON: I'd rather not. We talking about Michael Mann and what he did to my book is like Ralph Krandon on the subject of his mother-in-law. I get crazy mad. So I'll leave that one alone, if you do not mind... except to say that the latest statement I got shows that Paramount is now out 22 million dollars on that film by Michael Mann which happens to share a title with my novel. Serves them right for letting him rape the story, the stupid --

Next question, please.

SFR: When I read THE KEEP I was first delighted and then puzzled to see the Cthulhu Mythos trappings, the use of DE VERMIS MYSTERIIS, AL AZIF and so on. As a long time Lovecraft fan I'm pleased to see yet another first-rate Mythos entry, but in the end I felt the Mythos material was not really important to the story -- it worked just fine without it. Did you have some compelling reason to include it?

WILSON: The "Forbidden Books" from the Mythos were in THE KEEP merely as props. I needed some ancient texts as a means of prolonging Professor Quiza's value to the Nazis. I could have fabricated some Old Slavonic documents but decided on the Forbidden Books as a tip of the hat to insiders. THE KEEP was to be published out of category and so the AL AZIF and the other titles would be meaningless to most of its readers, but I figured insiders would get a chuckle out of seeing

them there. Plus, there was a chance for a little bit of business with one of the German officers as he glances through UNAUSSPRECHLICH KULTEN which is in German. THE TOMB, by the way, is chock full of Insider bits.

SFR: Like what?

WILSON: Like having Kusum speak my favorite of Karloff's lines from "The Mummy," two famous exclamations from EC Comics... so many, I've lost track. Got a fifty one upcoming in THE TOUCH.

SFR: Were Lovecraft and the other Mythos writers a big influence on you?

WILSON: No. Their style was too plodding with no immediacy to the situations. They always seem to use the voice of a victim, a guy who just let things happen to him instead of making things happen. That's okay for an occasional short story but not as a steady diet in a novel. If anybody influenced THE KEEP, it was Robert Ludlum. He's become almost unreadable lately, but I loved his early stuff with its reverses and double reverses and characters who are not what they seem. You can plainly see his imprint on THE KEEP.

SFR: What writers have influenced you?

WILSON: Isn't this where I say Proust, Joyce, Gide, Balzac?

SFR: If you wish.

WILSON: I don't. I write commercial fiction and that's where my roots are. About the nearest I can get to influences with any literary cachet are Aeschylus and Euripides. I was exposed to them by the purest chance. You see, when I showed up at Georgetown as a pre-med biology major, they assigned me to this honors English course because my verbal SATs were so high. The first semester was Greek drama. I figured, "Great! As if calculus, general chemistry and general biology aren't enough, I've got a bunch of old Greek dramatists to contend with, too!"

But they left me with something and it's stayed with me ever since: the concept of catharsis. You build up your dramatic steam, and then you release it. But you don't bleed it off like a radiator -- you blow it the hell off! I've seen a lot of otherwise good novels fall due to lack of catharsis.

But writers who've influenced me... that's tough. Their names are legion. If I had to go way back, I'd guess comic books were an early influence. The EC line was very instructive. Those

comics contain every SF and horror cliché that ever was -- an excellent source for a new writer as to what not to write. And certainly the Uncle Scrooge comics by Carl Barks helped develop my sense of wonder. They were wonderful -- light, funny, and yet intelligent and instructive. I still remember a take-over on SHANGRI-LA called "Tra-La-La Meets the Bottle Caps." You could use it as a primer for supply-side economics.

SFR: Do you still read comics?

WILSON: Yes. After staying away for about 20 years -- I can't stand costumed superheroes -- I came back. I buy Dave Sim's "Cerebrus the Aardvark" which is absolutely brilliant. Howie Chaykin's "American Flagg" is excellent SF -- I recommend the early issues for a Nebula. I buy anything that Dave Stevens touches. His "Rocketeer" would be the capstone of any illustrator's career and he's just a kid. "Judge Dredd," "Mage," stuff by Chris Claremont or Alan Moore -- as long as they don't concern guys and gals who fly around in funny suits.

SFR: Let's get back to novelists who influenced you.

WILSON: I'd have to say that anyone whose work I've read and enjoyed with any consistency has influenced me. Because I write what I like to read. That is my final criterion for anything I write: I ask myself, "Would I want to read this?" And if the answer is not a definite yes, then it gets zapped on the word-processor.

But let's see. On my SF books, I have to say Heinlein, Anderson and Niven were definite influences. I can't say precisely where, but I know I tried to incorporate aspects of their style that appealed to me. And John Campbell, of course -- my first editor. As I said before, Ludlum was a major influence on THE KEEP. On THE TOMB I was influenced by my favorite detective/p-i novelists -- John D. MacDonald, Robert Parker and Gregory McDonald, as well as the pulp weird-mechance authors, with a dash of Kipling and Haggard thrown in.

I'm not sure who influenced the next one, THE TOUGH. It's a medical thriller, but I don't read Robin Cook. I mean, I read COMA many years ago, and thought it was a good thriller but could not buy the Nancy-Drew-as-doctor heroine. Believe me, during your first weeks as an intern you don't go sniffing out conspiracies in your training hospital. All you want to do is not look stupid in front of the nurses and not kill anybody. Not necessarily in that order. Harold Gray is the only outside influence on THE TOUGH I can think of.

SFR: How about short fiction?

WILSON: I broke into SF with short fiction and still make myself do at least one short story a year. They're harder than hell after you get used to the elbow room of a novel, but the discipline is good for me. This year's story is "Hometown Girl" and will appear in PARAFANTASTICS IV in early '86. It takes place on Earth in the LaNague future history. I think it's the best thing I've ever done.

SFR: I want to get back to THE TOUGH, but let me take this opportunity to ask you about the LaNague series. As you know, I've written some negative things about HEALER and WHEELS, which are LaNague stories, and have praised ENEMY OF THE

STATE, which is the story of LaNague himself. My feeling was that the LaNague Federation charter and the "libertarian utopia" of Tolve were not very convincing and were mostly just plot devices. Yet you are identified with the SF libertarian "community" -- so why was there more libertarian content in those early books?

WILSON: I think you're right about HEALER -- I wrote the first section as a novelette ("Pard") for ANALOG while in med school; it was sitting on Campbell's desk when he died in his sleep in '71. I placed it in the LaNague Federation milieu just to maintain some continuity with my other stories. I had no intentions at that time of expanding it to novel length. However, the response to Dalt and Pard was so enthusiastic, and so many people said to me, "You can't stop now!" that I decided to continue the story. After all, I had made Dalt immortal so I had plenty of time to work with.

WHEELS WITHIN WHEELS, contrary to your opinion is a very libertarian book. You seem to be one of the few who hasn't recognized that. I set out to illustrate a libertarian theme with a science fiction story, and I believe it succeeded. Free market methods are used as a solution to social and economic problems; I demonstrated those methods in a tiny rural setting and on an interstellar scale; I also showed how the success of free market methodology is perceived as a threat by statist and collectivist forces and tends to draw the true nature of their own methodology -- brute force -- out into the open. All that and an intriguing murder mystery too. A wonderful book. A marvelous book. Too bad it's not a novel.

SFR: I'm glad you said that.

WILSON: Neither was HEALER. Both were cobbled together. HEALER is really three novelettes and a short story in a linear sequence with a common pair of characters in all segments. The central story of WHEELS is a novella concerning Josephine Finch; the flashbacks to her father's experiences on Jebinose form a second novella; and then there's an associated short story on a planet whose name escapes me.

You see, I had only written short stories up to 1975. The thought of a 50,000 word narrative following a single plotline and a single set of characters terrified me. I was sure I couldn't accomplish such a thing until I decided to sit down and write about the birth of the LaNague Federation. The result was AN ENEMY OF THE STATE, my first true novel.

SFR: Why develop the LaNague Federation at all?

WILSON: I had come to learn through college that free market economics was an alien philosophy in the latter half of this century, so I decided to take advantage of that alienness and base off the interstellar society on it. The credo of the LaNague Federation was to allow as much diversity as possible among humans while forbidding the initiation of force in any relationships, whether personal or political. The anarchist model fell apart here and so I resorted to a minarchist one.

SFR: How did the anarchists fail you?

WILSON: Well, I had these Splinter Worlds, akin to the results of Russell's "Great Explosion," where technologies had retrogressed in many cases to a pre-industrial stage. Such worlds were just ripe for a bunch of bully-boys to come in and start slave labor camps to rape the planets of whatever resources they had. I couldn't see any "private" police forces coming to the aid of the Splinter Worlds, and neither could Peter LaNague. The result was a Big-Stick government that said, "Do anything you want except initiate force. Do that, and I'll squash you like a bug."

SFR: Repairman Jack, the main character in THE TOMB, is certainly "libertarian" in the sense of being completely free from and opposed to the State -- yet THE TOMB is not a particularly libertarian story. Is this indicative of your present view of libertarianism?

WILSON: THE TOMB -- which was originally titled RAKOSH -- but which I allowed Berkley to change due to "retailer resistance" and bitterly regret to this day -- was born from a genuine nightmare I had. A big something was chasing me around this rooftop for hours. I kept killing it and it kept coming back. If you read the book, you'll know the scene. That was the nidus of the book. I worked backwards from there. The biggest problem was to come up with a character tough enough and resourceful enough to survive such an encounter. I'd done all right in my dream, but in real life I'd have lasted about 12 seconds. Eventually, I came up with Repairman Jack, a guy who "fixes things" -- for a price -- when the world or the bureaucracy or anyone is doing you dirty. I didn't want a cop or someone from the straight world. I needed a guy who was used to living completely by his wits, and who couldn't holler for the cops because he didn't have an official existence; a guy who followed his own code of ethics. What really excited me was setting up the villain of the piece -- Kusum. I depicted him as another honorable man living by a different code of ethics which he followed faithfully.

SFR: So you didn't set Jack up as a libertarian character.

WILSON: Yes and no. Let me put this libertarian thing in perspective. Libertarianism is a Weltanschauung -- a world-view, a mind-set. You don't turn it off and on. Repairman Jack became a little wish-fulfillment fantasy of mine. I have a libertarian Weltanschauung. He consequently has libertarian aspects, but they originated in his gut; he was anything but an ideologue. He knew how he had to live; how everybody else lived was their business.



SFR: Does that reflect your personal brand of libertarianism?

WILSON: I don't know. I've become a bit disgusted with the whole libertarian bit, especially the word "libertarianism." It no longer means anything. It itself to stand for a certain ideal of unparalleled freedom in which everyone could do what they wished with their own lives as long as they did not initiate force against others in the process. But everybody and his mother seems to be appropriating the word. Christ, when NAMBLA calls itself "libertarian" and the front cover of NEW LIBERTARIAN shows a couple of dead tennis players, shot up because they became Yuppies instead of remaining libertarians, I begin to retreat.

I started out as a simple anti-authoritarian type. I went through college as a labelless intellectual orphan. "Libertarianism" hadn't been coined yet. The YAFFERS and I got along great on free market economics and returning to the gold standard and ending the draft, but when I thought the free market ought to extend to presently controlled substances and to prostitution, I started getting cold shoulders; the lefties and I got a long great as far as Lenny Bruce and other social freedoms were concerned, but when I explained how laissez-faire capitalism could solve most of the country's economic woes, they looked at me as if I had just spit on their poster of Che.

Then the movement began and I learned I wasn't alone. I subscribed to REASON, OUTLOOK, the SII magazine, and so on. I found a home. There was sure to be other people out there. But that was then. After being in medical practice for 11 years and getting to know what real people are really thinking down on the grass roots level, I'm not so sure.

SFR: Why is that?

WILSON: Well, I've come to learn that most people don't really want the kind of freedom libertarianism has to offer. It scares them to death, in fact. And personally, I've been dismayed at the increasing nihilism creeping into the movement. If there's anything I remember about the early days is that we wanted to build. Now I sense a lot of unfocused anger that only wants to destroy. I saw this coming years ago and demonstrated a clear division between anarchism and nihilism in AN ENEMY OF THE STATE -- it may seem like they're reaching to the same drummer, but they're not reaching to the same direction. And so I don't call myself a libertarian anymore. I hate labels anyway. I've lowered my sights, narrowed my goals. I'm concentrating on maximizing my own autonomy while squeezing the last drop out of whatever personal potential I possess.

SFR: At the time of this interview (Oct. 1985) THE TOUCH had not been published so I know nothing of it. Can you give me your best pitch for it? What was your "inspiration" and how did it evolve?

WILSON: THE TOUCH is due from Putnam's in May of '86. By the time this is printed it will hopefully have proven itself to be my most successful hardcover. I certainly think it has the broadest potential appeal of all my novels. It's a medical thriller with a supernatural element. It's very close to home for me. A family practitioner is suddenly endowed with the power to heal anything -- anything -- with the touch of his hand for

approximately one hour a day. What he doesn't discover until late in the book is that the power exacts a price every time he uses it. It's a dream come true that turns into a nightmare.

SFR: Will it be published as a mainstream thriller, rather than SF/horror?

WILSON: Mainstream, all the way.

SFR: Is THE TOUCH libertarian?

WILSON: Not consciously, but I can't escape my Weltanschauung.

SFR: Let me flash back to the question on influence. Have you been impacted at all by such other Wilsons as discordian Robert Anton Wilson of ILLUMINATI fame, established Colin Wilson who has done some fine Cthulhu horror novels -- or humorist Gahan Wilson whose cartoon occasionally serves as your letterhead?

WILSON: No, I've read them all, but no.

SFR: Does your disillusionment with libertarianism extend to the Libertarian Futurist Society and its Prometheus Award? WHEELS won the very first Prometheus before there even was an LFS and you presented the award to the second winner, James P. Hogan -- so you have been associated with the LFS and its award. Do you think the Prometheus is meaningful or just a waste? Gesture that will have little impact?

WILSON: Don't get me wrong -- I'm not disillusioned with the principles or the philosophy, just the way the movement seems to be going with all the whoring around to broaden its base. I see LFS as one of the more sensible and constructive libertarian groups. I once defined a libertarian futurist as one who, when you say nothing is sure but death and taxes, will disagree on both counts.

As for the Prometheus Award, it doesn't seem to mean much at this point. When I won it for WHEELS, it was 7.5 oz. of gold and the size of the prize garnered a lot of publicity. But no one capitalized on all the free press; the award wasn't even given the following year and by the time it was reinstated, the prize was a mere fraction of mine and all the momentum was gone. Plus, I think people have an image of the award as one given for the ideological content of a work rather than for literary value, and that is a definite drawback.

SFR: What did you think of the 1985 Prometheus being awarded to None of the Above? Did you agree that none of the 1985 nominees were sufficiently libertarian?

WILSON: I read most but not all of the nominated books. I thought Neil Smith's was the one most libertarian. I was surprised to see THE TOMB on the final list. I was going to withdraw it, but I deduced from the way the finalists were listed that THE TOMB had placed third in the nominations and was therefore unlikely to win.

SFR: Why withdraw it?

WILSON: Because it's not a libertarian novel. Repaiman Jack appeals to libertarians, but I did not set out to illustrate libertarian points as I had in my LaBague books. THE TOMB is an old fashioned weird menace thriller with a subtext about clashing codes of ethics. The only reason I didn't withdraw it was a move like that would smack of grandstand-

ing, or worse yet, look like a slap in the face to LFS, which I wish well in all its undertakings. And so I was kind of glad when NOTA won it -- shows the LFS members have set some standards and won't settle on giving the award every year, no matter how tepid the metaphors...I think I'm mixing up all sorts of waters there, but you get my drift.

SFR: I didn't know in advance that you are a general practitioner as well as a popular writer. Which do you prefer -- or do you have a perfect combination you wouldn't want to change?

WILSON: I have a perfect symbiosis. The writing keeps me fresh for the medicine, keeps me satisfied with being a primary care physician so that my high-need-for-achievement personality doesn't push me back to a residency to become a super-rich specialist. I'm in a five-man family practice group -- and it's on-ly by being in group practice that I can find time to write -- and I love the variety of the medicine it allows me to practice. I'm stimulated intellectually and I'm doing good work. I'm a damn good family doctor -- I keep up with what's happening in the fields pertinent to my practice, and I care. I like my patients and they trust me. There's a right way and many wrong ways to practice primary care medicine. I think I practice the right way. And as long as I can practice my brand of personalized medicine, I'll never quit.

On the other hand, the medical practice keeps me away from me way processor enough so that by the time I sit down in front of it, I'm itching to go. The practice also keeps me in contact with lots of everyday people, not just editors and other writers. That helps with one's perspective on the workaday world.

SFR: If writing paid enough, wouldn't you be tempted to quit medicine?

WILSON: For five of the past six years, I've earned more at writing than at medicine. But the idea of being a full-time writer scares the hell out of me. What hat't off to anyone who does it. I mean...sitting down in front of the processor and saying, "Well, this one's for the mortgage." Ugh! Makes my skin crawl. Besides, that would make writing work. Right now it's still fun for me. Instead of playing golf, I write a steady 10 pages a week when I'm doing a first draft. By the end of the year, I've got 500 or so pages, which I revise over and over. Allows me to get a novel out every couple of years or so.

SFR: Finally, let me ask if you're optimistic about our future. Will the human race somehow manage to survive and prosper -- and go to the stars?

WILSON: I think so. I hope so. Colonizing the stars is the only way I can see to guarantee the future of the human race. Once we spread ourselves out over lots of light years, there's no way war, or plague, or just plain foolishness will cash us in. Somewhere, somehow, the species will go on. And hopefully, someone somewhere will be reading one of my books.

SFR: Thank you, Mr. Wilson.

Noise Level

By John Brunner

THE MIND AS A HOLOGRAM, OR MAYBE NOT

This will certainly be the last "noise level" for some time, and could well be the last of all. I'd dedicate it to the once and future Marjorie, but there may not be a future version of her, and the present one, although she might attempt to read it, would not -- so testifies her speech therapist -- be able to make sense of what it says.

Technically, during the night of 13th-14th April, 1986, my beloved wife sustained a cerebral embolism leading to right-side hemiplegia and acute dysphasia. In other words, she had a violent stroke.

There is no way of being certain, but it seems probable that the trouble originated in a partly-sclerosed artery in her right leg, which for some years past had given her pain due to intermittent claudication. Very likely, a fragment of the atheroma or other obstruction broke away and drifted round her circulation until it reached a vessel that it blocked. Whereupon....

Ironically, during the previous week I'd been laid low with some unpleasant bug that chiefly made me want to doze. I spent three days on my sitting room couch wrapped in a sleeping bag and paying negligible attention to the world; one day, I worked out later, I slept eighteen hours. So when Marjorie said on Sunday evening she was feeling out of sorts and turned in early, about nine-fifteen, I took it for granted she was in for a dose of the same thing that had bothered me. When I retired to bed after watching a late film I was pleased to find her fast asleep, and crept around with minimum noise because she has always hated to be woken up just after dropping off.

Then, in the morning, when I tried to ask whether she wanted her usual coffee or -- as often when she was unwell -- a glass of lemon tea instead, I wasn't surprised that she brushed me aside with unclear grunting noises. So many times in the past she, like me, had wanted nothing more than to be left to sleep off a cold or bout of 'flu. It was not until lunch-time that I caught on: this was no ordinary sleep, but stupor....

I called our neighbor, who's a physiotherapist taking time off to raise her youngest kid, and she told me to ring the doctor right away.

Waiting for him to arrive, I realized with sudden horror that I knew what must have happened. I remember saying to myself, "It looks like a stroke." I remember our GP examining her and confirming my guess.

Nonetheless, it wasn't real. Not for a long time. When the ambulance came to take her to hospital -- when I went to see the doctor in charge of the ward where she had been admitted -- I still had this subconscious conviction that in a few days she'd sit up in bed and start to complain about being stuck there when she had so much to do at home....

That was five weeks ago yesterday. She has been transferred from Yeovil District hospital, which is for short-term acute cases, operations and urgent therapy, to one called Summerlands, where she is surrounded by chronic geriatrics -- which depresses the hell out of her -- but where the facilities and staff for physiotherapy and speech therapy are, I am assured, as good as any in the area. Certainly, the physiotherapist whom I saw working with her today is obviously competent and marvelously patient.

But....

Well, yesterday, along with Marjorie's best friend from the village, and two old and dear friends from London who had come to visit her on the way back from a holiday in Devon, I watched the speech therapist running a battery of tests on her, at the end of which she said conclusively, "She can't understand what is being said to her. She may give the appearance of doing so, but in fact she's only taking clues as to the response she ought to make from tone of voice, or gestures, or facial expression."

I find this incredibly hard to accept. With the help of friends, and Marjorie's son who came from California to spend a few days here, I've been able to get her home half a dozen times -- and intend to

go on doing so, though I can't manage it alone: I've set up "Marjorie's Lunch Club" which will meet here every Sunday until further notice -- and at home, at least, she is often able to pose a question, or convey a statement about her condition, although it's largely a matter of guesswork that leads one to the eventual meaning. However, much of her speech is garbled. She knows perfectly well (and this is among the saddest aspects of her condition) that her words aren't coming out right; she demonstrated this the other day, by taking a get-well card and trying to read aloud the message on it. The words emerged with virtually no resemblance to the original.

Well, I've picked up a speech therapy data pack from the hospital, and from now on every time she's at home we shall drill her through some of the exercises in it, to reinforce the more intensive sessions at the hospital. But there is very little hope of success.

I have been advised to make no arrangements for her return. Even if she does come back one day, it won't be as Marjorie, my partner and helpmeet, the co-director of our company and the person I have so often called if not my right arm, then my right leg, on the grounds that whenever I try to do anything without her I'm likely to fall flat on my face... No, it will be as a total de-



pendent, at best hobbling around with a crutch, more likely confined to a wheelchair, and capable of only incoherent speech.

* * * * *

Those people who have met Marjorie will, I think, recall her as active, lively-minded, argumentative, and above all furious about the way we are mismanaging the world. At a blow -- at a stroke -- all this has been taken from her. She is locked inside the prison of her skull and any message that gets out she has to smuggle, and in code.

As for myself, I'm managing, after a fashion. Kind friends have rallied round to help, and I've had visitors whose presence dragged me back to life by imposing the need to cook meals, make beds, do laundry, clean the house. But the book that I'd been working on these past two years has gone -- phit! I've often compared the process of writing to trying to recapture a dream; that one has faded past recall. So I must try something else. I owe a large advance for a novel that now I know I'll never finish.

Years ago I sweated my way out of a similar predicament, albeit less severe. In 1970, while we were nursing Marjorie's mother through terminal abdominal cancer, my father had a stroke (a different kind, an aneurysm) and died in six days. When it came to his funeral, I could not even feel sad. My entire emotional capital had been exhausted.

At the time I was working on THE SHEEP LOOK UP. I found I just could not go on with it.

There followed a dismal period of some three months when I put blank marks on white paper, looked at them, and threw them away. At last I found a way out of the mental maze by forcing myself to put an end to a book I'd just begun to abandon -- that was THE WRONG END OF TIME. Then I wrote a complete new novel, one of the Max Curfew series; and then at last I was able to return to SHEEP and rewrite it from the start and bring it to an overdue completion. But in those days I was fifteen years younger and far more resilient. Besides, neither of the people that I'd lost meant half as much to me as Marjorie.

At Easter last we'd been together twenty-nine years.

* * * * *

When I started on this piece, I intended to explain why I don't believe the currently fashionable image of the mind as a hologram, distributed around the brain in such wise that ninety-plus per cent of the information in it can be retrieved from a mere fragment. I was going to make learned references to the hydraulic theory of consciousness devised by, if I recall, Descartes after a tour of the fountains of Versailles, the brains and Newman theory that the brain is like a computer which needs dreams to clear irrelevant bits of obsolete programs, and the manifest bias of Marjorie's speech therapist towards Skinnerian behaviorism. (Marjorie is not a black box! She's not! She's NOT!)

But never mind that. The most constructive thing I can do is make sure that I don't go irremediably broke and have to sell the house. During the early part of our marriage we had to move on average every four years. But we've been in our present place for over twelve; in consequence, it's more of a home than any of the previous residences. It would add indescribably to Marjorie's suffering were she to be brought out from the hos-

pital some weekend and find herself taken somewhere completely unfamiliar... and figure out (even the speech therapist says her intellect is unimpaired) that I'd had to sell up because of her. So I've got to hang on somehow.

Which means, of necessity, no more unpaid writing for the foreseeable future. I'd like to express my gratitude to REG for giving me a soapbox for so many years; apologize to those with whom I hoped to have a long-running and perhaps even constructive debate following on from my last two polemical columns; and last but not least say how pleased I've always been by Tim Kirk's charming logo.

Thanks, each and all of you. So long.



FOR SALE

This is a major sale, folk. We're talking heavy duty, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

Below are listed spare copies, mint copies, of my sex novels from 1963 onward. The price is \$5. each, postage paid. I'll even autograph them if you like.

The number of copies available is in brackets. First come, first served. When only a couple of copies are for sale, you might want to list alternate titles.

* Denotes a Geis pseudonym

SLUM VIRGIN, 1963 (2)

SENSUAL FAMILY, 1964 (3)

TEEN HIPPIE 1968 (2)

*Peggy Swenson

ODD COUPLE 1968 (3)

*Peggy Swenson

EASY 1962 (3)

*Peggy Swenson

OFF-BROADWAY-CASANOVA 1966 (2)

*Robert N. Owen

DRIFTER IN TOWN 1966 (3)

*Robert N. Owen

SAILOR ON THE TOWN 1966 (1)

*Robert N. Owen

RUNNING WILD 1969 (4)

*Peggy Swenson

TIME FOR ONE MORE 1969 (2)

*Peggy Swenson

YOUNG TIGER 1965 (5)

THE PUNISHMENT 1967 (2)

THE SATURDAY NIGHT PARTY 1963 (1)

SEX TURNED ON 1967 (7)

DISCOTHEQUE DOLL 1966 (2)

*Ann Radway

THE THREE WAY APARTMENT 1964 (3)

*Peggy Swenson

QUEER BEACH 1964 (1)

*Peggy Swenson

AMATEUR NIGHT 1965 (2)

*Peggy Swenson

SUZY AND VERA 1964 (2)

*Peggy Swenson

MALE MISTRESS 1964 (1)

THE THREE WAY SET 1965 (3)

*Frederic Colson

THE GAY PARTNERS 1964 (4)

*Peggy Swenson

PAMELA'S SWEET AGONY 1965 (2)

*Peggy Swenson

LESBIAN GYM 1964 (6)

*Peggy Swenson

IN BED WE LIE 1967 (1)

EYE AT THE WINDOW 1967 (2)

ROLLER DERBY GIRL 1967 (3)

*Frederic Colson

BEDROOM BLACKLIST 1966 (2)

MAN FOR HIRE 1965 (2)

*Robert N. Owen

THE PASSION THING 1966 (3)

*Frederic Colson

RITA & MARIAN 1967 (1)

*Peggy Swenson

THE LOVE TRIBE 1968 (1)

*Peggy Swenson

ORALITY '69 1969 (6)

ORALITY '70 1970 (8)

THREE WAY SWAP 1970 (3)

DEVIL ON HER TAIL 1969 (5)

*Peggy Swenson

THE MOUTH GIRL 1970 (2)

*Peggy Swenson

THE HOT KIDS AND THEIR OLDER LOVERS

*Peggy Swenson 1971 (1)

THE MOUTH LOVER 1970 (1)

*Peggy Swenson

A GIRL POSSESSED 1973 (1)

*Peggy Swenson

BLOW HOT, BLOW COLD 1972 (3)

*Peggy Swenson

ANAL HUSBANDS AND THEIR DEVIANT

WIVES 1971 (1) Case histories.

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ONCE OVER LIGHTLY

BOOK REVIEWS BY GENE DEWESEE

ONLY APPARENTLY REAL: THE WORLD OF PHILIP K. DICK By Paul Williams
Arbor House, \$7.95

Not being a fan of Dick, except perhaps for *THE THREE STIGMATA OF PALMER ELDRITCH* and *MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE*, I wasn't expecting to do more than skim a few pages in this "biography." Once I read even one page, however, I was hooked, primarily because roughly 100 of the book's 150 pages consist of transcripts of taped conversations between Williams and Dick. They talk about his nervous breakdowns, his attempts at suicide, his apparent recovery from paranoia, his failed marriages, his reasons for writing, his seemingly masochistic "method" of writing, his mystical experiences, his problems with ill health, drugs and reality, etc.

In the remaining fifty-plus pages, in keeping with the title, Williams speculates on what is "real" and what isn't. In one case (a destructive break-in at Dick's house in 1972) he tries to compare Dick's recollections with the supposed reality of police records and neighbors' accounts, though without coming to any definite conclusions. Other cases, however, such as Dick's claim that he was essentially immune to amphetamines but that for psychological reasons his body would mimic their effects even years after going quit taking them, are barely commented on, let alone checked.

As Williams himself says, ONLY APPARENTLY REAL is essentially an expansion of his 1975 *ROLLING STONE* article. He has not, he says, read the reams of Dick's papers now available to him as Dick's literary executor, and that's unfortunate. Maybe they would have answered some of the questions raised not only by the interviews but by Dick's work itself. On the other hand, they might just raise more questions. In either case, ONLY APPARENTLY REAL is totally, perhaps morbidly, fascinating but frustratingly incomplete, whether you're a Dick fan or not.

MR. O'MALLEY GOES FOR THE GOLD
By Crockett Johnson
Ballantine/DelRey, \$2.95

Even after a term in Congress (Barnaby #3), Barnaby's fairy godfather, Mr. O'Malley, still can't get anyone to believe in him, and now he's busy researching his "comprehensive anthropological study" of Pixies, which he plans to publish in order to prove that he really does exist. This time, in addition to some art thieves, he runs into a Salamander named Gridley who is always trying to borrow matches, and Davy Jones himself, who these days has to check the almanac to make sure he gets the tides in and out at the right times.

Like the first three, this one is just plain fun, either at a few pages a day or in one 200-page chunk.

THE HOUND OF HEAVEN By Glover Wright
Arbor House, \$15.95

An obscure but charismatic priest, brutally crucified by the North Vietnamese and rescued by a normally cynical U.S. covert operations agent/soldier/killer, remains in a coma for years and then dies when his life support systems are shut down. Nine hours later, however, after being beatified by written order of the Pope, he returns to life, complete with stigmata and even more supernatural charisma. Meanwhile, the death of the Pope who had ordered him beatified is being kept secret by the Vatican hierarchy, who are terrified that this "risen Saint" will destroy the Church with his pronouncements that all religions are the same and that we make our own heaven or hell right here on Earth.

The Vatican, like any political body, is out to defend itself by any means possible, having convinced itself that it is facing not a risen Saint but an agent of Satan. Suffice it to say that the plotting and intriguing culminate in an attempted assassination that doesn't turn out quite the way anyone expected.

HOUND OF HEAVEN is basically a political thriller, with all the insider viewpoints and complex schemes and fast-paced action and suspense that go with the genre. There are differences, however. One is that it's the Vatican, not the U.S. or British government, doing the scheming. Another is that, right down to the last line of the last page, it kept me wondering where it was headed, what the resolution would be. The trouble is, even after reading the last page several times, I still wasn't sure what the resolution was. I have a couple of ideas, but frankly, I'd like to hear from others who've read the book which I guess means one of two things. Either I'm dense, or *HOUND OF HEAVEN* is a great book for group discussions. In any event, it is, as they say, a page-turner, and I enjoyed it whether I understood it or not.

INTERSTELLAR PIG By William Sleator
Bantam Spectra, \$2.95

Vacationing with his parents at a beach cottage, 16-year-old Barney gets involved with some strange neighbors. They look differently to different people -- and they are obsessed with what appears to be a science-fictional playing game at the end of which all players and their worlds are destroyed -- except for the one player holding "the Piggy."

Before long, it becomes obvious that the game is far more real than it appears, and Barney is literally fighting for his life while desperately trying to figure out what is really happening and what the Piggy really is. Suffice it to say that every page is loaded with sus-

pense, and you don't learn all the answers until the very end.

Like Sleator's excellent *SINGULARITY* (also a Bantam Spectra release), *INTERSTELLAR PIG* was originally published as a juvenile, but like Heinlein's early "juveniles," these can be thoroughly enjoyed regardless of the reader's age.

CRISIS By James Gunn
TOR, \$2.95

A man called Bill Johnson, apparently sent back in time from some unspecified future in order to avert an unspecified crisis, is now trapped in a never-ending series of alternate worlds. He exists "outside of time" and each time he averts a crisis, he finds himself in a new and different timeline, facing a new and massive crisis -- an impending nuclear war, world death by pollution or by overpopulation, etc. Each time shift also wipes out his memory and his only knowledge of his own history comes from whatever message his last self leaves for him. To home in on and solve each crisis, however, he seems to utilize an odd mixture of precognition and psychometry.

Originally published over several years in *ANALOG*, the six segments that make up *CRISIS* are interesting, even compelling at times, but are just barely stories. Though there is tension now and then, there is little conflict or character development. In most segments, Johnson simply wakes up, reads the message left by his former self, finds the crisis, discusses it in darkly philosophical terms, spells out a purely common sense solution that key people seem to magically accept, and heads off to the next memory loss and crisis. To get rid of pollution, for instance, he recommends finding a way of making it more profitable for the polluters to clean up than to continue polluting, and part of his plan for averting an impending nuclear war is to get the news media to present favorable human interest stories about the other side.

Though I haven't read any Greek literature since college, I can't help but wonder if these might not be the kind of dialogues that Plato would be writing if he were reincarnated as a modern SF writer.



CASCADE POINT \$16.95
SPINNERET \$15.95
By Timothy Zahn Bluejay Books

A novel that grabs you on the first page and won't let go until you finish it is generally called a "page turner," but what would you call a collection of short stories in which one story sucks you in so completely that you not only read virtually every other story in the collection but also pick up an equally long novel by the same author and plow through that in short order?

I don't know what the generic term for such a collection is, but an example is CASCADE POINT. The story that first caught me was "The Final Report on the Lifeline Experiment," which manages to mix the abortion controversy with quantum mechanics in its recounting of a telepathic experiment intended to determine the point at which a fetus becomes human. Other equally intriguing items were "The Cassandra" and "Dreamsaver," both of which also deal with, among other things, peculiar forms of telepathy and the startling discoveries made through their use. The title story, which won a Hugo for best novella, deals with a particularly odd form of space travel, apparently linked with alternate realities.

And so on, over a wide range of subjects. What almost all have in common are fascinating ideas, better than average characters, and plotting and writing that flesh out those ideas into truly gripping stories.

The novel, SPINNERET, tells of an Eric Frank Russell universe, crowded with alien and human bureaucrats, all of whom appear to be in conflict with the hero over control of the ancient alien machine he finds when he and his men are dumped by the government on what everyone thought was a useless and totally metal-free planet. Through luck and brains though, he eventually turns the tables on them all and even learns something of what happened to the aliens who built the machine.

While perhaps not up to the level of the best of the short stories, SPINNERET is still one of the more enjoyable books of the year. And at least for me, it and CASCADE POINT were something very special in that they both elicited the same kinds of feelings that I got from the first SF I read longer ago than I like to think about, which doubtless means that they are much superior to those earlier stories. The only other books that immediately come to mind as having had that same effect recently are Asimov's continuations of his classic series, "Foundation's Edge" and "Robots and Empire," and that's pretty good company to be in.

REDWORLD By Charles L. Harness
DAW Books, \$2.95

Though REDWORLD at first looks like just another magical alien world story, it isn't. Instead, as we find out near the end, it takes place on a planet circling Barnard's Star sometime in the next few hundred years, and it's much closer to science fiction than to fantasy, particularly in these days of the new and mystical physics. It's just that it's told strictly from the first person viewpoint of a young native of the world, and to him and the other natives, everything associated with the not-quite-human earth people and their strange mission are the same as magic.

For me anyway, it would've been better had the setting been revealed early on, but to Harness's credit the intriguingly medieval background and the interesting narrator and the occasional hints about the true nature of the world kept me going until the truth finally began to come out. Perhaps not a Nebula or Hugo contender, but highly enjoyable and more than a little nostalgic.

GHOST By Piers Anthony
TOR, \$14.95

Not having like anything by Anthony since MACROSCOPE, I suppose it's my own fault for sticking with GHOST all the way to the end, but even so it's irritating. The basic idea -- a ship traveling trillions of years through time but remaining fixed in space while the universe moves around it -- had so much potential that I kept hoping that some of it would be realized. And every now and then, it seemed that it would be, such as when the ship reaches the point at which the universe should -- but does not -- stop expanding and begin contracting. And when, beyond "our" universe, the crew find themselves among "ghost galaxies," where matter appears to be massless and can be controlled by mental power alone.

Unfortunately, all such developments turned out to be false alarms providing just enough hope to keep me reading. In the end, without even an attempt at an explanation, the story degenerates into pretentious ruminations by the nominal hero, Captain Shertland, who launches into a seemingly endless Gosseyn-like analysis of the Nature of Humanity, its Seven Deadly Sins, etc. He and the other crew members even mentally create handy little illustrative scenes using the ghost galaxy material.

And to make matters worse, the characters are generally unpleasant, although that may've been intentional, since part of the object of Shertland's analysis seemed to be to figure out just which of the crew members embody which of the Seven Sins. GHOST is one of the few books that I actually ended up resenting because of the time lost reading it.

MR. O'MALLEY, WIZARD OF WALL STREET:
BARNABY #5 By Crockett Johnson
Ballantine/DelRey, \$2.95

I keep waiting for this series to deteriorate, but it seems only to get better. This time Mr. O'Malley, Barnaby's fairy godfather, creates a huge conglomerate, O'Malley Enterprises, even though he's never able to get into the corporate offices or even to speak more than occasional misunderstood words over the phone to the executives he has somehow hired. Things start unraveling, however, when his friend Gus the Ghost (who still hasn't learned how to walk through walls properly) takes all the company books home for Jake (another ghost, this one an ex-businessman) to check over.

For those who like comparisons, this episode reminded me very much of a comic-strip version of Jerzy Kozinski's BEING THERE, what with the way Mr. O'Malley blunders along innocently while everyone around him manufactures grand misinterpretations of everything he says and does and even grander misinterpretations of everything he doesn't say or do. Great fun and, in its own quiet way, often as good as DOONESBURY or BLOOME COUNTY.

THE SONGS OF DISTANT EARTH
By Arthur C. Clarke
Ballantine/DelRey, \$17.95

The Magellan, one of the last star ships to leave Earth before the sun went nova in 3620, stops at



Thalassa, an ocean world colonized by a seedship centuries before. The Magellan's crew has to rebuild its ice shield (protection against dust in space, necessary at interstellar speeds) before they can continue to Sagan Two, their ultimate destination seventy-five light years beyond Thalassa.

SONGS OF DISTANT EARTH is a chronicle of their months on Thalassa and their interactions with the natives as the ice shield is rebuilt piece by piece on one of the world's two inhabited islands. Earth's destruction, known to be inevitable for centuries, is covered only by memories and flashbacks, as are all other non-Thalassan matters.

Like IMPERIAL EARTH and other Clarke novels, SONGS is largely a combination of essay, future history and travelogue, this time with a love story and a smidgin of mutiny thrown in for good measure. It moves somewhat slowly, and only occasionally is there much "conventional" suspense. Often, it seems almost as pastoral as Thalassa itself.

But none of that really matters. What matters is Clarke's style and vision, which once again manage to make that combination pleasantly spine-tingling. And of course, there are his usual casually-tossed-off ideas, each of which could be the basis for another novel or series of novels.

For instance, there are his thoughts on the Quantum Drive, discovered only a century or so before the sun was due to go nova. It operates by tapping the virtually limitless energy of superspace, a concept discussed by "real" scientists since at least 1969. The drive's leakage alone would be enough to destroy a planet, and at one point, one of the characters says: "Someone once said that the Quantum Drive's real purpose is nothing as trivial as exploration of the universe. We'll need its energies one day to stop the cosmos' collapsing back into the primordial black hole -- and to start the next cycle of existence."

Anyone who can read that or any of dozens of other passages without getting a shiver down the spine or a lump in the throat -- well, they probably wouldn't like CHILDHOOD'S END, either, and are therefore simply beyond reach. SONGS OF DISTANT EARTH isn't nearly the book that CE is, but it definitely has its moments and I wouldn't have missed it for the world.



SHELTER By Martin Asher
Arbor House, \$12.95

The publicity that came with SHELTER compares it to early Vonnegut and calls it a fantasy novel about the rock concert that saved the world. With less than 150 pages, many of which have less than half a dozen lines on them, it's closer to a 50 page novelette than a novel. Also, the fantasy rock concert apparently happens only in the drugged mind of the protagonist, "a man named Billy," who sets out to find the true message in the Beatles' songs and thereby save the world from nuclear disaster.

On the other hand, it is reminiscent of Vonnegut, not only because of Billy's name but because of the style of its 100+ brief episodes and the plentiful one-liners. There is, for example, Billy's final realization, which he jots down, presumably for future use in his bumper sticker business: "Sometimes the only solution is to find a new problem."

Unlike Vonnegut's works, however, SHELTER is a very slim volume, but perhaps the solution to the potential reader's problem is also contained in the publicity. Book club rights have been sold to the Quality Paperback Book Club, where the price per effective page will doubtless be more reasonable.

IT WAS HYPOCRITICAL OF THE AMERICANS TO NOT TRY THEIR MILITARY AND CIVILIAN LEADERS AFTER LOSING THE VIETNAM WAR!



AND RUDE OF THEM TO GIVE VIETNAM THE FINGER WHEN THEY DEMANDED THEIR RIGHTFUL REPARATIONS!

FOR SALE

Some of you will remember the short-lived CONSPIRACY NEWSLETTER which I and an unnamed co-conspirator wrote and published from May to November, 1981.

These seven issues were concerned with macro-conspiracy: who really controls the world, and how? What is being planned for the United States and the world?

We spotted some trends and presented some evidence.

If you'd like to pick up on those writings, I have copies of CONSPIRACY NEWSLETTER #1, 2, 3, 6, and 7.

The cost is \$1. each, postpaid.

Send money or checks to:

Richard E. Geis
P.O. Box 11408
Portland, OR 97211

I have been a hopeless writer and publisher of a personal journal for many, many years. The only problem is, I tend to write a pj in spurts, then kill it, start again a few years later, kill it...

Such was the case with RICHARD E. GEIS, a personal journal which ran from 1978 to 1981. I have copies of some of those issues. They are: #4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23.

The cost is \$1. each, postpaid.

Send money or check to:

Richard E. Geis
P.O. Box 11408
Portland, OR 97211

BACK ISSUES OF MY CURRENT PERSONAL JOURNAL, THE NAKED ID (whose first issue was titled Richard E. Geis), are available, from #1 through #12. They, also are \$1. each, postpaid.

Uhh, overseas buyers must send US\$1.60 per issue. I don't think I'll sell many overseas.

As above, send money and checks to:

Richard E. Geis
P.O. Box 11408
Portland, OR 97211

AND THEN I READ....



LESS THAN HUMAN

By Robert Clarke

Avon, April 1986, \$2.95

Kind of science fiction of the absurd. Kind of mockery, kind of good, kind of junky. When will this author ever write straight, serious science fiction? He seems embarrassed...perhaps afraid to do it for fear of failing? Or fear of reviews after having really done his best? In tongue-in-cheek there is safety.

Oh, the story? An android (not a damn robot!) is grown on the moon by Earth scientists following instructions from aliens, while below a despotic government strives to rule a decayed, rubble, chaotic world. In New York, in the Chrysler Building, the aging remnants of the Hippies live in a drug-fogged flawed nirvana, living in sin and sour desperation. Their leader's daughter is a rebel—who loves rock-n-roll, neatness and virtue.

The android escapes, but has a tiny gap in its programming... It reaches New York, meets the girl, the hippies... It invents defenses against the racist, reactionary, ruthless police and...

Well, there are a lot of sidebars and bits of plot business—funny and savage, along the way.

But by far the funniest part of the novel is the final page—About the Author.

Robert Clarke... Aw, let me quote. It's pure...pure....

'Robert Clarke, a slot-machine collavation system designer from Des Moines, Iowa wrote science fiction in his spare time for twelve years with a pitiful lack of success. The manuscript of his first book,

CHILDHOOD'S TROOPERS, was lost in the mail when he submitted it to a publisher in 1963. His second work, THE TIME MERCHANTS, disappeared when Lancer Books went bankrupt shortly after purchasing it in 1972. Undaunted, Clarke embarked on his magnum opus, the LORD OF DAMNATION trilogy. Unfortunately, he modeled his protagonist on his brother—who, upon reading the manuscript, burned it.

Weary and embittered, Clarke wrote LESS THAN HUMAN in 1975, immediately before his untimely death in a choking episode at a fried chicken restaurant....'

There's more. Funny. Satire. You have to turn to the copyright page to learn who really wrote this novel. Are you ready? It was Charles Platt.

It may be that only in the family of sf publishing that jokes like this can be perpetrated. And a good thing, too. I love it.

IN SEARCH OF FOREVER

By Rodney Mathews

Dragon's World Ltd., 1985 (England)
Salem House Publishers \$14.95
462 Boston Street,
Topsfield, MA 01983

There are amazing, and superb artists alive and well in England. Rodney Mathews is one of them (as is Patrick Woodroffe, reviewed below).

I'm always struck sick with envy and admiration when I see a collection, in full color, of the work of such men. How marvelous is the detail, the color, the imagination! And how astonishing the skill levels and techniques!

Mathews seems to work best in inks and Gouache; the lines are so clear and precise, and the colors pure and subtle all at once.

His posters are marvels and his book covers incredibly fine! Superlatives hardly exist to describe the quality of this work.

Mathews' work is almost all fantasy and fantasy science fiction. All simply stunningly superb.

There seems to me to be a thread of Bosch in his work: some of his creatures and aliens and humans are vicious and cruel and deadly---re-

minding me of some of Bosch's third panel in The Garden of Delights. But all through Mathews' adult work his children's material is rounded and funny and gentle, mostly. I'm struck by the pervasiveness of sharp towers, spurs, dagger-like points, lances, thorns.... Subtle deadly images everywhere.... A painting of his on the wall would be subconsciously disturbing to most people.

Even so, even so, this element of danger inherent in his images is exciting. And it makes you look at it! There's no swift glance and shrug when viewing these masterpieces!

MYTHOPOEIKON

By Patrick Woodroffe

Dragon's World Ltd. 1984 (England)
Salem House Publishers \$14.95
462 Boston Street
Topsfield, MA 01983

This volume is subtitled 'The Paintings, Etchings, Book-Jackets & Record-Sleeve Illustrations of Patrick Woodroffe.' With notes and commentary by the artist.

Woodroffe is a marvelous technician with a glorious imagination. His paintings often virtually explode off the pages at you, riots of color and image.

There is surrealism here, and a strong reminder of Bosch and Dali. But this man is so individual, so powerful, that he is unique. Children, nymphets, death and danger, mad symbolism, weird creatures, compelling assemblages of impossible images inhabit his works. He is hypnotizing. Here are indeed Fantasies, Monsters, Nightmares and Daydreams. The unconscious spewing its freight. In madness there is sanity.

I have here the fourth edition of this work. Superb printing, incredible color. This collection, and the one reviewed above, are well worth the money.

SPIDER PLAY

By Lee Killough

Popular Library, \$3.50, July, 1986

A purist should consider this future detective/murder story a rip-off in two ways: it's a translation (a present-day murder mystery with names/places changed to give it the illusion of being science fiction) and it sloughs off the murder (the whole accumulating point of the book, for Christ's sake!) at the end, shrugs, and walks away.

I felt cheated and felt the writer had done violence to my (and other readers') reader expectations.

RICHARD E. GEIS

Killough does have a talent for future detail, for good main characterizations (though a lot of the time the writing is too dense--too much detail crammed in, too much business going on inside and outside the minds affected).

The novel starts fast and intriguingly as a hearse-with-corpse is stolen one dark, cold night, and the team of Sgt. Janna Brill and "Mama" Maxwell are obligated to track it down and catch the tribal gang who apparently took it.

Ah, but all is not as it seems and the plot thickens...

As soon as the team are sent up to a corporate satellite in the sky the story slows, changes content, direction and loses interest. New priorities appear; the murder of a space worker is trivial, now, and must be shrugged off.

As I shrug off this novel for not keeping to its moral and genre track.

I don't really mind all that much that this murder mystery isn't "true" sf, but I do mind that it didn't punish the killer.



GOD GAME

By Andrew M. Greeley
Warner, \$16.95 June, 1986

The novel is more about the author, Andrew Greeley, an intellectual Catholic priest-writer than it is about his characters.

In GOD GAME a very thinly disguised Greeley is given a highly advanced computerized interactive adventure game to play; he is himself able to play God to a set of characters in the computer-game world.

But somehow, the medieval-like world he becomes involved with, and plays God in, is actually an alternate world which the computer has penetrated, and the people are as real and complicated as we are, in this world. In fact, as the "game" progresses, there is some interpenetration of Them into our world, in dreams, in "coincidences"...

Greeley is a hell of a good writer. His naturalness and right-on characterization makes his fiction very real. True-to-life is the exact description.

But he is a compulsive egotist, it seems, and uses this GOD GAME framework to wallow in speculations about God and Man, Free Will, Fate, The Nature of Man... He does it adroitly, interestingly, skillfully, but his natural need to Question and Wonder is intrusive, and irritating.

To me, at least.

Maybe I'm just mad at him for doing the juvenile, egotistic author-schtick (LOOK AT ME!) and not concentrating on his other-world characters. They are real, hurting, joyous, utterly believable people and their world is in crisis...yet they and theirs are kept in their place, distanced, at the intellectual mercy of Greeley, who turns them off intermittently to be himself and to muse on their plights.

GOD GAME is a device for Greeley to indulge himself, and he does it well and smugly. Along the way he moralizes a lot, calls God a Her, and tricks up the narrative with references to the Other---the player of a game in other world in which we are characters? Or is Greeley talking about God? There is ambiguity galore in this novel. The author asks questions, poses questions, pokes and prods at eternal human puzzlements, and mostly shrugs and walks away. He says he is secure in his belief in God, but in his heart of egotistic hearts, I wonder. There's a bright strain of solipsism in this novel; Greeley is having a hard time keeping humble.

Finally, if fiction is supposed to be an emotional experience, this is essentially an intellectual experience; Greeley sets up emotional involvement, and jerks it away. Be warned.

TUF VOYAGING

By George R.R. Martin
BAEN BOOKS, \$15.95, 1986

This isn't really a novel. It is a progressing series of stories about a central character, Haviland Tuf who acquires a huge, ancient, Old Earth ecological Corps seedship and singlehandedly, capitalistically, sells his services to planetary governments throughout the human galaxy. The resources of the ship allow him to create plants, animals, fish to order, to solve critical ecological problems.

His initial problem is surviving the schemes and murder attempts of a group who have employed him to take them to a discovered 1000-year-old derelict spaceship. Only he survives their greedy double-crosses and takes ownership of the ancient, still 'alive' seedship.

His greatest danger comes from the planet S'uthlam whose peoples and religion insist it is their destiny to procreate at maximum speed no matter what. They are forever pressing against the limits of their planet to feed them.

Tuf contrives new plants, animals, schemes to extend their margin, but the government wants his massive ship...

These stories are almost all from ANALOG, and thus were written to fit that magazine's story needs. Tuf is virtually immutable---an honest man, clever, lucky. He survives all the plots and schemes against him. And he loves cats. It seems he will do anything to save one of his cats.

There are harsh things said about lack of birth control, lack of responsibility, lack of ethics and morality. You might think these stories are extended morality tales. You'd be correct.

I was disappointed in the shallow characterizations (having been spoiled rotten by Martin in his extraordinary ARMAGEDDON RAG), but even as stereotypes these characters do have credibility.

Tuf and his seedship also inspired thoughts in me about might-makes-right, as Tuf uses his power to play God...and in one story to murder. Well, Doing Good is a tough job, but somebody has to do it! Right?

WELL, NO, THE AFGHANIS WEREN'T ACTUALLY BROADCASTING ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM AT US. BUT THEY COULD HAVE.



INSIDE OUTER SPACE SCIENCE FICTION PROFESSIONALS LOOK AT THEIR CRAFT

Edited by Sharon Jarvis
Ungar, \$7.95, 1985

This trade paperback includes ten essays by Parke Godwin, C.J. Cherryh, Ron Goulart, Stuart David Schiff, Carter Scholz, Marion Zimmer Bradley, Marshall B. Tymn, Sharon Jarvis, Lloyd Biggle, Jr., and George Alec Effinger.

Really inside stuff is hard to find because authors are usually afraid to offend editors and publishers, and editors are afraid of losing their jobs and being blackballed. (It has happened.)

So, aside from the honesty of Sharon Jarvis (a rather bitter tale of male chauvinism and sexism) these essays are safe and routine, while also being interesting, especially to the outsider.

OTHER VOICES OTHER VOICES

CONTACT By Carl Sagan
Simon & Schuster, 142 pp. hardcover, \$18.95

REVIEWED BY LARRY NIVEN

You've seen his face on "Cosmos" or the "Tonight Show." He's a man in love with the universe. His "Cosmos" series on television and his several best-selling nonfiction books were all attempts to explain the most abstruse and startling aspects of the universe to anyone bright enough to read. He talks good English for a scientist.

First contact between mankind and extraterrestrial intelligence (ETI) is a major topic in science fiction. The universe is big; inhabited worlds should be innumerable. Where are the ETIs? What are they like? Why haven't they reached us yet? What do they have to tell us?

After all, what topic would Carl Sagan choose for his first work of fiction?

CONTACT starts in the tradition of Charles Dickens: A child is born. Her name is Ellie, and she fixes radios before she's ten. She becomes involved in the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence, SETI. Dr. Eleanor Arroway has established herself as one of the brightest minds around before a message arrives from interstellar space, just short of 2000 AD.

A message from the stars is a world-wide event. It cannot be received from any single location. Its importance is such that the world scientific community, established religions, the news media and national governments must all get involved. The President of the United States and her Science Advisor play central roles; the latter is in fact Ellie's lover.

Thus CONTACT bears the traditional earmarks of the best-seller category. Huge cast of characters; meticulously described background; a view into the domains of power ... but it all fits. In a first-contact novel set in present time these aspects are unavoidable. Whatever the nature of the ETI, the story that follows human reactions to their arrival will have a familiar look.

Science fiction readers may feel that the book starts slowly. The signal from Vega arrives as a string of prime numbers on page 78. It tells little of the senders. The second signal is merely an early TV broadcast returned to Earth. But don't get the idea that nothing's happening. By page 231 we still know nothing of the aliens except that they're sending designs for a machine; but in the meantime a world has been described.

Sagan is an optimist. Planet Earth of twelve to fifteen years from now is a nice place to live. The nations are breaking up their thermonuclear bombs into fuel cells for power plants. In industrialist has been marketing tiny de-

vices for a TV set that will mute the commercials, or change the channel if you hit a religious show. (He's S. R. Hadden, and he will build the Machine described in the message.) Nuclear war has not happened; civilization has not collapsed.

The point is, this isn't a novel about aliens. It's about communication. We watch governments negotiating to keep the world stable, and to share a message from space that falls all across the globe as it turns, and finally to build history's most expensive machine (without knowing what it's supposed to do). Spokespersons for industry and for organized and freestyle religion get into the act. Ellie herself has trouble communicating with her own species.

The problem that she and her fellow travelers face on their return is one of communication: How can they tell their own world what happened to them, and be believed? At the end she's more concerned with her relation to her family than with the puzzle she carried back from the galactic core.

(The puzzle: If there is a God and He isn't in hiding, He will have left an unambiguous message. What will it look like? Hint: Who is it He's trying to talk to? Sagan's answer is stunning, and satisfying.)

Even at the climax, in a docking station near the galactic core, the aliens are still not onstage, not quite. There is communication, but it shows little of the ETIs themselves.

Maybe this is valid. The aliens' translation system derives from billions and billions of years of research and experiment. (Yes, they're that old. The universe is occupied, we are late comers.) Perhaps the ultimate translation system will tell almost nothing about the speaker. It will instead translate information into terms familiar to the listener. Only the message itself will get through.

The author, however, is very much onstage. You will learn his philosophy and his viewpoints on the scientific method, religion, education, arms control, and stupidity (he's against it).

One caveat: This author needs an editor. There are jarring changes in tense. There are problems with pronouns: "us," "we," "our," where Sagan must have meant "humanity." These remain irritating throughout.

But I found myself arguing with the author. Aloud. It drives my wife nuts, but it's the sign of a good book.

NOTE: Larry Niven has been writing science fiction of all lengths and varieties for 22 years. His most recent novel is a collaboration, FOOTFALL, with Jerry Pournelle.



INTERZONE: THE FIRST ANTHOLOGY
Ed by John Clute, Colin Greenland
and David Pringle
St Martin's Press, 1985, 204 pp., \$14.95
REVIEWED BY STUART NAPIER

This anthology contains 13 stories from the first nine issues of a British magazine that began publishing in 1982. If this first collection is any indication of the current level of stories appearing each month in INTERZONE, I feel we all have some catch-up reading to do.

Not since the original DANGEROUS VISIONS have I read a collection of stories in which the originality of concept and execution of the authors screamed at you from each page. Until this hardback arrived in my mailbox courtesy of St. Martin's Press, I had never heard of INTERZONE, an oversight I hope to correct on a regular basis in the future!

The lead story, "O Happy Day!" by Geoff Ryman is a chilling American near-future tale in which war and violence have been determined to be purely male characteristics and the solution has been for the women to systematically exterminate all the men who were by profession violent (police, soldiers, criminals, etc.).

The scene is a railroad station run by homosexuals (thought to be more like women in temperament and thus less prone to violence) who processed drugged males onto death trains and then later disposed of the dead when the trains returned. The main character, Royce, a young black male, is faking his homosexuality to stay alive and it is his personality that upsets the careful balance at the station and leads to a dramatic conclusion.

"The Monroe Doctrine" by Neil Ferguson is a witty and insightful look at an alternate time line where Marilyn Monroe becomes President of the United States. In this encounter between the U.S. President and the Premier of the Soviet Union we find new meaning for the term quiet diplomacy.

"What Cindy Saw" by John Shirley is probably the strangest and most "dangerous" vision here: a world where nothing is what it seems, stumbled onto by young Cindy as she realises her home is actually a living creature designed to give the appearance of a normal house. Shirley's description of Cindy's discovery and the "Dalliesque" universe beyond accepted reality is science fantasy at its finest.

THIS IS THE WAY THE WORLD ENDS

By James Morrow
Henry Holt & Co., 1986, 319 pp., \$18.95

REVIEWED BY JAMES ANDERSON

James Morrow's latest book is a depressing novel, but then again no one ever said literature was happy stuff (just look at Eliot's *THE WASTELAND*). This book follows in the cataclysmic tradition of nuclear age end-of-the-world literature and presents a disturbing yet satirical look at World War III.

The book opens in the study of Dr. Michael de Nordström (a name of no fame) as he shows the story of the end of the world to a young boy. This terrible look at the future tells the story of George Paxton, who is destined to be the last survivor of the human race. Paxton's simple, happy life becomes disturbed by the invention of the scope suit, a survival suit guaranteed to protect the wearer from nuclear holocaust. Paxton, to his credit, wants the suit for his daughter, not for himself. George gets his suit by being tricked into signing an admission of complicity in starting World War III. The warheads start dropping before George can get the suit to his daughter. George, by mere chance, survives the blast and is whisked off to Antarctica by a submarine piloted by the souls of those who were never born because the war exterminated humanity. These "unadmitted" souls put George, and a select group of human survivors, on trial for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Overall, I found the novel quite compelling as it combined a frightening view of the future with a biting satire of the arms race. A lesser novelist might have become overly didactic with such a subject, yet Morrow keeps it entertaining and, sometimes downright funny, throughout the book. I wouldn't recommend the novel to someone who needs cheering up, but for those of us who are genuinely worried about tomorrow, it is an excellent, if disturbing read.

THE MAN WHO WANTED TO BE GUILTY

By Henrik Stangerup
Marion Boyars, Inc., \$12.95

REVIEWED BY RICHARD A. COOPER

Danish novelist Henrik Stangerup warns us of the path we are following. *THE MAN WHO WANTED TO BE GUILTY* perceptively captures the spirit of totalitarianism and its steady erosion of the concepts of individual guilt and moral responsibility. Set in Denmark, the archetypal welfare state, Stangerup's anti-utopian novel considers a totalitarian utopia that does not rely upon crude means such as terror and concentration camps. It stifles with kindness and therapy.

The plot of this short novel is simple, but rich in meaning. Torben, a former novelist, kills his wife during a drunken quarrel. His beloved son is taken from him and sent to an undisclosed location, but no punishment is administered and no trial held. The only no blame attached to him at all, but ultimately the fact of the murder itself is officially denied by the Helpers who control the people. Torben struggles to compel others to admit his guilt and return his son.

Comparisons will inevitably be made with George Orwell's 1984. The two novels share some elements while differing in others. The totalitarian assault on language which disturbed Orwell continues in *THE MAN WHO WANTED TO BE GUILTY*. Thus, Torben works for the Bureau of Language Improvement devising innocuous names for state actions, while Orwell's Winston worked for the Ministry of Truth rewriting history in terms of Newspeak. In both novels, the protagonist resists the awesome powers of the state. Stangerup dispenses with the fanciful gadgetry of 1984. Stangerup's Denmark is peaceful and relies upon none of the traditional statist devices of hatred to stir frenzy amongst the people and channel it against the enemies of the state.

Like Orwell, Stangerup devises a future history to provide background. Denmark's present trends continue. People are crammed into vast, public housing projects. Taxes penalize work, and welfare benefits reward idleness. Immigrant workers excluded from the welfare state's umbrella and despised perform most of the useful work. The Danes find themselves subjected to psychological techniques of manipulation which are legitimized in the name of controlling aggression and other undesirable emotions (such as individualism). Ironically, psychiatrist Thomas Szasz cautions that our liberties are threatened by the rise of the "therapeutic state."

The state controls child raising by issuing permits. Permits can be withdrawn and children removed forever by administrative fiat. Readers of Roland Barthes' *THE NEW TOTALITARISMS* know that bureaucratic control of parents exists in Sweden. Stangerup draws from several countries, especially in Scandinavia where the influence of organized therapeutic professionals is great and allied to the bureaucracy.

"The situation was a new one, but nobody had found a name for it. And there was nowhere to put the responsibility. Politicians apologized and apologized on TV, but their apologies could not remove the bond of almost feudal obligations..."

Orwell wrote in the shadow of Nazism and Communism. Stangerup writes in the shadow of Big Brother with a friendly face. He does not take totalitarianism at its bloodstained worst, but at its best -- and finds it wanting. "Did not the state have only one aim: The Common Good from Cradle to Grave? But why was nobody happy then?" *THE MAN WHO WANTED TO BE GUILTY* skillfully blends realistic and fantastic elements to create a powerful work of imagination with critical importance to our time.

THE RIVER WALL

By Randall Garrett & Vicky Heydon
Bantam, June 1986, 275 pp., \$3.50

REVIEWED BY MARK W. ANTONOFF

In this the seventh and final volume in the Gandalaria cycle, *THE RIVER WALL*, Ricardon and Tarani have reached Tarani's rightful place as High Lord of Eddarta. And now, they find themselves on a quest for a powerful stone known as the Ra' ira. *THE GANDALARA*, Cycle I, and the recently published *THE GANDALARA CY-*

CLE II (Bantam 1986) introduced us to the desert world of Gandalaria and to the main characters of Ricardon and Tarani, who were dying on another world when they were reborn into Gandalaria bodies.

Gandalaria is a world laden with mystical powers, particularly those of the mind. A sacred stone, the Ra' ira, served to enhance the mind-gift and render it easier to use. However, it was generally believed that the Ra' ira had been stolen from the city of Raithskar. It had in truth fallen into the hands of an evil lord, Fernathyn, and its use (or misuse) was killing many people. The killings were attributed to the loss of the Ra' ira.

There is a blend of political intrigue, high adventure and philosophical overtones, which make up the bulk of this work. The characters, in addition to the interesting overtones, have depth, intelligence, individuality and a strong sense of duty and loyalty. The authors have created well-developed plot lines as well.

For those who have not read either of the *GANDALARA CYCLES*, *THE RIVER WALL* should still prove to be of interest. But for those who have, I recommend you spend the time and money on this one.

MAGIC KINGDOM FOR SALE-SOLD

By Terry Brooks
Del Rey, 1986, 336 pp., \$16.95

REVIEWED BY MARK W. ANTONOFF

If money was no object, what chance would you take to get away from an unsatisfying life?

How about buying a magic kingdom? In the Kingdom of Landover? Interested?

MAGIC KINGDOM FOR SALE-SOLD, by Terry Brooks, offers such a chance to its main character, a lawyer from Illinois (some autobiographical wish by the author? Terry is a real lawyer.)

Ben Holliday is a lawyer who has recently lost his wife. But his real problem is that he no longer believes in anything. While browsing through a Christmas wish-book, he sees an ad for the throne of the magic Kingdom of Landover. Against his better judgment, and that of his business partner, Ben checks out the ad, and what the hell, buys the magic Kingdom of Landover. After all, it only

I'M
CRAZY



costs one million dollars to become its new king.

Landover is not, however, what Ben or the reader expects. It does have magic, dragons, trolls, gnomes and a wizard, as advertised, but not what is anticipated: The kingdom is in ruin and is broke, the magic is dying and its inhabitants are not willing to accept Ben (or anyone it seems) as High Lord (King). The only inhabitants of Landover who pledge their loyalty are a small group of comical fantasy characters.

The humorous side to the novel adds an enjoyable spark. Ben is full of sarcastic quips. While being led into the Deep Well (where Nightshade, the Witch, resides), Ben's guides, two repulsive gnomes, are unaware of the dangers because of their poor eyesight. "Sometimes ignorance was bliss," he remarks to himself. How true! While trying to place the dragon Strabo under his power, "Ben felt like Fay Wray and King Kong." And later, he remarks "Great special effects!" while awaiting his ensuing confrontation with the demon named The Mark. The technique of applying humor is not something new, but Terry Brooks uses it effectively.

Although this is a deviation from the author's earlier work, it does offer readers an enjoyable read.

SANTIAGO: A MYTH OF THE FAR FUTURE
By Mike Resnick
TOR, 1986, 376 pp., \$3.50

REVIEWED BY DEAN R. LAMBE

Not so long ago, in a galaxy quite nearby, the pulp pages thumped with the roar of rockets, as the good guys headed 'em off at the Crab Nebula. On one level, Resnick returns us to those "Bat Durston, space opera" days, with this complex tale of galactic bounty hunters in search of the greatest outlaw, Santiago.

On the Inner Frontier of planets, far from the Democracy's 100,000 civilized worlds, rival bounty hunters scout the spaceways for the legendary Santiago. Sebastian Nightingale Cain, a former revolutionary, seeks meaning in his life through Santiago's death. The deadly Angel merely hunts the mysterious outlaw for the huge reward. Father William, who eats and preaches the Gospel with equal gusto, claims no interest in Santiago, although he freely scalps lesser criminals for the greater glory of God. And journalist Virtue MacKenzie, with loyalty as fickle as her nickname, Virgin Queen, follows them all in search of an interview with the elusive killer -- Santiago.

Just as the "dine novels" created the mythos of the American West, Resnick fills out a segment of the future history he previously sketched in his BIRTHRIGHT: THE BOOK OF MAN. Both western and mystery conventions are combined, as bounty hunters follow the trail of a planet to planet, from colorful character to shady criminal. All the players are intertwined, linked through the stanzas of traveling minstrel, Black Orpheus, whose "Ballad of Santiago" provides the novel with its own folk song.

By the time the hunters converge on the real Santiago, the reader is lulled far beyond simple myth to the heart

of human comedy. Space opera, yes, but also a work that ranks with Asimov's FOUNDATION TRILOGY, Resnick's best yet is one to keep and re-read.

CIRCUIT By Melinda M. Snodgrass
Berkley, 1986, 232 pp., \$2.95

REVIEWED BY DEAN R. LAMBE

Some 70 years in the future, the major powers on Earth become concerned with the independent spirit in the System, the collection of space habitats, Moon and Mars colonies and asteroid miners. U.S. President deBacca pushes a bill through Congress, and the Fifteenth Circuit of the Federal judiciary is created. Judge Cabot Huntington, and his court clerk Jenny McBride, move to space habitat EnerSun 1 to bring law west of the Pecos ... eh, justice to the heavens. Lydia Kim, manager of EnerSun, makes it clear that Earth's brand of justice is suspect, and the judge and his "girl Friday" are shunned.

At a small Russian moonbase, however, Evgeni Renko and his fellow miners try to break their bonds of poverty by trading ore with the U.S. Steel satellite, and their simple act of defiance escalates into Judge Huntington's first case. President deBacca forces Huntington to compromise his integrity for political expediency, and Premier Tupolev takes even stronger measures against the errant Russians. A disastrous break between Earth and System threatens, with Judge Huntington's life on the line for his final court decree.

Throughout, Snodgrass presents a very well researched tale -- action and adventure in the mold of classic Heinlein. Federal and international law, and most aspects of space development, are shown with skill. Perhaps the work adheres too closely to SF of 40 years ago, however, for there are an unbelievable number of smokers in space, and despite the "Watergate" comparisons, no thought is ever given to the possibility that a corrupt president might bug phone lines. Oddly, the worst pulp-era offense is the blatant sexism. Jenny, a 28-year-old lawyer, is a "girl" throughout, and so politically naïve that she immediately falls prey to a scheme to pair her with handsome space stud, Peter.

While CIRCUIT is definitely worth reading, ask yourself why the broads and bimbo at Berkley/Ace didn't hold this new writer to the same standard they demand of the male authors?

ENIGMA By Michael P. Kube-McDowell
Berkley, 1986, 355 pp., \$3.50

REVIEWED BY DEAN R. LAMBE

The middle volume of a trilogy carries a heavy burden: often to the despair of writer and reader alike, it must start in the middle and remain there.

At first ENIGMA seems to presage the disappointment of many middle books, for the action begins some 200 years after the time of EMPRISE, Kube-McDowell's impressive debut tale of first contact



with an alien species that incredibly turns out to be Homo Sapiens. Slowly, we follow the career of Merritt Thackeray, as the young man rejects a promising life among the bureaucratic rulers of Earth for an apparently minor role in the Unified Space Service. Not until the middle of the novel, as Thackeray comes in to conflict with his starship commander, Alizana Neale, does the central enigma emerge. How could the thus-far-discovered human colonies be settled from Earth? Did some vanished pre-Pleistocene civilization actually seed the near-by stars, or did a truly alien species intervene on mankind's behalf? The philosophically-named people of Semif suggest one answer, but then Thackeray gets his own ship to command, and he finds yet another answer in the ruins of the extinct Wenlock colony. When Thackeray directs his crew towards the Ursa Major group, however, he risks loss of loyalty, love, and sanity as the enigma dissolves into even greater mystery.

Again, the ways of science are presented with vivid insight, as the resolution rivals Arthur C. Clarke's bright metaphysics -- in conjunction with Fred Saberhagen's grim realism. Characterization may come off second-best here, but we get our money's worth and still have much reason to await Book Three. After all, we don't yet know why Kube-McDowell calls it "The Trigon Disunity."

BEYOND THE SAFE ZONE By Robert Silverberg
Donald I. Fine, 1986, 472 pp., \$18.95

REVIEWED BY ANDREW M. ANDREWS

As Silverberg writes in the introduction to BEYOND THE SAFE ZONE: "Things are quieter now, though no less perilous. The disturbing, fragmented SF of the last decade has given way to the bland, comforting, predictable fantasies of today ... the stories in this book are, by and large, not like that. The world that they sprang from was the troubled, bewildering, dangerous, and very exciting world of those strange years when the barriers were down and the future was rushing into the present with the force of a river unleashed."

These are Silverberg's finest, from his finest years. A tribute to his fans, and no doubt a stone in the face of his critics, the best years have been contained in BEYOND THE SAFE ZONE. Some of these 27 tales have been collected before, in period anthologies; theme anthologies; awards collections; and numerous other places, some select, others arcane. The reader cares less where they originated; it is enough joy they can be found assembled at last.

Some favorites: "Schwartz Between the Galaxies," "Many Mansions," "In the Group," "Caught in the Organ Draft," "Now n, Now -n," "Getting Across," "When We Went to See the End of the World," "Good News from the Vatican," and "The Wind and the Rain."

There is sadness in all of them; apprehension, confusion, weariness -- the framework of a turbulent era. And so much more. The collection is large, exhaustive, and penetrating. It is well worth the price.

VISIBLE LIGHT By C.J. Cherryh
DAW, 1986, 348 pp., \$3.50

REVIEWED BY ANDREW ANDREWS

Filling a need for a home of most of Cherryh's short fiction (modest as it is), VISIBLE LIGHT ventures a bit away from any typical author anthology -- instead it is instrumented much like a voyage along the outskirts of Cherryh's nearly decade-old career, tying up some loose ends in her many popular series of writing.

The fiction itself falls short of the execution: Cherry interweaves this continuing dialogue, herself aboard this large starship filled with passengers. A guest speaks to her, and she as passenger, provides an interview, detailing and describing the nurturing of the stories and the meaning her work has in the universe.

Cherry offers fascinating anecdotes, stories-within-stories, providing a lush history of her writing. The stories are diverse, but not random: Included here are the award winners and classics, from "Cassandra" to "Companions" and "A Thief in Torianth" to what may be a previously uncollected piece, "The Brothers" (which she remarked may have been too controversial to publish when it was finished, but which she saves intact, barring minor editorial changes, for VISIBLE LIGHT). This book, because of the "narrator/starship guest" sequences, is hypnotic and entrancing.

MAROOINED IN REAL TIME
By Vernor Vinge
Bluejay, 320 pp., \$17.95

REVIEWED BY DEAN R. LAMBE

For 20 years I have argued that the last truly unique SF invention was Bob Shaw's "slow glass." While Vinge's "bobbles" may not be quite as original, for such impenetrable force shields wherein time stops have appeared in earlier fiction, Vinge's use of this concept

represents a new level of imagination.

A direct sequel to his THE PEACE WAR, MAROOINED IN REAL TIME is more successful in many ways. Where else could one follow the lives of continuing characters over half a billion years later? Vinge presents us with mystery on a grand scale: Not only has the majority of humanity disappeared sometime in the 23rd Century, but those few hundred remaining encounter the ultimate twist in locked-room murders, with all of mankind closed within the bobbled "room," while the victim dies outside.

In the distant future, when lovers Marta and Yelen Korolev emerge from their one-way time travel via bobble, they discover that Earth is vacant and in ruins. Within a few decades of their entry to bobble time stasis in 2201, something happened -- an extinction perhaps due to alien attack, or maybe an evolution of Man and his machines to a higher plane. Marta conceives a plan to rekindle the human race, however, from those few who are also bobbled for various lengths of time. From misfit loners to organized criminals, the bobbled remnants of mankind are brought together by the Korolevs as eons pass on Earth.

The final rescue involves a large group of Peacers, escapees from the collapse of the 21st Century Peace Authority dictatorship. Not a few of the low-techs, those who were bobbled before the incredible 23rd Century survival technology was available, have reason to wish that the Peacers never rejoin the race. Even though 50 million years have passed on Earth, many -- including Earth's last private cop, Wil Brierson -- have fears of statist government that are mere days old. As the Korolevs bobble up everyone to await the final reunification when the Peacers' bobble collapses, someone sabotages Yelen's software, and Marta is left outside, in real time. Without equipment or longevity treatments, Marta struggles to survive alone for 40 years, but the extensive diary she leaves for Yelen falls to name her murderer. Despite her contempt for the low-tech detective, Yelen asks Brierson to team with the high-tech space explorer, Della Lu, to solve the mystery. But Brierson's task is plagued by another investigation -- who, perhaps among those still alive, shanghaied him into this crazy twilight of Mankind?

Vinge has better control of his characters in the sequel, and while the ending may seem contrived to fit the "locked-room" mold, the scope and grandeur of the plot mark this

novel as a high point in hard SF creativity. Highly recommended.

I HOPE I SHALL ARRIVE SOON
By Philip K. Dick
Doubleday, 1985, 180 pp., \$12.95

REVIEWED BY ANDREW ANDREWS

It's a marvel to be able to find that one previously uncollected short story, which brings one writer's gift more intensely to heart, and when you find many stories that do as much (especially of sustained quality), for any collector and abiding fan, it is great joy.

Some jewels are found.



There are moments in this new Philip K. Dick collection of short stories, I HOPE I SHALL ARRIVE SOON, where the presence, the personage of the author has been transferred keenly -- Dick's voice, if only for a little while, is with us.

An unpublished essay called "How to Build a Universe That Doesn't Fall Apart Two Days Later" peels away any persiflage to arrive at the core of Dick's latest schizophrenia, his muddling, laming paranoia about the disenfranchised, indifferent, catatonic, mechanized world about him.

"Strange Memories of Death" rides the fence of autobiography and details a horror Dick faced the last years of his life. The title story brings home another Dick testament -- the consuming question be-

fore him: What is Real? What is Reality? -- leaves us, too, wondering.

THE HUGO WINNERS Vol. 5
Edited by Isaac Asimov
372 pp., \$18.95, Doubleday

REVIEWED BY ANDREW ANDREWS

This volume spans the years 1980-82, an overwhelmingly minuscule length of time for many award-winning stories to be wrought, and three world conventions to be staged (the WorldCon being the sole event at which the coveted Hugo Awards are bestowed, held mostly on American ground).

At times there seems a method, however, to the editor's madness. Why such a short span of time? (Possibly because of the length of the stories, mostly in novelette form.) Why the thinness of the tome? (In the past, these Hugo Award collections were awesome things, covering several hundred pages.) I suppose this length takes advantage of a rather large market over several upcoming volumes.)

Included here is Barry B. Longyear's "Enemy Mine" (upon which the movie is based), works by Gordon R. Dickson, ("Lost Dorsai" and "The Cloak and the Staff"), Clifford D. Simak ("Grotto of the Dancing Deer"), George R. R. Martin ("The Way of Cross and Dragon" and "Sandkings") and this reviewer's favorite, John Varley's "The Pusher."

As his wont, Asimov, the editor, chum-chummies his way through brief anecdotes, memorabilia of the authors and/or conventions and interjects Asimov Ego where fit -- it is welcome everywhere. Asimov's introductions are the welcome puff between the text. Some stories are demanding; others are forgetful; most will be coveted over lifetimes.

THE SCIENCE FICTION HALL OF FAME
VOL. IV, Edited by Terry Carr
Avon, 1986, 434 pp., \$4.95

REVIEWED BY ANDREW ANDREWS

Here we go again. With unfettered finesse, with a wisdom borne of twilight sleep, nights spent shuffling through stacked ANALOGS, GALAXIES, WORLDS OF IF, days researching old award-winning stories in the back of convention catalogs -- No, wait. This is the SF Hall of Fame series. The fiction is garnered from the Nebula and Hugo Awards lists. These prestigious awards make nearly any story col-

lectible, perhaps several times over. The fiction is sure-fire, an easy job for any editor.

This series is Special. The Nebulas and Hugos are coveted awards. These stories are deserving -- for those with sense enough to know, of the entire series, this one is reliable.

The fiction includes "I'll Met in Lankmar" by Fritz Leiber; "Slow Sculpture" by Theodore Sturgeon; "The Missing Man" by Katherine MacLean; "The Queen of Air and Darkness" and "Goat Song" by Pohl Anderson; "Good News from the Vatican" and "Born with the Dead" by Robert Silverberg; "A Meeting with Medusa" by Arthur C. Clarke; "When it Changed" by Joanna Russ; "The Death of Doctor Island" by Gene Wolfe; "Of Mist, and Grass, and Sand" by Vonda N. McIntyre; "Love is the Plan the Plan is Death" by James Tiptree, Jr.; "If the Stars are Gods" by Gordon Eklund and Gregory Benford; and "The Day Before the Revolution" by Ursula K. LeGuin.

THE YEAR'S BEST SCIENCE FICTION, Third Annual Collection, Ed by Gardner Dozois
Bluejay Books, 1986, 624 pp., \$10.95

REVIEWED BY ANDREW ANDREWS

The attempt is admirable: What Dozois intends with a collection as massive as Year's Best, with an overview that may satisfy most scholars, and with an execution so as to leave no stone unturned, is astonishing. Bluejay has hired the field's short story mastermind to do what the less intent find impossible. Something like this makes walking on eggs appear time-consuming and dull.

Many readers can find different anthologies covering a definite year -- but how reliable are they? Do theme anthologies cover as many bases? Are all aspects of any given year covered as thoroughly, with as much brave oversight? (Oversight meant as "taking in the whole period," no negative connotations intended.) Does any other anthologist take the time to do the research, or show as much concern and love for the short story as Dozois? No. Probably not. Dozois is singularly preoccupied with investigating and nurturing the short story market, given his editorial status with ISAAC ASIMOV'S SF MAGAZINE.

But --

From a marketing standpoint, a collection such as this is also a brave undertaking. My respect goes to a publisher who wants to journey into the elusive short story market so willingly. Bluejay's presents the best there is.

This massive, let's admit, hefty volume, bears the following fruit: "The Jaguar Hunter" by Lucius Shepard, another in his narrows of Central America, and the mysteries of that stranger-still world; "The Only Neat Thing to Do" by James Tiptree, Jr.; "Green Mars," by Kim Stanley Robinson; (many Hugo and Nebula Award nominees are here, ladies and gentlemen), and many more, from sources in and out of the SF/Fantasy field, including OMNI magazine, PLAYBOY and collections such as IMAGINARY LANDS.

If you have no time or patience with the deluge of SF and Fantasy magazines out there, and you want only those finest distilled, the best of the crop, you should enter these gates. The work is fresh and promising.

ROBOTS, ANDROIDS AND MECHANICAL ODITIES:
THE SCIENCE FICTION OF PHILIP K. DICK
Ed. by Patricia S. Warrick and Martin H. Greenberg. Southern Illinois University Press, 1986, 261 pp., \$9.95

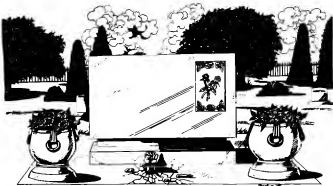
REVIEWED BY ANDREW ANDREWS

At work here is a creative and sensitive mind, troubled by increasing technological complexity, world drawn further away from the people who have to live in it, leaving the individual (the creative, spontaneous soul) isolated and alienated.

The writer was drawn to the question: What is reality? And he searched for the answer to: What is the absolute truth? Some answers are contained at every stepping stone in the author's works.

Such were the themes and movement of most of Philip K. Dick's fiction. Rising from the ashes of some of the earlier SF short story writers and novels, in which authors sawed a future from the fabric of technological optimism and faith, Dick brought some of the tragedies and horror of growing technological sophistication down under our noses, and made us stare at technology-gone-wild as it really, for some people, turned out to be.

Here are stories collected throughout his career, drilling for some answers: What real difference exists between man and machine? Are we coming to a point where there soon will be no dif-





ference? If only man can inherit intelligence, grace and sensitivity -- then why is it just the opposite? Why a growing dependency on technology, then -- why are we trusting our futures to machines?

As is his wont as a writer, through the eyes of machines (a small toy soldier come to life, or a robot house servant that sells itself) Dick shows us another view of the world -- a world and universe in which the distinction between man and machine blurs. We have here "The Little Movement" from 1952; "Imposter" from 1953; "The Last of the Masters" from 1954; "Autofac" from 1955; "Electric Ant" from 1956; "The Exit Door Leads In" from 1972; and the last story in the collection, "Frozen Journey" from 1980: They are all a testament to Dick's fears, as he trembled in writing them down, because of his need to reach others who were just as frightened of the things he saw as he was himself. It is a journey that is not taken alone, and not easily forgotten.

THE LOOKING GLASS UNIVERSE
By John P. Briggs, Ph.D. and
F. David Peat, Ph.D.
Simon & Schuster, 1984, 290 pp.,
\$14.95

REVIEWED BY RITCHIE BENEDICT

I used to hate books about science. An overdose of high school textbooks will do that to a person. On the other hand, I was very fond of reading science fiction. Science was too stodgy and didn't have that necessary degree of weirdness to attract my attention. However, something unusual has happened in the last 20 years, certain aspects of science have become weirder than science fiction (more towards fantasy) and it seems that you must know about the new elements in science if you are to successfully write science fiction as the new breed of writers such as Gregory Benford, James P. Hogan and Jerry Pournelle

will demonstrate. In fact, the implications of quantum physics point the way towards proof of the paranormal and we all know where that leads -- pure magic!

Of course, the authors of this new book, being scientifically trained, might be reluctant to admit that but I don't think so, as many of their examples and illustrations are based upon Lewis Carroll and ALICE THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS. This is a book that is not difficult to read, but must be digested slowly in order to grasp some very odd concepts. We start in the early 20th Century where Einstein, Heisenberg, Planck and others are trying to grasp what is going on in the subatomic realm, and whether light is composed of waves or particles (or both). This leads inevitably to the famous "double-slit" experiment, where paradox reigns supreme, and electrons appear to have a mind of their own. The next step is Schroedinger and his half-dead, half-alive cat trapped in a box with a vial of poison, the condition of which seems to be dictated by the result the observer wishes to happen! (With multiple observers things get a big complicated. For a recent SF novel see Pohl's COMING OF THE QUANTUM CATS by Bantam.)

After that, all hell breaks loose and nothing quite makes perfect sense thereafter. We must deal with the concept of non-locality where here is there, the holographic universe principle that says everything mirrors everything else, and Bohm's implicate order where there is nothing but flowing movement.

Then, bringing things right up to date, there is the ever-popular science fiction idea of bifurcating branches of time developed by Everett and Wheeler and the highly controversial theory of British biologist Rupert Sheldrake, of "morphogenesis," wherein the mind is not in the brain, and individual consciousness is connected to some sort of field lying beyond normal space-time. The hardest part of the Sheldrake idea for conventional science to swallow is that a newly acquired ability can be passed from generation to generation (i.e. a dandelion learns a way of resisting weed killer and once the initial break-through is made the knowledge spreads like ink through blotting paper to all other dandelions). The fields are peculiar in themselves in that they are themselves formed by the very things they are forming. Of particular interest are the chapters on the latest brain research where a new theory by Californian Frank Barr, proposes we have, in effect, "mini-black holes" in our brains that eat light

in order to sustain matter. It is very edifying to realize that one scientist suggests that brain holograms may be stored in "phase space" which may be something entirely non-physical! Sort of makes you believe in ghosts, doesn't it?

There is a clever fish tank analogy to explain the possible existence of higher dimensions of reality -- a mind-boggling sixth dimension and speculation that time itself is a projection from a higher dimension, part of a system that may very well be infinite. All of this is so new, the authors remind us, that we are still thinking of names and labels to paste on all this phenomena. Science fiction writers can be a bit smug in that some of them like Jack Williamson (THE LEGION OF TIME) considered such questions in a fictional context decades before science ever got around to them.

Parts of this book are a little hard to absorb if science is not one of your interests, but the authors have done a remarkable job in explaining difficult questions. It is a gold mine of ideas for science fiction stories and full of interesting speculation in the field of pure science. I only wish the subject had been this entertaining when I was at school. This book is a reminder of how weird "ordinary" reality is.



DAVID TRANSLUC

NEAL WILGUS

OSMA'S COMPLAINT

BY NEAL WILGUS

Emerald City, OZ (LEAK) -- In her first ever Magic Picture news conference, Princess Ozma of Oz today expressed her irritation with what she called "the runaway inflation that has taken place in the modern imagination." Using a newly devised Oz-wide system of MP broadcast which was recently installed under the Wizard's direction, Ozma spoke for close to an hour on the dangers of "polluting our precious imaginative spirits."

Ozma began by pointing out that until recently the magic of imagination was both relatively rare and comparatively rich -- with only a few great minds in each generation generating its FAIRIE QUEENE, GULLIVER'S TRAVELS or ALICE IN WONDERLAND, as the case might have been. "But in the past hundred years," Ozma said, "there has been a population explosion in the realm of imaginative literature, and the last thirty years has seen an unbelievable expansion -- especially in fantasy fiction." Most of it pretty bad, Ozma believes.

"When Oz was created by Lurline and Mr. Baum," Ozma went on, "it was one of those rare and rich moments when imagination is magically manifested -- it was magic. And it was Baum's genius that he could keep that magic going for fourteen volumes and delight generations of young minds. It's to the great credit of Mr. O'Neill, Mz. Thompson and a host of others that the Oz spirit has carried on, no matter how imperfectly."

But it is inevitable, Ozma believes, that the more extended a fantasy line becomes, the more impurities creep in and the less intrinsic value remains. Citing examples such as the Frankenstein and Tarzan series, the Cthulhu Mythos, the Conan sagas, Disney World, the Muppets and Godzilla, Ozma complained that as the fantasy lines get longer, the magic gets weaker. "The popular use of the Magic Picture through which I'm speaking (it's done with mirrors) shows that when the inspiration fades we're more and more forced to rely on technological crutches," Ozma said.

Ozma's main target, however, was not the fantasy series so much as the lack of innovation in imaginative writing at all. "More and more writers are churning out novels and trilogies and clusters of trilogies based only on some minor variation of a long established (often bankrupt) fantasy stereotype from the past. That's no way to run an imagination," Ozma concluded.

In a brief question-and-answer session Professor Mogglegub asked what Ozma would recommend to remedy the situation of which she complained. "Inspiration," was Ozma's instant reply. "Great works of imagination require inspiration and without it any fantasy imaginable is only hackwork. To create, fantasy writers should write less and spend more time cultivating inspiration."

At which point most of the reporters began shaking their heads and moving nervously toward the door. "It's a waste of time," complained one. "Back to your desks," said the City Editor.



GOOD NEWS BY Edward Abbey
E.P. Dutton Trade paper, 1980, 242 pp.
\$5.95.

REVIEWED BY NEAL WILGUS

Here's a novel of the near future by a "mainstream" author that is of passing interest only. You may want to pass, unless you're an Edward Abbey fan.

GOOD NEWS takes place in Phoenix, Arizona, after the fall of technological civilization but no phoenix-from-the-ashes sleight of hand takes place. Abbey, in fact, is an environmental extremist who has little use for civilization and his "good news" is presumably his projection that it will take one hell of a long time for civilization to recover, if ever.

Abbey is the author of two excellent novels, THE BRAVE COWBOY (1956) and THE JACK BURNING GANG (1973) -- as well as other novels that are only very good, and some outstanding nonfiction. GOOD NEWS is mainly of interest because it is Abbey's only "science fiction" (that I know of) and because it tells what became of Jack Burnin, the hero of THE BRAVE COWBOY, a half-century later. Anarchist that he is, Burns is involved in the fight against a fascist boss intent on building a new military empire on the bodies of all opposition.

Abbey is a good story teller and will keep your attention but this story seems lacking in focus and rambling. You'll probably hardly even notice that Abbey uses the present tense (except for one chapter, for some reason), but you might not be motivated to finish the story -- unless you're an Abbey fan, of course. I am, I did and I'm glad.

GOOD NEWS!

NEW CREW TO ZOO

BY NEAL WILGUS

Plankton, UT (LEAK) --

Hemphad Memorial Zoo was the recipient of an unusual addition today when Zoo Administrator Sherlock Zimmerman accepted a gift from Beowulf Natural Gas Company. The new specimens consisted of a group of 27 barbarian tribesmen (three male, eight female and sixteen young) who had been roaming at large in the Kakawat River basin for several years. Gas Company employees captured the barbarians, Zimmerman said, after they encountered the herd near the site of a new gas line.

"Several more were also sighted," Zimmerman told reporters, "but the crew had their hands full with the ones they caught and just couldn't round up the rest. We're hoping, of course, to track them down in the near future."

A number of the barbarians were injured during the capture. One was reported to have a broken leg and health authorities have been considering possible disposal moves. The remaining specimens were inspected by zoo veterinarians and returned to their temporary quarters.

"Our main problem now," Zimmerman said, "is keeping the barbarians under wraps until adequate display areas are available. We envision a building similar to the monkey house with a controlled natural environment but it will take some time to accomplish such a project. Meanwhile the public is anxious to see these rare animals in their natural state and we're considering several possibilities. We may house them at one of the city's jails temporarily or perhaps in one of the slum areas which are to be condemned anyhow."

Another problem, Zimmerman indicated, would be food for the newcomers. "These creatures have been living on roots, berries and small game for most of their lives," he said. "It may be difficult for them to adjust to the cereal mush we expect to provide for them, but we're confident most of them will make the necessary changes." Soaring overhead costs preclude the provision of meat to the barbarians, Zimmerman said.

--Reprinted from INTEGRA, the Journal of Interlat, Vol. M, #6, March 1986. (C) 1986 Interlat, Inc.

SONGS OF A DEAD DREAMER by Thomas Ligotti
Silver Scarab Press, trade paperback, 166 pp., \$8.50 (300 copies)

REVIEWED BY NEAL WILGUS

It's a shame that this excellent volume of horror stories will be read by so few -- this 300-copy edition will probably take years to sell out. But if you're interested in "horror fiction" at all -- get it, it's worth the effort, and the price.

Thomas Ligotti has a unique and arresting style that more than makes up for the rather weak plots in this collection of eleven stories and seven prose poems. I particularly liked "Drink to Me Only with Labyrinthine Eyes," in which a hypnotist takes his audience for a rather revolting ride, and "The Troubles of Dr. Thoss," in which a mindless young artist is "taken" in a gruesome manner -- but all of the stories are well done and some are excellent. Two stories-as-lectures-on-horror-fiction are the weakest and least successful, though even they have their moments -- as do the "poems" retelling the lives of famous horror figures.

SONGS is illustrated by Harry O. Morris, publisher of Silver Scarab Press, and has an introduction by Ramsey Campbell, who reveals that Ligotti's stories have appeared only in the amateur press so far. Alas, details of the original publication of these stories are lacking, but Campbell mentions that several have appeared in ELDritch TALES, FANTASY TALES

and Harry Morris's NYCTALOPS. The cover collage and the ones accompanying the stories are excellent examples of Morris's horrifying work.

Silver Scarab is one of the best of the small press fantasy/horror publishers and should be better known. Thomas Ligotti should abandon his fears of rejection from big time publishers and go professional. And you should buy and read this book!

PLUGS LEAKED

BY NEAL WILGUS

Secropolis, MD (LEAK) -- a new federal policy designed to curb the illegal disclosure of public information was announced today by the Office of Data Utilization and Management (ODUM). The policy itself is highly classified but an official ODUM leak revealed that all government employees will be assigned a Leak Quotient (LQ) and that anyone who exceeds his quota will be given retirement demerits, while those who remain within their limits will be given bonuses and possible early retirement. The ODUM Fringe Benefit Committee voted overwhelmingly to keep the LQ system classified Topsecret Secret.

The new policy was made possible, according to ODUM Security Chief Jack Sniff, because of the recently instituted Mandatory Employee Analysis for Lying (MEAL) system which is now a requirement for all public and most private employment. The MEAL Ordeal, as it's popularly called, consists of chemical analysis of individual fingers, and toe- and clippings and certain other classified tests which can ascertain whether or not a person has told a lie within the last 76 hours (on average). Similar to the People's Sput-Swast Test (PSST) used in the Soviet Union, MEAL is required weekly by many employers and daily by those in sensitive positions such as policy makers, security personnel and trash collectors.

Sniff said that ODUM is still negotiating with the Federal Union of Certain Kraits (FUCK) over the LQ ratios and the demerit system. The Union is expected to settle for a compromise package allowing only thirty lies per quarter but slashing the demerits by fifty percent for the first year, twenty-five percent the next

three years and like that. ODUM and FUCK have already agreed that politicians, federal judges and union officials will be exempt from the LQ and MEAL systems.

In a related development, LEAK News Service has filed for bankruptcy. Again.



THE YELLOW KNIGHT OF OZ (1930) 226 pp.
PIRATES IN OZ (1931) 225 pp.
THE PURPLE PRINCE OF OZ (1932) 227 pp.
By Ruth Plumly Thompson
Del Rey TP, 1986, \$5.95 each

REVIEWED BY NEAL WILGUS

Despite the untimely death of Judy-Lynn Del Rey, the reissue of the Oz books continues. These three titles and the next three forthcoming (OJO IN OZ, SPEEDY IN OZ and THE WISHING HORSE OF OZ) were no doubt already in the pipeline. It will be interesting to see if the series continues unto the last of the Ruth Plumly Thompson titles -- and/or beyond.

In THE YELLOW KNIGHT Thompson's first major Oz character, Sir Hokus of Pokus (from THE ROYAL BOOK OF OZ, 1921), goes on another quest and discovers some new Oz territory, assisted by a boy named Speedy who comes to Oz via rocketship. There are the usual travels and side adventures and of course everything comes out all right.

In PIRATES we have yet another attempt by the Gnome King (L. Frank Baum had it Nome King) to take over the Emerald City and recapture his magic belt. A boy named Peter opposes the Gnome with the help of a magic ship, a flying pig named Pig-asus and the swashbuckling Captain Samuel Salt, pirate.

And in THE PURPLE PRINCE Prince Randy of Regalia and Kabumpo the Elegant Elephant go adventuring in search of Randy's royalty. Kabumpo's native kingdom of Pumperdink is conquered and recovered -- as Oz kingdoms often are.

As the Oz series continues the illustrations by John R. Neill seem less inspired (though still very good) but the covers by Michael Herring seem to be getting a bit better (or I'm getting used to them). Mainly for children but open to all -- Oz rolls on!

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Ten Years Ago In Science Fiction - 1976

By Robert Sabella

The true identity of the reclusive James Tiptree, Jr. was revealed as Alice Sheldon, shocking some prominent science fiction people who had proclaimed publicly that Tiptree's writing style was definitely that of a man (see Robert Silverberg's introduction to Tiptree's anthology WARM WORLDS AND OTHERWISE).

The judges of the John W. Campbell Memorial Award decided that no 1975 novel met the award's standards. Instead they awarded a retrospective award to

Wilson Tucker's 1970 novel, THE YEAR OF THE QUIET SUN, which they felt never received the recognition it deserved.

Edmond Hamilton died at the age of 72. He achieved his greatest fame writing space operas of the E.E. Smith type in the 1920s and 1930s.

Laser Books ceased publication, ending their attempt to mass-market a series of similar science fiction novels, much like their successful Harlequin Romances.

Important publications: FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION had a special Damon Knight issue, featuring his short story, "I See You." It was a good quarter for prose serializations. GALAXY overlapped serializations of Frederik Pohl's GATEWAY and Larry Niven's CHILDREN OF THE STATE simultaneously with the hardcover publications of both novels (the latter as part of A WORLD OUT OF TIME). ANALOG published Robert Silverberg's SHADRACH IN THE FURNACE.

THE INSPECTOR

BY DARRELL SCHWEITZER

LIFE IS LIKE THAT, MORE OFTEN THAN NOT:

RADIO FREE ALBEMUTH By Philip K. Dick
Arbor House, 1985, 214 pp., \$14.95

Philip K. Dick's death was as untimely as any that ever happened in our field, and there is no doubt that he is much more famous now than when he was alive, but I suppose there is some consolation in the fact that he wasn't the complete tragic figure, whose success is entirely posthumous, like Richard Middleton or H.P. Lovecraft. He was able to publish his best work in his lifetime, in humble places, yes, but it was published, and he built an audience. His "ace in the hole" all the while was that (as usually happens in these cases), the Europeans recognized his genius to a far greater extent than did the Americans, and this too happened in his lifetime. And even in the U.S., he was riding an upsurge of popularity in his last few years. I would venture to guess that, had he not died in 1982, Dick would be nearly as famous as he is now.

He was one of those great visionary writers, like Wells or Lovecraft or David Lindsay, whose work transcends all considerations of genre. I would compare him most closely to Arthur Machen, who, like Dick, had that sense that the world is not what we perceive. Machen wrote of altered states of consciousness, of people suffering the sudden realization that there is far more outside of the usual scheme of things than normally meets the senses. But, since he was writing around the turn of the century, he used the apparatus of the supernatural horror story. Dick, beginning in the very materialistic early '50s, more typically used science fiction, and made his work a lot more political.

But unlike Lovecraft, who rather made a mess of his career, or Machen, who suffered the tragedy of outliving his own talent by half a lifetime, or Lindsay, who really, as even his admirers admit, could not write, and thus had a hard time getting his unique message across, Dick was productive and (so I gather) competently represented by an agent, who placed his science fiction, at least, with clockwork regularity.

Therefore it is a bit of a surprise that there should be a major Philip K. Dick science fiction novel left to be published posthumously. The superficial explanation is obvious enough: it existed in manuscript under the title VALIS: SYSTEM A, and for a long time was thought to be a draft of VALIS. Then somebody read it and discovered it to be an entirely different work, sharing some of the themes and even characters of VALIS, but in no way dependent on it. It is also a brilliant book in its own right, so why Dick was unable to sell this in his own lifetime is beyond me, unless he never tried. Maybe he was dissatisfied with it, and felt that VALIS had expressed the same material so much better. **RADIO FREE ALBEMUTH** (as Editor Hartwell entitled it, taking the phrase from the text) was superfluous.

Well, even the best writers can be

wrong. **RADIO FREE ALBEMUTH** is not the greatest of Dick's novels, but it is a major one, showing him at the height of his powers. And it is much more accessible than VALIS. Anyone puzzled by that book should read this one first, as a means of entry.

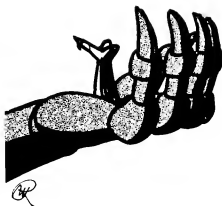
It's written as a mock autobiography. Philip K. Dick, the science fiction writer, narrates two out of the three sections. It seems that Phil has a friend, Nicholas Brady, who may be going mad. He is hearing voices from outer space. This might be classic schizophrenia until before Phil's very eyes, Nicholas, or the force within him, performs a miracle. Then the trouble starts, because, while the book began in a very recognizable 1950s Berkeley California university setting, it moves on to an alternate present.

Dick was writing the middle '70s, so he seems to have performed one of those rare examples of science fictional prophecy: he foresaw Lyndon LaRouche. In the alternate world of the novel, a crazed right-wing conspiracy theorist has become the American People, begins to denigrate long the country is enmeshed in web after web of paranoia. There are loyalty checks which make the McCarthy era look mild. An informer organization, Friends of the American People, begins to denigrate fiendish things to entrap Dick, and Brady, both of whom have suspect "Red" pasts. All this ties back into the author's "real" life, with the introduction to his story in **DANGEROUS VISIONS** giving him the reputation as a notorious drug user, and the mysterious burglary, during which his safe was expertly blown apart, forming a central incident of the book, just as it did in his later life.

Of course, Nicholas is hearing voices from space, but it's not as simple as that. Every few chapters he and Dick come up with another theory, which works as well as the last one, and shifts the characters' (and the reader's) perspective around 180 degrees. We also learn that the crazed right-wing conspiracy theorist is actually a Commie (as Louche, at least used to be) and that the vast "Aram-cheh" conspiracy which he seemed to have invented as a means of getting himself elected, really does exist. Further, Nicholas is a member of it.

I am not giving away anything here, because any experienced Philip K. Dick reader should be prepared for at least that much. Besides, surprise is the most superficial of fictional values. The real value of this book is elsewhere. Dick gives a sense of a mystical, cosmic vision which is rare in even what is supposed to be the most visionary of literatures. And, as he always did in his other books, he thoroughly undermines the reader's sense of what is comfortably "real."

He also writes/wrote with great feeling. **RADIO FREE ALBEMUTH** is a book of real emotional power. The final part, when Phil and Nicholas decide to take their own quixotic stab at the evil regime, has that same terrible, heart-wrenching inevitability.



ity as the ending to 1984. At the same time, it isn't quite as Black as Orwell. The final message is not "a boot in the face forever and ever," but one of absurdity and faint hope, as Phil, now a lifetime political prisoner, is last seen at a construction site, listening to kids with ghetto-blasters blasting away music which contains the very subliminal message which he and Nicholas tried to get out. It's a strangely fitting coda for the real Philip K. Dick's whole career. The message is still going on without him.

THE LAST WORD FROM THE VALLEY OF FONGO-FONGO, BEING AN EPILOGUE TO THE TRUE AND TERRIBLE HISTORY OF THE LOST RACE NOVEL

THE UNDYING LAND By William Glimour
Donald M. Grant, 1985, 208 pp., \$20.00

A couple of issues back, as you may recall, I discussed the abrupt demise of the once-flourishing genre of the Lost Race Novel, and drew some analogies to the state of the contemporary field of generic fantasy, which also, I feel, may be heading toward an untimely end.

Now, as if to mock me, what should arrive but a genuine new Lost Race Novel. Has this much Schweitzer-maligned literary form got some life in it still? I mean, after all, no genre is dead as long as people are still writing in it. Isn't that so?

Certainly not.

The problem still remains: Ah, yes, you have discovered a lost race of dwarfs, lesbian Hittites in the legendary Valley of Fongo-Fongo in the Upper Amazon. I have it on the satellite photo here. Sure, we can get a fleet of helicopters in there within twelve hours

And that is why the Lost Race Novel, Edgar Rice Burroughs proprietor, removed itself to Barsoom some generations ago. There is no reversing what has happened. Literary forms have their duration and their span, just like people, just like

empires. Sidonius Apollinaris (late 5th Century) grasped this in his own fumbling way (he being the chief fumbling representative of classical Latin literature in its death-throes) when he remarked of some work of the Golden Age, "Of course, such a book couldn't be written today." (Of words to that effect, in decadent late Latin fustian.)

Similarly, a real Lost Race novel cannot be written anymore, because this is no longer 1890. All Mr. Gilmour has managed to do is create a pastiche. He has done so most skillfully, to the extent that, with very minor changes, THE UNDYING LAND would pass perfectly for an obscure novel published in ALL STORY in 1911. He has got the whole routine down perfectly: competently readable prose, wooden characterizations, impossible dialogue, wild implausibilities, and even a touch of Age of Imperialism racism. (That is, the non-negroid Lost Race is said to be more "clean cut" than regular Africans. A very authentic touch.)

But there are signs of decadence, even in this pastiche. It is an eerily convincing mimicry of a late Lost Race novel, from the period when the audience was already thoroughly familiar with the basic schticks, and required more. So authors piled it on. Sure enough, in the first half of the book, we encounter no less than four lost races, one of them only semi-human (but the hero spares one of these beastial Dugs, and the fellow promises to become his staunch sidekick for life), two lost valleys, an evil tyrant tempted to sacrifice decent folk to the Volcano God, and even a beautiful pagan princess who, right after being rescued from dire extremities, talks like this:

"It is well known by all that Sar has long aspired to the throne of Haak, not only because he believes that it is his prerogative, but also because the throne would undoubtedly offer him the free hand he seeks in re-instituting an ancient ritual which was climaxed by the casting of a living Haakian into the bowels of Elharazen, the mountain of fire. This practise has long since been denounced by the ancestors of Nag, who for many generations, had been strong advocates in the belief that this outrage upon an intelligent and rational people was unprincipled and immoral, and they conscientiously strived (sic.) to effect the abolishment of this barbarism by inciting rebellions against its perpetrators." (page 71)

It's all great fun in a silly sort of way, but what we have here is a prancing corpse, not a living Lost Race Novel, as Haggard might have written.

And I can't help but wonder: How come the British adventurer hero, who arrives in these lost places as a complete stranger (although conveniently able to converse with the natives, one group speaking a Bantu dialect, the other degenerate Latin), always manages to fall in with the good guys? My knowledge of the Lost Race genre is far more enough to know if this has never been tried, but wouldn't it make a better story if, for once, halfway through the book, the hero discovered that the weird folk among whom he finds himself have been lying, and they are really the oppressors, rather than the oppressed? In science fiction, many writers thought of that. There were numerous stories about Earthmen who were fooled

into assuming the moral uprightness of humanoid aliens, when in fact the plant-creatures (or whatever) were actually the ones who meant well.

But that's a later stage of literary evolution entirely.

CHRIS DRUMM BOOKLETS

Chris Drumm, the Man Who Makes Booklets, is a book dealer (POB #445, Polk City, Iowa 50226) who discovered that the facilities he used for his catalogues could be put to Higher Purposes. As a result he has published a whole series of original odds and ends by various prominent writers. The most important have been several collections of previously unpublished R.A. Lafferty stories: FOUR STORIES (\$2.00), HEART OF STONE, DEAR, AND OTHER STORIES (\$2.00), SNAKE IN HIS BOSOM AND OTHER STORIES (\$2.00), THE MAN WHO MADE MODELS AND OTHER STORIES (\$2.50), and SLIPPERY AND OTHER STORIES (\$2.00).

All are very small (about 4 inches by 7), and rarely run over 50 pages, but the print is tiny (but clear) and sometimes the wordage can be substantial.

I haven't the space to review them all, and some of them have already been reviewed here, so I'd just like to mention a few which have impressed me, or otherwise attracted my attention:

LAUGHING KELLY AND OTHER VERSES
By R.A. Lafferty (\$1.00)

Lafferty readers are familiar with the short nonsense poems which appear in Lafferty's stories. Here are more, not many of them short, most of them delightful. Who else would start a poem like this:

"Sylvester was a mental man
but suffered an estrangement:
He used, to house his brainy span,
A very odd arrangement.
His forehead filled his massive
head

Like bursting, swollen flagon:
He pulled his backbrain on a sled
Behind him like a wagon."

In other words, his poetry is just like his fiction.

IT'S DOWN THE SLIPPERY CELLAR STAIRS (\$2) is a collection of Lafferty's non-fiction.

This comes as a revelation because his critical writings have been few and far between. But it transpires that he was, for quite some time, a delightful columnist for an Italian fanzine, ALBIN. It's a shame that these columns were not published more widely before, because they reveal a whole new side to the author's talent. He can be whimsical, sometimes acerbic. Sometimes he hangs the whole SF field up to dry and there doesn't seem to be any excuse for what he is criticizing. Sometimes, too, his own viewpoint is so far removed from that of everyone else's that, while the essay may give insight into his own thinking, it won't convince anyone else. (As when he seems to be arguing for a literal belief in the Garden of Eden and the Fall of Man.) There are lots of quotable passages, lots of ideas which seem skewed at first, but then make sense when you think about them. Like the claim that for something to be truly original, it has to be written several times, so the unoriginal parts can be shaken off. He also includes one of the best convention reports I have ever read.



MILDLY ANNOVED.

CUTS By Carter Scholz (\$2.50)

This one is important because Scholz is. He has an enormous critical reputation on the basis of a very small body of work. This is his first collection. All the material in it, but for one very short sketch, is previously unpublished. That, in itself, merits attention.

But the booklet itself is a disappointment. It is pretty obvious why Scholz was not able to sell these pieces. Most of them are not stories, even the best of them. They are short, satirical sketches, just outlining absurd ideas. There is, alas, not much of a market for that. The stories themselves tend to be of the extremely arty sort, often so deliberately obscure and fashionably nihilistic that it's hard to care about the ciphers who populate them. Nothing here is anywhere near as good as Scholz's more widely-published work, and the booklet can be no more than a footnote to his career.

CUSTER'S LAST STAND/THE COSMIC PERSPECTIVE
By Brian Stableford (\$2.00)

This might be called the first Chris Drumm Double, because the two stories are back-to-back and upside-down to one another, just like an Ace Double. "Custer's Last Stand" is the better of the two. The Custer in this case is Marcus Custer, a trash novelist of the V.C. Andrews/John Saul sort, whose characters go on strike for better treatment, since he usually sends them to gory ends after lives of degradation. All the while Custer proclaims his "Artistic Integrity" and refuses to give in to the militant forces of Sweetness and Light. It's all very funny and mock-pretentious, the same sort of Angst About Literary Life that Barry Malzberg handles so badly, without the characteristic Malzbergian whine.

"The Cosmic Perspective" is an attack on the science-fictional Sense of Wonder. The hero destroys mankind's Outward Eye by proving (or at least making it look plausible) that there is no cosmic vastness out there after all, and the universe is all a reflection on a vast bubble which encloses the solar system. Is there life after dis-enchantment? Well, maybe. But it's not as convincing as the absurdities of the novelist Custer.

THROUGH NO
FAULT OF
OURS WE
ARE PRESENTING

LETTERS

GEIS NOTE: John Brunner's last two "Noise Level" columns were devoted to U.S./U.S.S.R. relationships, and to his experiences and opinions concerning the world, peace, disarmament, leadership, cultural influences...

His writings produced an enormous reaction---mostly negative---among the readers of SFR.

I have from the beginning, many years ago, given John carte blanche in writing for SFR, in his column. I preferred him to write about writing, editing, publishing, sf, fantasy...but whatever he sent, I published. I didn't always like it, but I published it.

I disagree with most of what he wrote last issue. And had not a reader or two covered the same points, I would have written an editorial, or allowed Altered Ego a go at it.

But the readers have covered the rebuttal potential from stem to stern, and have said it better than I could have.

So I'm going to get out of the way and let this section of LETTERS speak for itself.

I consider this reaction and response totally separate from John's column this issue, and have not cut any letters or in any way lessened their impact. I could not publish all the letters received in reaction to his column last issue, due to excessive duplication and space limitations.

John is welcome to respond in turn, if he desires.

LETTER FROM CHARLES PLATT
9 Patchin Place, New York, NY 10011
May 5, 1986

'John Brunner is always happiest when sanctimoniously admonishing others for their moral lapses (as in, for instance, his obituary of Philip K. Dick), so it comes naturally for him to tell Americans to feel guilty for their sins. But I wonder how guilty John himself feels on behalf of his country's recent "terrorist act" -- the sinking of the Argentine ship *Belgrano*, in a sneak attack outside the designated war zone, with massive loss of life. Speaking as a British citizen myself, I see little to choose between British and American jingoism. The only real difference is that Americans, being innately more enterprising,

are more liable to take action, while the British tend to put things off and hope for the best (c.f. Chamberlain before World War II). Both the U.S. and Britain have a history of attempting to impose relatively democratic regimes on other nations, with varying degrees of success, and Brunner's "holier than thou" stance is bogus in the extreme. RAMBO (which Brunner uses in his argument even though he didn't see it) may be symptomatic of American aggression -- but did John also manage to miss seeing *WHO DARES, WINS*, the British paen of praise to its own Special Forces? Personally, having spent half of my life in each country, I see little moral difference in nationalist behavior between Britain and the U.S.; but considerable difference between them and the U.S.S.R., which seeks to impose something much less benign, for all of Brunner's weaselly question-begging re Afghanistan.

On another topic: Greg Benford, in a letter, refers to criteria "criticized" for evaluating science fictional or fantasy utopias. Actually, I was the one who first drew Greg's attention to some of these criteria, in a letter I wrote to him, which led to our collaborative piece on *LeGuin in THE PATCHIN REVIEW*, a subsequent collaborative paper, and ultimately his own piece on reactionary utopias. It may seem churlish to mention this, but one never likes to see a good scientist stealing credit for collaborative work.

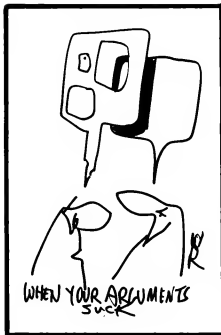
'Re George Scithers' departure from *AMAZING*: contrary to Darrell Schweitzer's suggestion, I have no hot gossip on this topic. I do have an unanswered question, though. Originally, Scithers promised he would double *AMAZING*'s subscription list within a year. Was the breaking of this promise irrelevant to his being asked to step down? If so, I do hope for George's sake that his new employers will be as magically tolerant of his embarrassing lapses. This amiable man, once described by Isaac Asimov as potentially "The new John W. Campbell, Jr." (prior to his unexpected departure from *IASFM*), continues to demonstrate that antigravity exists not only in science fiction but in the careers of some of those who aspire to edit it. I confess I have found little to interest me in the work he has published over the years, but his behavior has been consistently entertaining, so really I'm happy that he continues to flourish. It means we can look forward to more Scithers anecdotes to enliven those boring editorial luncheons.'

LETTER FROM MIKE RESNICK
May 5, 1986

'Bravo for John Brunner! He articulates his position with courage and dignity.'

'Of course, the fact that he articulates it without a German accent is due primarily to the fact that we've displaced all those American traits he so distrusts twice already this century, at a cost of 350,000 American lives.'

'We do see eye-to-eye on one thing: If John is in any way representative of his society, I'm all for never doing it again.'



LETTER FROM ANDREW WEINER
124 Winchester Street, Toronto,
Ont., Canada, M4X 1B4 05/28/86

'I have no wish to defend the Soviet Union, and John Brunner can defend himself, but all this raking over of old Soviet atrocities doesn't really address the key issue, which is whether the U.S. is the greater threat to world peace now.'

'There is good evidence to suggest that the U.S. is preparing itself, psychologically and materially for war. The Centre for Defence Information, hardly a radical organization -- mostly made up of ex-military types -- recently warned of the "militarization of our domestic political economy" (see enclosed clipping). It's the psychological preparations, the vast flood of war toys and Rambo-style movies, that I find most chilling. The only real question is whether these militaristic passions can be staved by beating up on the Nicaraguans of this world, or whether it's going to lead to more dangerous adventures.'

'SF, in its own small way, is contributing to this mood, through the boom in militaristic fiction, and through the support of a sizable segment of the SF community for SDI -- which, if it works at all (a dubious proposition) is going to be an offensive weapons system of the most destabilizing nature. The space shuttle program, too, is clearly of primary interest to the military, as Frederick Pohl has been virtually alone in pointing out. Some SF people are so keen to get off the planet that they don't seem to care whether any kind of planet is left behind.'

LETTER FROM RICK NORWOOD
Box 1762, Wayne, NJ 07470 05/26/86

'John Brunner in *SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW* #59 is engaged in a time honored formal dance, but the name of the dance is not "making peace." The name of the dance is "choosing up sides." The people who choose Side A always denounce Side B as the "threat to world peace" (just as

if there were such a thing -- has there been one minute in all recorded history when the entire world has been at peace? Side A, of course, is peace loving, and they are only getting ready for war because the warmongers on Side B force them to it. And of course, the people who choose Side B say exactly the same thing about Side A. This is how wars start.

'If John Brunner were really interested in peace, then instead of choosing sides he would be praising both sides, for their almost unprecedented restraint. More than forty years since the first nuclear war and we still haven't had a second one. Considering the history of the human race, that is a remarkable achievement.'



LETTER FROM ELTON T. ELLIOTT
1899 Weissner Dr., NE, Salem, OR
97303 05/03/86

'What is this? I've been shocked. John Brunner, what in the Tony Benn is going on? How dare you make outrageous comments about the Soviet Union, America, Afghanistan and Vietnam. Raising Hakkies is my territory. I won't have it usurped. I did, however, find your comments most fascinating. My humble reply follows:

'Re your comments on Afghanistan: the true test of freedom is not whether you like the personalities and the culture of those who are fighting for freedom. The test is whether you'll fight for the freedom of those whose system you abhor. I don't particularly appreciate Moslem Shiite Fundamentalism, but is Treblinka better?

'But what is definitely not kosher is what some people in America are saying about some British fans and writers and you, John Brunner, in particular. I do not agree that your comments indicate some new strain of gutlessness among some Brits and other Western Europeans in general. I think the strain is at least fifty years old. This is understandable, considering the bloody nature of your British history. I figure after WWI you were tired of fighting. I am sure I don't need to remind you of the pacifist movement of the 1930s led by British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain and of the suffering such unsuccessful appeasement policies cost both of our countries. Think how many lives would have been saved if Chamberlain had had the insight to realize the monstrosity that Hitlerian Nazism was and the guts to stop Hitler when he could. But maybe history isn't that simple. Maybe there are deeper, darker forces at work here. Maybe England was betrayed. After all, one of Hitler's closest advisors was Houston Stewart Chamberlain. Neville's relative. But the British Elite don't want that mentioned. They also want us to forget about how their dim-witted ex-monarch Edward VIII palled around with Hitler. I mean after all -- who was Hess

going to see when he was captured -- and why have the British consistently vetoed attempts to not only free him, but even to let people in to talk to him? These are a few of the questions you should be asking your own government.

'Here now, that's how to Raise Hakkies. And for all of my fellow Americans out there who are so mad at Brunner's writings that they are considering nominating him for the first Atlantic Abomination award -- don't. I mean, he had to suffer having a book of his come out with that title. Once is enough.

'Hey, Dick, I've figured it out. I know what has gotten into John Brunner. After has been traveling around the planet during his sojourn from your synapses -- do you think -- maybe -- naaaaaa.

'One final comment. All jokes aside, I know that John is deeply concerned about America. I had a long, serious chat with him at the 1984 Westerncon about the rise of the right wing in America and I think there's one item he might find interesting. Today (05/03/86) Clark County (north of Portland) held its first ever Loyalty Day Parade. Attendance was over 30,000. Clark County consists of suburban homes in and around Vancouver, Washington, and is technically in the metropolitan area of Portland. The area has been successful economically recently with quite a few high-tech firms locating there. So the 30,000 participants are not hicks and right wing crazies. They are main street USA. Why do you think there have been no terrorist incidents in the US? Our FBI isn't good enough to smother all of them. No, I believe that the Soviet Union, seat of most of the terrorism directed at public opinion in Western Europe, has ordered terrorists to stay away from the US because they are afraid that such terrorism would radicalize the US. Well, I've got news, the US is becoming radicalized and the wimpy appeasementism if our Western European allies is exacerbating the situation.

'Oh, by the way, John, what do you think of your noble Soviets' actions during the Chernobyl fiasco? Still think they have a right to Afghanistan? Remember if they take Great Britain, you'll be among the first to the Gulags.

'P.S. Today (05/05/86) the radical PLO terrorist, Abu Nidal, said in an interview on NBC evening news that his group would now strike inside America.

He mentioned the U.S. actions in Lebanon and Libya as reasons for taking the war to the U.S. -- time will tell. In fact, considering our last three space "spectaculars" maybe they have already struck.'



LETTER FROM JOHN J. PIERCE
128 Montgomery St., #4
Bloomfield, NJ 07003 May 12, 1986

'John Brunner seems to suffer from that delusion common in these latter days to the racist Right and the racist Left: if there are two sides to a question, one of them must be right.

'Ronald Reagan knows the Communists are Wicked. Therefore, nothing done in the name of opposing Communism can possibly be bad. Brunner knows Capitalism is Wicked. Therefore, nothing done in the name of opposing Capitalism can possibly be bad. Furthermore, anyone anywhere who opposes the obviously Right ideology must be self-evidently a filthy Communist or a filthy Reactionary, as the case may be. So the blacks in South Africa are a bunch of filthy Communists, and Afghans are a bunch of filthy reactionary barbarians, and deserve whatever they get. Only Good people have rights.



'I wonder if Brunner realizes the rationale he uses for Afghanistan is the same one we Americans used to slaughter the Indians, the Spanish to destroy the Aztecs and Mayans, the Boers to suppress the blacks. In each case, the victims were called savages, and in some respects they were (The Mayas and Aztecs had human sacrifices, the Zulus had witch hunts etc.). And in each case, the conquerors could claim they were bringing "civilization," and with some justification -- even now, the South Africans can claim their blacks are better off economically than those in black-ruled states. Yet I doubt Brunner would consider these "gifts" of civilization justification for oppression and mass murder. And I haven't even mentioned slavery: was it justified by the idea of bringing "Christianity" or "civilization" to the blacks?

'I was just reading an old journalistic Victorian future war novel, THE GREAT WAR IN ENGLAND IN 1897, by William Le Queux. Brunner surely is familiar with it. The



funny thing about it is that, in the 1890s Britain's future allies, France and Russia are characterized as lands of fiendish barbarians, who seem to have nothing to do day or night but hate the British and plan and carry out atrocities. For a long while, this justification seemed out of fashion, but when ideologists can torture logic and ignore common sense enough to justify either Vietnam or Afghanistan, I wonder.

LETTER FROM MARK COFTA
218 Townsend Street, N. Brunswick,
NJ 08901 May 28, 1986

I appreciate and share John Brunner's concern about how the world sees us, and I think a large part of our blindness is the result of emotional conditioning.

The friend I saw TOP GUN with shocked me by defending it with the argument that this much war propaganda is "only entertainment." All "entertainment" -- plays, fiction, films, news -- is communication. The less obvious the message, I've found, the deeper it penetrates, because it bypasses the intellect and directly affects the emotions.

"RAMBO and TOP GUN are conditioning us to believe in war again, by allowing us to enjoy killing the nameless, faceless, less-than-human Enemy in situations where the U.S. is totally innocent. RAMBO is a lot more fun than APOCALYPSE NOW, and millions (including the president) have responded positively to it. Likewise, blasting Libyans has been much more thrilling than the forgotten Beirut tragedy. Both were meaningless, wasteful diversions, and the movie-land simplicity of victory feeds into our movie image of ourselves, and we believe it."

"Entertainment feeds the soul, and we are, truly, what we eat -- or rather what is fed to us. The gap between movies and real life is being bridged by our happy acceptance of a movie view of our nation, where good guys are totally good, bad guys totally evil, and killing all the baddies without a second thought is a glorious romp."

"Brunner ought to have noticed that introspection is 'out' again. He's wrong about Vietnam -- the memorial is especially moving because our dead trusted an idea, the same idea being fed us now, and were betrayed by their leaders."

"Vietnam's lesson is lost, though, when Stallone wins the war for us single-handedly and we wallow in the glory. World opinion doesn't scare me as much as the emotional conditioning that's making America feel great about war again. The movies give us what we want from life: the simple answers, invincibility, and moral superiority that Reagan claims is ours. "Entertainment" reduces our ability to comprehend the complexity of our fragile position in the world, and right now, the American government and population are finding bliss in ignorance."

LETTER FROM DARRELL SCHWEITZER
113 Deepdale Rd
Stratford, PA 19087 May 13, 1986

"Another good issue of SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW. But John Brunner's column is a shocking disappointment. Here I had always thought Brunner a decent and humane fellow, and reasonably open minded. Yet he dares to suggest that maybe the Russian genocide in Afghanistan could be



justified on the grounds that Afghan society is so repugnant to us Normal Folks that the invaders are within their rights to knock some civilization into the disgusting buggers. (Or in this case, buggers.) How remarkably ethnocentric for a science fiction writer. How paleolithic. The Beast is still with us in all, right beneath the skin. I am sure the Belgians thought themselves with their rights in the Congo, too. And let us not overlook the Spanish, who brought the benefits of Christian civilization to the benighted Incas.

"I am reminded of one of the less enlightened remarks of H.P. Lovecraft: 'The more I think of India, the more I want to vomit.' Quite possibly people in other cultures may find ours so evil and repugnant that they might feel it their duty, for decency's sake, to conquer us, massacre most of the population, and impose some civilized standards on the rest. The standards of civilization, of course, are defined by the winners."

"His explanation for why the Soviet Empire is actually doing it is childish-ly naive. Does he believe that the Imperial government so cares about the feelings of their Islamic subjects that it went to war on their behalf, because they (the Russian-ruled Muslims) were so overwhelmed by an urge to spread the benefits of socialism to their less fortunate neighbors? If this is the case, why then are there no Islamic troops in the Imperial armies which are engaged in this particular humanitarian venture? There were few at first, you may recall, but they had to be withdrawn, having proved unreliable, and engaged in massive Koran smuggling, since the Koran is not legally available in the U.S.S.R., this being one of the benefits of socialism those Soviet Muslims were so eager to share with their less happy brethren."

"If John were just a bit more honest or more a student of history, he would see that the Russians are in Afghanistan for very much the same reason that the Americans were in Vietnam: to support a client state and secure the borders of the Empire. If, as many Americans have always seen the world situation, the 'Free World' is locked in a life-and-death struggle with Communism, then South-



east Asia was very much the border of the Empire, American influence stretching across the Pacific to where it ran up against the barrier of China, the northeastern part of the U.S.S.R., and the Russian client states of North Korea and North Vietnam.

"The only differences I can see is that the Russians have certain strategic advantages the Americans did not, and, more importantly, the Russians are not about to lose the war due to humanitarian restraints imposed on themselves, as the Americans clearly did in Vietnam. The Americans lost because they were not willing to inflict more casualties on the Vietnamese than the Vietnamese were willing to accept. Now, had they conducted the war in classic Asiatic barbarian fashion (taking a few hints from Tamerlane's campaigns in the Middle East), invading the North, massacring the population, razing the cities, poisoning the rivers and laying waste the land, victory would have been assured. But the Americans were not willing to do all that. I am not sure the Russians are so inhibited."



"It is a piece of particularly deceptive Communist rhetoric that imperialism is out of fashion. Some would have us believe that it died after World War I. No, old empires fell, new ones were born, and the Tsarist one renewed itself, changing a few names and titles."

"I don't think that history will even make much note of these minor imperial wars, in Afghanistan and Vietnam, since such things have been going on for thousands of years. Roman, Byzantine, Persian, and assorted Muslim rulers were constantly fighting in Armenia, supporting or deposing clients, and using the country as a buffer to shield the imperial heartlands. (How did the Armenians feel about this? Nobody asked.) This went on for over a millenium, until the Turks conquered the whole area and started massacring the Armenians. Israel was a buffer state between the Ptolemies and Seleucids for centuries, and ultimately it found itself saddled with a series of Roman client-rulers. Or, more recently, I might point out, British misrule in Ireland has stemmed from thoroughly imperialistic reasons: Ireland was the back door to England. The English could not allow it to be controlled by a hostile (most of the time, that meant Catholic) power. Hence the various conquests under the Tudors, the more vigorous suppression of Cromwell, and the rest. The English, from their own point of view, doubtless considered themselves justified. They didn't want the bloody Spanish papists breathing down their necks, as they would have been, operating through Irish client-kings."

"What does this have to do with morality? Why, very little. But Brunner is being sanctimonious in a particularly

repellent way, and needs to gain a little perspective.

'Not that the Reagan administration isn't also being sanctimonious. Now that they are nixed down in an imperialistic war, we can be the advocates of the freedom of border peoples. The roles were reversed 15 years ago. Otherwise, nothing has changed.

'As for Grenada, that was something which was justified in political terms because we got many votes. The Russian Empire was deprived of a forward base, maybe of a missile-launching platform. The fact that the Grenadines seem genuinely grateful for the liberation is actually irrelevant to the U.S. government, although useful as propaganda, and the alleged danger to U.S. students was. It is no example of military glory. The American forces were so overwhelming that, in the course of tripping over each other, some of them happened to fall on the enemy.

'It's a whole other debate whether or not morality and international politics can have any connection at all. At a glance we can say that it is immoral to start a war gratuitously, or for loot or for the personal glory of the leaders. At the same time it is immoral to lead one's people to suicide. History teaches us that countries which do not defend themselves are soon absorbed by countries which do.

'If you are head of a nation, and a hostile power tries to set up one of its client states on your border, or one of your client states is under attack, what is to be done? Both the U.S. and U.S.S.R. usually try to avoid being directly involved, supporting local insurgents instead. But it is a thorny question, and to arrive at any understanding at all, we must get beyond the level of sanctimonious finger-pointing, or the kind of paleolithic prejudices which make us brand an alien culture as so disgusting that it deserves to be wiped out.

'I am not as upset as Gregory Benford over the Luc Sante article in HARP-ER'S, for all I helped draft the George Seithers reply to the same. (Gee, that will probably be the only time I an ever published in HARP-ER'S ... but then, being published in HARP-ER'S is not one of my great ambitions.)

'Rather, I think the current spate of SF-bashing on the part of the Serilit establishments is the howl of the defeated. They have already lost, they know it, and it's all over but the shouting. How many young people, do you suppose, ever pick up a volume of BEST AMERICAN SHORT STORIES, as opposed to any of the SF annuals? (Young people are the ones who matter. They have the longest book-buying future ahead of them.) How many people at all ever read any of the Serilit stuff outside of the classroom? Have you noticed that many teachers there don't even have Serilit lines? They do not publish that stuff at all. As Greg points out, the typical ESQUIRE story is not likely to arouse much interest.

'My own reaction to the HARP-ER'S article was that this clown Luc Sante was so obviously ill-at-ease with the 20th Century, that of course he cannot understand 20th Century literature ... i.e., SF. I am reminded of the Wilson Tucker speech a few Discalves ago: "We are the mainstream."

'The difference between P.E.N. and the Soviet Writers' Union is that P.E.N., and the Serilit establishment can't censor anything. They don't control publish-

ing. SF has taken their audience away from them. (As I write this, six out of the fifteen hardcovers on the PUBLISHER'S WEEKLY bestseller list are SF, including books by such in-genre figures as James McCaffrey and Niven & Pournelle. There are no Serilit books on the list.)

'Luc Sante and HARP-ER'S can't hurt us because SF is bigger than they are. It has the audience, the hold on the publishing industry, and even strong inroads into academia. None of this was achieved, I assure you, by converting the literary establishment, or even the old-time English teachers who insisted all SF was trash. All the while enough of the public knew better and the establishment protests were in vain. Publishers followed. (I don't know about you, but I much prefer publishers ruled by money than ideology. Money is more democratic.) As for academia, the teachers held this prejudice, but the students knew better, and when the older teachers died off, they were replaced by some of their former students. I don't think anyone was converted. Now, for more than a generation, the general reading public has regarded SF as part of the regular reading fare, and so there are SF books on the bestseller lists. Meanwhile, Serilit has withered.

'I am not advocating complacency. I think SF has to maintain its standards, lest it slide into a dull formulaic decadence (as I fear Fantasy already has) and lose its readership. I have actually net lots of SF people who refuse to believe that Serilit even exists. (That are those non-SF books being published all the time, you may well ask? Just pop junk, all Judith Krantz and Irving Wallace.) I know it's there, and regard it as a minor backwater of literature, not very interesting as a whole, but once in a great while producing a work of interest. I confess the one contemporary "mainstream" writer I follow with real enthusiasm is Gore Vidal, but then he isn't exactly acceptable in the Serilit establishment either. His books have too much thought in them, and, worse, yet, they aren't all set in the bedrooms of New York suburbs. His books rely too much on "situation and setting," often the pivotal points in history which have made the world today what it is. This, of course, is not a fit subject for Real Literature, we are asked to believe.



'I shrug off things like the HARP-ER'S article as beneath contempt. The Serilit establishment has been trying to kill SF that way for decades, and it's less likely to work now than ever.

'Various ignorami are perfectly within their rights to proclaim that real literature can only be about character and style, and must be realistic, and must take place in contemporary settings, or whatever. There used to be a school of thought that held that the only proper drama was that set in English drawing rooms. I am sure that the adherents of this view stuck to it to their dying day -- but in the meantime dramatists and audiences had gone elsewhere.

'You ask me: If L. Ron Hubbard was really Robert E. Howard, then who was Howard Hughes? You mean you don't know? You must be one of them. After all, you know about that top secret Andes resort where Marilyn JFK, Hitler, Elvis, and all the rest are staying. I understand the room service is a bit slow, but the view is great, and the usual routine there was recently enlivened with a Halley's Comet to entertain the Mysteries with ritual offerings of unbaptized infants. The Masters, who live at the heart of the comet, demanded this. No-body knows why.

'The way I figure it, the Conspiracy works like this: Aliens from Halley's Comet initiated Moses into the Mysteries in the episode recorded in the Bible as the Burning Bush. (It was really sort of an instructional/hypnotic hologram.) Moses went off and founded Judeo-Christian civilization, and his descendants were frequently aided by alien technology (the Ark of the Covenant). As the conspiracy widened, their agents included such figures as Alexander, Caesar, Christ, Justinian, Mohammed, but with the inner circle passing on the knowledge and power through the Roman and later Byzantine empires. The last serious challenge came when the Pope and the Venetians diverted the 4th Crusade to Constantinople (1204), but the Conspiracy recovered, and the entire world, ever since, has been secretly ruled by the Palaiologoi, the last dynasty of Byzantium. The popes have all been Palaiologan princes since the middle of the 14th Century. The fall of Constantinople in 1453 was faked, the Turkish sultan being a pawn of Constantine Dragases Palaiologos, the emperor's purpose being to allow himself and his successors to move less visibly among the nations of mankind. Before long, Tsarist Moscow was calling itself the Third Rome, even as the Soviet Union is the Fourth Rome (and Constantinople was the Second). Little wonder that Europe, prior to World War I was full of Caesars, who called themselves Tsars, Kaisers, etc. The World Wars were only an advancement of the whole secret master plan, which has been there since the 2nd Millennium B.C. If you check carefully, you will discover that Mikhail Gorbachev and Ronald Reagan are both descended from the House of Palaiologos, thirteen generations removed.

'Pardon me, while I go write a best selling book about this. I will contemptuously ignore a recent one, HOLY BLOOD, HOLY GRAIL, which explains everything in terms of the very mediocre Merovingian dynasty being descended from Jesus Christ. That's just more of the Coverup.

(I should mention that the many Brunner-oriented cartoons in this

section of Letters is Alexis Gilliland's form of loc.

((The major problem SF has to deal with (if it can be dealt with at all) is the burn-out problem: kids and young adults read and read SF and finally discover they've read all the plots, all the themes, all the stereotypes dozens of times, and grow tired of it all. There are always a few hardcore readers who never get enough, who are emotionally wed to SF for deep character reasons. But most new young readers are attracted to the glitter of advanced science, deep space, the future, change, altered realities, altered bodies... SF is anti-establishment and naturally attracts youth. How to keep them after they've become bored? I'd vote for better, more suspenseful writing, and better, more honest characterizations. In my experience, characterization is the most difficult part of writing fiction, and keeping the tension-level high is pure work and orientation when plotting. SF may have to change in these directions in order to keep people reading. Science fiction ideas, themes, and SF furniture like robots, androids, fti drives, time travel, etc., etc. may have become widely known and accepted, and may permeate all media, but print SF still is of limited size, and unless it changes its mix will be simply that which youth reads for a few years and reads occasionally thereafter.))

LETTER FROM FERNANDO Q. GOMEA
18 Robinson St., #12
Cambridge, MA 02138 May 12, 1986

'My reaction to HEART OF THE COMET was the opposite of Alter's: it reminded me of Brin's work rather than Benford's. In fact, the whole conflict between the two kinds of modified and unmodified people is similar to the conflict between the two kinds of dolphins in STARTIDE RISING, and as tedious. I agree that it's a rather disappointing book. To my mind, it's worst feature was the overly-talented protagonists: I cannot believe in either Saul or Virginia. They seem to have scientific miracles constantly up their sleeves; nothing that the plot demands is too difficult for them. The book has many of the defects of "golden age" SF, I feel: too many monsters, too many plot twists, and characters that can do just about anything the authors need them to do.

'I think you missed the point of Fred Fowler's letter. What he seems to be saying is that if we define SF as stories about what could happen, then this definition seems to be worldview-dependent. Some readers might feel all time-travel stories are fantasy. Some readers might feel stories about magic are SF. Christians like myself would possibly feel that the definition allows us to consider Charles Williams' thrillers as close to SF, since he writes about spiritual experiences that just might be possible.

Notice that there is no "arbitrariness" in this use of the supernatural: our ideas of what is allowed would still be subject to our worldviews or theologies, which can be quite strict in what they allow.'

((But I thought SF was basically rooted to ideas about what could be true scientifically! I'm sometimes a purist. Once you take out science in science fiction you are left with a form of fantasy... speculative fiction, perhaps... or speculative religion fiction... spec-soc-fic (social fiction of the future.) All valid, all fine areas of speculation, but not real science fiction. But who cares about such nitpickery? SF has become a truck carrying all kinds of future-fiction freight. And these sub-sub-genres screw like crazy and produce all kinds of cross-breeds! Literary incest is interesting, to say the least.))

LETTER FROM IAN COVELL
2 Copgrove Close, Berwick Hills
Middlesbrough, Cleveland, TS3 7BP
England April 19, 1986

'Norman Spinrad says it all, and says it perfectly. Never before have I understood what a "political lesbian" is. I had never even considered that hate can run so deep you run your life by exclusion. It explains those feminist-types (I'm told, by feminists, that "feminism" can't be defined absolutely) who are actively anti-heterosexual, and demand that women follow them... who see all heterosexual activity as inherently oppressive and objectionable; who object to erotic pictures and photographs because they turn men on, and excited men are dangerous men. Everything else he says also makes perfect sense. What we should promote is humanism, the belief that everyone should attain their highest level without interference based on sexism, racism or classism; since the majority of people are human, it doesn't bear any stigma at least.

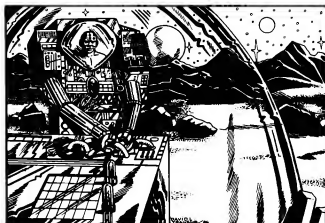
'The bit about STANLEY AND THE WOMEN doesn't surprise me; there was some comment a while back in our publishing trade mag that the book was having difficulty in getting a U.S. print. It was one of

the things that has prompted me to point out in an article that the predominance of women in SF publishing circles seems to have created an increasingly unbalanced output of SF. A lot of mediocre stuff seems to be getting the push strictly on its political and social elements, specifically its portrayal of women. It has rightly been said that if books were as slanted as, say, Russ, Charnas, Varley, McIntyre, etc. on the male side, the denunciating screams would still be ringing in the publishers' ears. As in all spheres, tolerance is going through the window streaming with blood on its back from stab wounds; you must tread the right line because the enclosed authorities don't trust freedom of expression -- to be free is to be enemy.

'I attempted to read RAINBOW CADAENZA. The interview explained why I couldn't. It's a polemic, a manufactured hybrid. It's also boring.

'I think Gouven's review of THE CAT WHO WALKS THROUGH WALLS is very fair, and I agree right up until the final sentence: "...would rather read an unsatisfying Heinlein than no Heinlein at all." Well, actually, we don't need to make or accept any such choice. First of all, there are a fair number of good RAH books to reread (Don't anyone tell RAH he wrote BEYOND THIS HORIZON, I couldn't stand what his new personna would do to it!); and the fact is we are supposed to have something called "editors" and others called "agents" the majority of whom should have said to RAH, "Look, this is a good exciting novel with intriguing undertones; neglecting this rather silly importation of "socialist" as a swear word, it could become a very good novel, if you will just tear out the Lazarus Long menage, consign it to your personal files for another novel, and rewrite everything from about halfway." We don't, and Heinlein doesn't, need to keep repeating himself in such a thoroughly redundant manner.

'There are various books, reviewed in this issue, which I detested when I attempted them, and see no excuses for in any review, but I've learned something from a loved one. It's a lesson I will remember, possibly for more than a week. It's this: in everything, no matter what it appears, there is some spark of wit or humor or intelligence or magic or beauty or some other worthwhile (if negative) aspect of interest. To me, it has always seemed that the majority of books have been good but could be corrected by changing that bit, say, and my reviews have read accordingly; I have started from the proposition a book was worth



looking through, and pointed out its faults. The reverse is equally valid. Maybe.

'Neal Wilgus's interview with None of the Above is excellent, and does give a couple of insights into books whose political content had never, to my recall, crossed my mind (PUZZLES AND OTHER PEOPLE as a libertarian tract?). Do you have to be consciously libertarian to be nominated, or will someone's interpretation of your motives be sufficient? (By the way, THE CARABINE HORSE was not by Koman, O'effutt tells me that contrary to LOCUS's remarks, he wrote all of the novels with the assistance of friends he asked to collaborate...)'

((Humanism...meritocracy...these are ideals and goals, perhaps, and not possible of achieving. Humans are instinctively them/us oriented, and almost always are group loyal (it all depends on the group, right?) and when economic factors reinforce the 'loyalty' we lose all perspective. If you can get a better job or keep your advantage...you tend to be exclusive and prejudiced. Given these facts of life, why be depressed or disappointed when time after time, year after year, generation after generation, people behave as they have always behaved? Some societies are more rigid (you are born in your 'place' and you accept it) or you are born into a more socially fluid society and the social power struggles are awesome and constant. It makes for a great spectacle as each group claims right and god is on its side...))

((Good editing requires a lot of time, and editors rarely have the time to work with promising authors, and rarely have the clout to tell established, millionaire authors to make radical improvements in their automatic-best-seller novels. And I have myself a jaundiced view of an editor who cannot write a novel telling a proven professional to make changes. The public always wants more-of-the-same from an author or an actor or a director; they enjoyed the last work and want to enjoy it again (with a few minor changes, perhaps, to make it seem different)).

((How a book is reviewed--seeing the good, or seeing the bad--is a matter of basic character in the reviewer. Some reviewers put in a little of each.))

LETTER FROM NEAL WILGUS
Box 25771, Albuquerque, NM 87125
June 6, 1986

'In the interest of brevity, I won't say more than a minimum in reply to Joel Rosenberg's comments on the Neil Schulman interview. The shortest reply, of course is: if you don't find a piece in-

teresting, skip it. But the alternative is to open up that closed mind, Joel, and make it a practice to rethink your 'well-considered' position on anarcho-libertarianism. Jimmy Swaggart, Congregationalists and any other subject that comes down the pike -- at least to the point of listening for something new or unusual. That is not anarchism, that's just good practical agnosticism -- or openminded skepticism, if you prefer.

'And I must take exception to your assumption that anarcho-libertarianism doesn't understand citizenship or that it avoids "the obligations of the social contract." On the contrary, what we of the anarchist tradition want is voluntary citizenship and social contracting, not forced or mindless imitations of same. If "citizenship" means voting for Tweedledee vs. Tweedledum, count us out -- we're more interested in restructuring society so that we won't have any more Tweedles at all. Nobody sez it's gonna be easy.

THE COUNTRY
ISN'T READY
FOR A JEWISH
PRESIDENT.
EVEN IF SHE'S
A WOMAN.



'Incidentally, I did read somewhere that Schulman was acting as Victor Koman's agent for THE JERUWAH CONTRACT, but I really don't think it was all that important. Nits to you! And yes -- I have done a Koman interview, which should be in the next SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW. But no -- I missed Linaweaver, whose works I'm unfamiliar with at present.

'Next -- a few words in response to Bruce Berges' letter about my 'interview with None of the Above.' Also, you got it all backward, Bruce. Anarcho-libertarianism is a recent historical development, not a throwback to primitive days -- which is why it has had zero impact on the world scene to date. That "socialistic" trend you champion is not synonymous with "civilizational" as you imply, only loosely related. Personally, I'm an evolutionist rather than a revolutionist and I think we're going to evolve into anarchism -- not chaos, but free people cooperating voluntarily.

'As for your suggested Prometheus Award announcement -- egomanias we may be (who isn't) but I strongly deny being more than the ordinary in the selfish department or the antisocial section. You must have us mixed up with those damnable Randian Objectivists who actually praise selfishness (horrors!) and urge people to be self sufficient. Admittedly, many people who call themselves "libertarian" are strongly influenced by Ayn Rand, but not everyone in the Libertarian Futurist Society is, since the LFS is a mixture (as any social group is) of many different views. Personally, I never much cared for Rand, though I do recognize her as one valid (if extreme) position in the anarcho-spectrum.

'Nor are the Prometheus Award and the LFS Hall of Fame so narrow and dogmatic as you imply -- there is a strong and healthy tradition of freedom raging, in SF and out, which constantly churns up new anarcho-material. I think it's a shame that Ursula LeGuin's THE DISPOSSESSED hasn't yet been voted into the Hall of

Fame, and I've been campaigning for several years to include Jack London's THE IRON HEEL. This year I'm pushing for THE MONKEY WRENCH GANG by Edward Abbey -- about as far from your Randianism as it's possible to get within the anarchist tradition.

'And you, Dick Geis! How could you be suckered into agreeing with Berges that libertarian fiction is hard to come by and that None of the Above will probably win repeatedly! The problem with the Prometheus Award is that there are so many different ideas of what might qualify and so many books nominated that it's really difficult to give fair consideration to all the potential contenders. The Neanderthalists and the Flat Earth futurists might well have a problem. The Libertarian Futurists, in the footsteps of Wells, Heinlein and Robert Anton Wilson, don't have to worry!'

((As you will note in this issue, I consider the anarcho-libertarian position on the "social contract" to be a form of fantasy. Wishful thinking which ignores the hard, cruel reality of human nature. Libertarianism of the pure kind is fun to write about and talk about, but it's like the second coming of Christ--always in the future.

There are a few (relatively) people who need to believe in Libertarianism and total freedom and the withering away of the State. And they will pay a few bucks to have that emotional need tickled and stroked. But it's a small movement, and a small market, and will never be a significant force in this country or any country. Almost everyone wants lower taxes and less government, but damn few want a tent city and open sewers in the vacant lot next door, or drug peddlers on the sidewalk, or everyone in the city carrying a gun. There is always government, and its power and pervasiveness runs in long cycles. We are in an expanding government cycle, now, and the only way to cope with it is to learn its rules and use it to your advantage, or find a way to live in its cracks. As is obviously the case with tax rebels, opposing the State only gets you thrown in jail, because the courts are not going to admit obvious facts, misstatements, lies, fraud by government and overthrow the existing tax structure. Period. The government we have---the idiot presidents we have had and now have---is what the people want! Most of them are mostly satisfied with it/then. Until a really serious crisis shows most people a radical change in State structure is required, the system will continue. And a radical change will most probably not be toward less government, but toward more. And if politicians fail, the military will be the next step. That's the cycle. Advanced electronics and computers make people-control

easier and easier. The net of the State is closing tighter and tighter over individual freedoms, and regulation Q, subsection 22 is our future. I wish it were otherwise.))



LETTER FROM J. NEIL SCHULMAN
POB 94, Long Beach, CA 90801-0094
May 14, 1986

"LOCs follow LOCs, as winter fall.
So here's a LOC on Joel Rosenberg's LOC on the Wilgus interviews in general, mine in particular. But any comment I make can't be half as damning as the following confession from Joel Rosenberg's own LOC:

"It's hard for me to evaluate the libertarian portions of the interviews, as I don't pay much attention to them. The legitimate reason we have the oft-defamed 'Watchful Dragons,' after all, is to filter out noise; I no more intend to rethink my well-considered disparaging attitude toward anarchic libertarianism every time I run across another 'yawn' libertarian diatribe than I intend to reconsider speaking in tongues every time Jimmy Swaggert comes on the tube to implore that it's soooo necessary. I usually just skin the Randoid diatribes while picking out an easy factual error, a lapse in sense of proportion that results in a misstatement of fact and leave it at -- about the way I treat Jimmy Swaggert."

"Since habitually tuning out other's views is the hallmark of the religious fanatic, when Rosenberg lumps libertarians in with Jimmy Swaggert, Rosenberg is simply calling the kettle black.

"That he only skimmed my comments is obvious: I'm far from being a Randoid, as anyone who reads either of my books can judge. Both THE RAINBOW CADENZA and ALONGSIDE NIGHT will be out in Avon paperback editions within the next twelve months.

"Joel Roseberg is perfectly within his rights in filtering out whatever point of view he wishes, including libertarian views. Everyone else is forever after free to consider Rosenberg's opinions to be prejudiced and ignorant, and therefore precisely what he accuses libertarians of producing: noise.

"Unfortunately, ignorant ravings can be ignored only when they're opinion; when they distort facts they must be answered.

"If Rosenberg wonders, in a footnote, about the 'silence of the libertarian community on the deprivation of the most basic of rights in the USSR: the right to l e a v e' -- then this is a perfect example of Rosenberg tuning out then complaining about the silence. Not only libertarians, but especially the "Randoids" he studiously ignores, have said plenty on this issue in books and magazines. He might start with Ayn Rand's first novel, WE THE LIVING, then proceed through the writings of Eastern Bloc escapees such as Tibor Machan, in REASON magazine.

"Slavery is slavery. An American drafted into the army would be just as much a slave as a Russian in the Gulag. I focus on this because while most Americans are aware of Soviet slavery, they are ignorant of the domestic brand. That the Sherman Anti-Trust Law was used to suppress the free market in ideas is reason to condemn it as totalitarian in its effect if not in intent. Liberty must be defended consistently, on all fronts -- no matter how trivial a particular issue seems to any one person.

"Rosenberg accuses libertarians of 'preoccupation of how and why to avoid the obligations of the social contract.' I, for one, am a signatory to, and fully live up to the obligations of the only social contract I have ever been given to sign. I enclose a copy of the Covenant 1. Neil Smith authored, to which I am signatory, for reproduction in SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW. I'd love a copy of whatever social contract Rosenberg has signed. Unless he produces one, I must assume he's one of those gangsters who has put out so-called 'social contracts' on the public.



"Rosenberg's comment that my 'fulsome praise of Victor Koman's THE JEHOVAH CONTRACT' should be placed 'in a more complete context, by mentioning that (Schulman is) Koman's agent' snidely implies that the only reason I praise this novel is that I hope to get ten percent off it. Here is the complete context (perhaps more complete than Rosenberg wishes) that he calls for:

"I read Victor Koman's THE JEHOVAH CONTRACT in manuscript when it was first written. I endorsed it and referred it to my own literary agent of the time who represented it. Because the book crosses genre lines, this agent failed to get an offer, and subsequently ceased representing it. When I became bicoastal with New York in late 1984, I told Victor that I was as enthusiastic as ever about his novel and suggested that my personal contacts with publishers over my own books might put me in touch with the right editor for his as well. I passed the manuscript around in late 1984 and early 1985, but failed to get an offer.

"At the time Neal Wilgus interviewed me in August 1985, I had no copies of

THE JEHOVAH CONTRACT under submission. My "fulsome praise" of it in my interview, along with works by a dozen other authors, was solely as an admirer of the book, not as its agent.

"In December 1985, I gave THE JEHOVAH CONTRACT to my editor at Avon, John Douglas, who liked THE JEHOVAH CONTRACT but felt it needed hardcover publication to do it justice. (Avon is strictly paperback.) John passed the novel along to Charles Platt at Franklin Watts, who has just bought it. THE JEHOVAH CONTRACT will be published in hardcover by Franklin Watts in Spring, 1987.

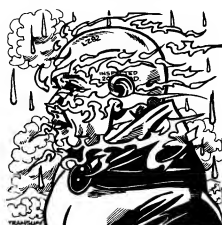
"I endorsed THE JEHOVAH CONTRACT, long before I agented it, because it is a brilliant book, and I worked hard to find an American publisher for the same reason. If Joel Rosenberg thinks that I said that THE JEHOVAH CONTRACT is simply one of the best books I've ever read for any other reason than it's the truth, then Rosenberg can, as they say in French: Va tu faire encule!

"Rosenberg manages to be correct on only one point: Victor is being interviewed by Neal Wilgus for an upcoming SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW.

"Regarding Rosenberg's footnote 'easy factual error' that it 'ain't so' felons who serve a year and a day lose their citizenship. He isn't catching an error but disputing a label. Felons who serve a year-and-a-day in jail might remain de jure citizens, but de facto they may not vote in elections, may not bear arms, may not hold public office, and are barred from professions. If on parole or probation, they are further restricted about where they may go and with whom they may associate. What else is left that defines 'citizenship'? Rosenberg's skimming managed to miss my point: that in current America felons are an underclass equivalent to the Touchables in THE RAINBOW CADENZA.

"Finally, Rosenberg chides me for saying that 'people are taught to make no distinction between a tax evader and a murderer' and would correct it to: 'people are taught that a tax evader and a murderer have some common characteristics and ought to, in some ways, be treated similarly.' I support Rosenberg, continuing his logic, would also declare that 'rapists and rape victims have some common characteristics and ought to, in some ways, be treated similarly.' If Rosenberg doesn't mean this, then he is merely a typically confused apologist for statism. If he does mean this, then he is also a criminally sexist swine.

"One non-Rosenberg comment prompted by Neal Wilgus's letter: the story of my



Twilight Zone episode on the Kennedy assassination, "Profile in Silver," did have a second gunman. CBS demanded, as a condition of approving the script, that the second gunman be removed, stating that the CBS Television Network would not go against the Warren Report.'

((Your fight with Rosenberg is interesting and a delight to watch, but I find that last tidbit--- that CBS will censor any script, even a fantasy script, which questions the Warren Report's conclusion that Lee Harvey Oswald was the lone gunman who assassinated John F. Kennedy---of even greater interest. I wonder if the other networks also have this taboo? It would be very interesting to know who made this policy, and when.))



@bad w poster. 1981

LETTER FROM JOEL ROSENBERG

1477 Chapel, #B-4
New Haven, CT 06511 May, 1986

'Having looked over J. Neil Schulman's LOC -- which was kind enough to copy me on -- I see that I've elicited some raw nerves on several issues.

'To take the first, as I would have hoped my brief comments in the last issue made clear, I don't want to get into a long debate with anyone on the subject of Libertarianism, Communism, Scientology, Christianity, or any other belief system that I've already considered and rejected. Life is too short, and I have promises to keep.'

'So I'll make this response short and leave Schulman to his silly little mug's game. It is, after all, a mug's game to attribute views to someone that he hasn't expressed and doesn't hold -- as Schulman does in his letter -- and then to attack those views -- as Schulman does in his letter. This seems to be endemic among some members of the libertarian SF crowd, although I'm not sure what the cause is.

'Just in passing, in the past few years, my major exposure to libertarianism has been the incessant, pitiless barrage of Wilgus SFR interviews with member after member of the SF libertarian crowd. As Schulman correctly says, I only skin these; if anyone can point to the spot where a member of the SF libertarian crowd has spent any significant time and effort darning real oppression -- say, the Gulag -- I'd be grateful.

'Otherwise I'm going to continue to conclude that they're more upset about the legalized prostitution.

'I'd leave it at that, but I find Schulman's analogy between rape victims and taxpayers offensive, and can't let that go by without comment. It's clear that Schulman is more interested in trying to score debating points than anything else; even so, I wish that he would not stoop to trivialize the kind of brutalization that rape is.

* * * * *

'On the matter of Schulman's tale of how and why Schulman-the-admirer came to speak highly of a book by his friend, Victor Koman, without acknowledging that this was a book for which Schulman-the-agent, by his own statement, "worked long and hard" to find a publisher...

'If Schulman had simply mentioned a small portion of this during his interview with Wilgus, he wouldn't have left himself open to various interpretations about his candor. While I was interested to read Schulman's lengthy account, and pleased to hear that someone finally bought Victor Koman's novel, I still think that it would have been appropriate for Schulman to briefly mention his own business interest.

'I think he'd agree, upon quiet reflection; after all, Schulman clearly represents the inferences that his previous omission left the situation open to. A brief sentence in his original interview, stating the fact of his business relationship, (an intimate one, apparently; from his LOC, I see that he and Koman also share a mailing address) would have cleared the matter up before any uncertainty arose.

'I don't think that an agent speaking highly of a client's work is of necessity acting from venal motives; agents are often very genuinely fond of their wares. My own agent, Richard Curtis, has told me and others that he greatly enjoyed EMILE AND THE DUTCHMAN; I am certain that his applause is entirely sincere, but when he praises it publicly I would be surprised and shocked were he to do so without acknowledging that I am his client and that EMILE is a book that he has sold.

* * * * *

'Lastly, as I've said before, the best way of seeing whether or not someone understands a subject is to see how well they predict the future. I've accused you of ignorance of economics because your economic predictions don't come to pass; I think it shows that I know something about the behavior of the Libertarian SF crowd when even Schulman admits that my prediction has come true: Victor has sold something more substantial than a Spaceways, and Wilgus will interview him for SFR.

'Further prediction: Brad Linaweaver is next. And, with that, I'd better get back to --

'Oops...I almost forgot: Schulman managed, rather deftly, to work in plugs for both of his books as well as Koman's but I've only mentioned one of mine.

The first three books of my Guardians of the Flame series -- THE SLEEPING DRAGON, THE SWORD AND THE CHAIN AND THE SILVER CROWN -- as well as my science fiction novels, EMILE AND THE DUTCHMAN AND TIES OF BLOOD AND SILVER, are available from WAL/Signet. I'm rather pleased with how they've been doing; by L. Neil Smith's delightful measure -- miles of library shelves filled -- the paperbacks passed mile six as of the close of the last royalty period; I don't have handy the figures on THE WARRIORS, the Science Fiction Book Club hardcover three-in-one of the first three Guardians books.

'If Schulman is interested in yet another mug's game, he can read them and try to infer my own politics therefrom.'

'In fact, I've promised my wife -- mercenary woman, she -- that I will get back to writing pay copy and won't write a further response, on any matter political, any longer than a postcard.

'He seems to accuse me of religious fanaticism; I plead limited time and what I hope is a forgivable desire not to hear the same clichés over and over and over and over ...

'And saddened and hurt that Victor, my old SFMA Forum sparring partner, hadn't told me the good news himself.

'If I made public my economic predictions, neither would mine, by the way.

LETTER FROM J. NEIL SCHULMAN POB 94, Long Beach, CA 90801-0094 June 24, 1986

'Reply to Joel Rosenberg's Reply:

'Joel Rosenberg uses all the nasty debate tricks. He ignores issues and makes ad hominem attacks. He makes unfounded accusations and when they're shown to be garbage he pretends he never raised them, hiding behind not wanting "to get into a long debate with anyone." He falls silent in the face of my refutations on issues which he raised -- the draft, anti-trust laws, the obligations of a social contract, or the "citizenship" of felons. Instead, he raises a smokescreen by repeating charges -- that libertarians fail to condemn Soviet repression, or that my praise of THE JEROME CONTRACT is tainted -- I've already answered.

"Rosenberg's 'desire' not to debate doesn't stop him from making a new set of equally outrageous accusations -- that my analogy trivializes the brutality of rape, or that I've somewhere made economic predictions which have failed to hold up, or that libertarians are only concerned with legalizing prostitution, or that I'm debating views he didn't state in his original letter. Rosenberg accuses me of playing a mug's game, without realizing that in such a game he'd be the mug. He charges his opponent with scoring debating points -- the standard debater's way to avoid admitting that his original arguments lost because they had the consistency of lumpy tapioca pudding.

"Since the analogy in my loc didn't compare taxes to rape, I can ignore Rosenberg's plastic outrage. What my example does point out is that the only in-context "common characteristic" between a tax evader and a murderer is that under the law both are criminals while, normally, the first is a victim protecting her/himself from the state's predations while the latter alone is a criminal. This lumping-in of victims with predators is useful in the moral-self-disavowment of those who would rise to defend the victims -- in the same way that lawyers of rapists try to dismiss the rape victim as a whore.

"What I do think is a valid comparison to the brutality of rape is the brutality of drafting boys to kill or be killed in some swamp. This is the theme of my novel, THE RAINBOW CADENZA.

"Moving on. (1) I already said where Rosenberg can find libertarians denouncing the Gulags, if he wants to take off his blinders. Let me add my voice to his: The Gulags are a crime against humanity. But if Rosenberg thinks you have to go to the USSR to find "real oppression," I suggest that libertarianism isn't the only area of Rosenberg's ignorance -- he's never opened a recent newspaper. If Rosenberg is so concerned about Soviet-style oppression, why does he remain silent about the imprisoning of draft protesters Paul Jacob and Ben Saway, the persecution of Bernard Goetz for defending his life (not racialist violence -- Ralph Abernathy of CORE praises Goetz), or the Reagan administration's attack on freedom of the press by intimidating 7-11 not to carry PLAYBOY or PENTHOUSE?

"(2) Why didn't I mention that I was agenting THE JERUSALEM CONTRACT? As I said, I wasn't agenting it at the time I was interviewed and I was also praising dozens of other books, none of which I

was agenting. Additionally, I make my living as a writer, not as an agent -- Victor's book is so far my only sale as an agent, and the commission represents about one percent of my current income -- zero percent after I pay my long-distance Bill.

"If Rosenberg thinks there's something sinister about Victor and me sometimes using the same mailing address ... well, there is. Victor and I have shared a mail address for a number of ventures, including The Committee to Eliminate the New Draft and The First Order of the Jedi Knights, Intergalactic. Worst of all, it's been a mail drop for Victor's membership in the Cheese of the Month Club.

"As for reading Rosenberg's books and trying to induce his politics therefore, I'll offer a cultural exchange: If Rosenberg will read -- not "skim" but read -- ALONGSIDE NIGHT and THE RAINBOW CADENZA, he can pick two of his books and I'll read them. If he can stand it, I can stand it -- play it, play it."

LETTER FROM PHILIP JOSE' FARMER May, 1986

"Thanks for the latest SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW even though I found it to be as depressing as its predecessors. I read the reviews of works by Bloyack, Powers, Rucker, etc., what wonderful ideas they have, what powerful language, what fabulous plots, what great characters. And, as I sink into despair and gloom, I ask myself what an old fart like me is doing still writing? Why don't I just give up and join Ed Earl Repp and Ray Cummings in oblivion?

"Or, since I'm not financially able to retire on Social Security and some minor stocks and bonds, why not become a mainstream writer? There's this novel, PEARL DIVING IN OLD PEORIA, I've been thinking about for years. Why not do that? Or the nonfiction biography of one of my great heroes, Nellie Bly, dem-on girl reporter? Ou sont les neiges d'antan? I'll tell you where they are. They're here every year in slightly different crystallized form. They never really went away. If this be madness, make the most of it."

"I wish John Brunner would quit confusing the U.S. government with its citizens. There really are very few of us who want war, nuclear or conventional.

There are a lot of us who didn't vote for Reagan and many more who did but wish they hadn't. As for RAMBO, yes, I enjoyed it though I found it somewhat unbelievable. His mission was fully justified, given the circumstances of the story, and he, in the end, was betrayed by his own government for political reasons. That I found credible. That's been done by all governments everywhere in time and place, not just by the U.S. government.

"Scott's words re MOBY DICK were quite refreshing and stimulating and on the nose. The book should be removed from college curricula and denied to anyone under forty-five. But that would be censorship, wouldn't it? I'm fed-up against censorship of any kind no matter how laudable the motives of the would-be censors. By any kind I mean the censorship that both conservatives and liberals hope to impose."

LETTER FROM JANE VOLEN Phoenix Farm, 31 School St., POB # 27, Hatfield, MA 01038 05/23/86

"Normally it is hard to make me angry. Even my children have marveled at that, my daughter once shouting at me, "Why don't you scream like real mothers do?" but you have surprised it with your review of THE MAGAZINE OF SPECULATIVE POETRY."

"It is true that the kneejerk "Anybody can do it..." reaction is endemic in the SF/fantasy field. As is the "If it doesn't rhyme, it ain't poetry..." but I expected better from you. I have been a poet for over 25 years. I write rhymed and unrhymed. What we are talking about is not whether the end of a line conveniently sounds like the one right before it, but whether a poem has a metaphorical content and rhythm and pace, a singing in the bone. With the fragment you quote in order to savage, I like the image of "I entered your body and set up camp..." As a woman, that line rings very true to me.

"You seem to think that poetry that is unrhymed is also undisciplined. Perhaps you do not know (or like) among others Sandberg, Cummings, Whitman, or discipline. So deal with individual poems or issues, but don't condemn all unrhymed poetry out of hand.

"There is skill, beauty, passion, and metaphor in a poem like Sandberg's "The Grass" or Whitman's "When lilacs last in the dooryard bloom'd" or Cummings "Buffalo bill's defunct." And if you cannot see and hear that, I pity you because you are tone stone deaf."

((Obviously I don't condemn all free verse out of hand, since I've published a string of unrhymed poems by Blake Southfork over the years. His stuff is so strong, loaded, powerful of image and acidic satire--a kind of poetic surrealism--I loved to current event--that it would lose impact, I suspect, if disciplined to traditional rhyme requirements.

((I think that most poets today shrink from the work and discipline required in using meter and rhyme and resort to free verse,

THE SUNDAY BRUNCH
IS BRISTOL CREAM ON
WHEATIES.



thus making laziness and lack of talent a virtue. And I think the public senses this and as a result has ignored poetry for generations.))

LETTER FROM WILLIAM ROTSLEER
17909 Lull Street, Reseda, CA 91335
June, 1986

'The Benford article was superb! A touch of re-write, setting the scene, and it should be in some slick mag.

'David Transue (odd name) is an interesting new artist. His small drawings are too complicated, but he is interesting, nevertheless. Give him more exposure. (Without, of course, cutting down on Alexis.)

'Alexis (and Paul Anderson) did a delightful job of taking John Brunner to task for thinking we American folk want war. SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW continues to have the most literate and wide-ranging letters of any fanzine. (Is SF a fanzine? Is it ever real?)

'My standard operating procedure for reading SF, by the way, is to look through at all the Gilliland cartoons first, paying scant attention to the other art. Then the other art and the small items, then settle in to read letters and articles by my friends, then the other stuff. I almost never read book reviews, I'm afraid. No doubt, they serve a good purpose, but having had a few reviews of my own books (both good and bad) in which I wondered if they, in fact, had read the book I wrote, I don't have much feeling about them. Long before I turned pro I had decided that unless it was a Great or a Killer review on the front of the NEW YORK TIMES REVIEW OF BOOKS, or KIRKUS or PW it didn't really make much difference what anyone said. Not if you had a good title, a good cover and a nugget of a good idea. Not in sales, not even in posterity -- witness the dumb books which are considered Classics and Literature. Not all, of course, but enough Dumb Books exist enthroned to make me wonder. Have you, for example, ever read a National Book Award winner that was readable?

'Grumpily -- Rotsler.'

((No, but I've read a few paragraphs of CLAN OF THE CAVE BEAR (plonky writing, a step above amateur) and a few paragraphs of the newest Jackie Collins bestseller, and have concluded that women readers of Women's Bestsellers don't care or know about style, talent, good writing.



STARVING ARTIST

((The characters and their emotional crises, their life-problems are the whole of the law. Feminism is a strong factor too. (And is there a strong reek of disguised racism in the idea of a blonde, lithe cro-magnon being raised by and triumphing over a tribe of short, hairy, ugly, dark-haired neanderthals?))

LETTER FROM JOHN SHIRLEY
8115 Rosaline, #8, W. Hollywood, CA
90046 May 5, 1986

'Re Greg Benford's remarks in your last letter column -- evidently, judging from the El Salvador reference, he's talking about my piece in REM 3 satirizing rightwing politics in SF. He says, sneeringly, "and, as John points out in REM 3, beastly old Larry Niven drinks booze in his coffee for Chrissakes." Actually, I didn't say a fucking word about Larry Niven in that piece. Never mentioned him once. The SF Writer I satirized was the personification of an attitude. The bit about booze in coffee was a joke on the convention life. I don't know anything about Larry Niven's drinking habits.

'Benford also accuses me of "reeking of warmed-up Hubert Humphrey." What a detestable idea.

'Some of the REM piece was somewhat comically overstated, but most of it I stand by, because the issue here is not "liberalism" or "conservatism," the issue is to murder or not to murder. The bit about the butchery of peasants in El Salvador? I didn't make that up. That's a real testimony, coming from a reliable source. This is just one more example of a government we're backing using our money -- for training, weapons, etc. -- to murder innocents. Civilians, doctors and nurses, women and children.

'After the Sandinistas took over Nicaragua, they instituted a variety of health programs in the countryside. Infant mortality and the spread of disease were markedly reduced -- and my information comes from the Red Cross, not the Red Army. The Contras in Nicaragua -- and this was reported in Science -- have been systematically killing doctors and nurses, destroying clinics, medical supplies and civilian supplies of food and water. The result has been a significant rise in infant deaths, and death or crippling of children from epidemics. That is what our tax dollars pay for.

'I say that objecting to this is not "liberal." I say it's decent. It's very easy for us to cynically pass these things off as the natural attrition of nations in flux or whatever -- easy to do from up here, where we don't have to see the suffering we've helped to create. Too easy, Benford. Wimpish, in fact.

'I'm not a Liberal, nor even a Moderate -- on some issues I'm radical left, on others I'm well to the right. But I am always opposed to murdering children and destroying medical centers.

'Smugly shrugging those things off is not political sophistication, it is moral cowardice.

'And you won't be able to sneer at acid rain much longer. Giving Carter



Blanche to big business -- as rightist SF writers would have us do -- has resulted in an environmental emergency which could well cause famines and the deaths of thousands from toxic gases released by acidic precipitation (this last is admittedly conjecture, but it's the conjecture of responsible scientists). The destructive ramifications of acid rain go on and on. And it's not something the U.S. border guards can protect you from.

'As for cyberpunk's supposedly being a recycling of old ideas: bullshit. Bill Gibson's cyberspace concept and the various social and cultural futurological insights he gives us in his first two novels are strongly original. In addition, Gibson has taken old SF ideas and developed them in new, hyper-realistic ways. Most "cyberpunks" are engaged in a kind of sociological speculation. We're reporting on the world that's creating itself around us now. We're trying to make sense of it.

'My novel ECLIPSE includes science fiction speculation about the social consequences of life on a space colony; about the co-optation of families by big corporations; about the society we will be letting ourselves in for if the current international situation culminates in world war (and I'm NOT talking about nuclear holocaust, about the effect of the new, pervasive international media Grid on society; about new forms of mind control and "brain tampering" now under development. About dozens of other background details of life in the early 21st Century.

'Bruce Sterling's brilliant cyberpunk novel SCHISMATRIX glows with new ideas, too damn many to mention. And it should have won the Nebula.

'We're writing science fiction, and we're not ignorant, so of course we employ some standard science fictional ideas as starting points. We use them, but we innovate our own as well, and we synthesize the two into one.

'Another thing that sets so-called cyberpunk apart is its use of non-SF cultural input. Cyberpunk writers are more culturally on-line, and this encouraged a fresh interpretation of SF imagery and ideas. It's true we disagree among ourselves, superficially, about what "cyberpunk" is. But we know it when we see it. And when we hear it: its characteristic beat.'

((More power to Cyberpunk sf, as it appeals to the next generation, as it becomes a leading-edge kind of sf, possibly a rebel sf.))

RAISING HACKLES

BY ELTON T. ELLIOTT



By this time at least two issues of ELLIOTT'S BOOKLINE (EB) will have been published. Topics covered include: Nebulagate; NASA; Sacred Cow of Science Fiction; Arthur C. Clarke Comes Out -- of the Closet -- Well, Sort Of; Stephen King/Jack Chalker feud; Amazing Stories: Encounters in the Boredom Zone; Scientology Taking Over SF; Publishers Ripping Off Writers and much, much more.

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CENSORSHIP: -ON MAINE STREET

The forces of censorship reared their ugly heads in Maine this spring, but in a state-wide referendum, June 10, 1985, voters rejected the ballot measure by 55 to 45. The measure would have been the toughest such law in the nation. It included jail terms of up to five years for the sale or promotion of books, magazines, videotapes and other materials found to be obscene. The definition, according to the Associated Press, of pornography, and hence obscenity, was anything which appealed "to the prurient interest in sex," is "patently offensive" in its depiction of sexual acts and which, taken as a whole, lacks "serious literary, artistic, political or scientific value."

Whew, talk about vague definitions. The opponents included the American Civil Liberties Union, publishers, librarians and others. Several noted writers led the opposition including Stephen King who appeared in commercials opposing the measure.

The group that supported it, the Christian Civic League of Maine, a so-called Christian civic business group, attributed the measure's defeat to television ads showing literary classics being burned. George A. Smith, campaign director for the supporters of the measure said, "That was the most powerful TV ad I've seen in politics. When I saw the ads my stomach dropped out. I knew they had hit a home run." Maybe the real reason was described by Barry Lynn of the ACLU who said, "Citizens don't like government to tell them what they cannot see and read." He also saw the vote as a repudiation of the proponents' argument that pornography plays a role in sexual violence. "I don't think the citizens of Maine bought that, and I don't think they should have bought it. I think this is a very important message to be sent to the rest of the country."

Christopher Finan, director of the Media Coalition, a national publishers and wholesalers group, said, "I certainly hope this causes people around the country to take pause and reflect on the fact that this position is anti-First Amendment and is very much a minority view."

Indeed it is a minority view, but 28% is only 5% lower than the largest vote total Hitler ever received in an election in Germany (prior to seizing power after the National Socialists won a plurality in the 1933 elections). It is true that the Maine vote is important to the rest of the country. Informed sources have told me that if the vote passed in Maine, the equivalent of the Maine measure would spring up all over the country, probably fueled by the huge war-chests of the television evangelists.

Lynn went on to say, on ABC's Nightline, of the U.S. Attorney General Edwin Meese's Commission on Pornography, that "their attitude is that pornography causes bad attitudes and should be suppressed" whereas what they ignore is that "the point of literature is to change attitudes." He then said that the Meese Commission is really off on a "crusade against 'dirty' pictures," and that in sending threatening letters to some convenience and drug store chains they have overstepped their bounds. He also stated that he would "never be satisfied with suppressing pornography as a way to deal with abusive men." He also disagreed with several people connected with the Meese effort who have said that the majority of pornography is bought by males between the ages of twelve to seventeen. He supports efforts to educate children on "healthy sexuality."

While I agree with Lynn on a lot of issues I draw the line at education in the public schools. Whose "healthy sexuality" are we talking about? I think parents have a right to not have their kids indoctrinated in public schools. Now, of course, there will be those who say that anything that a kid learns in school is indoctrination. Well, I agree. In fact, that is the best argument I know of for getting rid of public schools, but that's another issue.

Why I think this is an important issue and have gone on at length about it is that I think this is the battleground in the near term for the future of America. I think what happened in Maine is but a microcosm of what will happen elsewhere. Of special concern is the attempt to hold a Constitutional Convention using

the idea of a balanced budget as a ruse to get control of the central government of our country, the Constitution, rewrite it and in the process gut the First Amendment. The convention (or ConCon for short) has two more states to go before the required thirty-four pass it and ConCon is mandated. Michigan turned it down, but California and one other state (either Ohio or Kentucky) have it under consideration.

Two final items on the Maine vote: First, congratulations to Stephen King for his tireless efforts to defeat the measure. When the dragons came in was ready for them. (A side note: King also serves on a policy committee headed by Senator Gary Hart. King was active in Hart's 1984 campaign for the presidency). Send, Maine voters got a taste of what life under the law might be like -- not ed children's author and frequent oral storyteller at schools in Maine was arrested and accused of child molestation and possession of kiddie porn shortly before the election. Since he has been arrested but not convicted, I will not bandy his name about as one of the major TV network news broadcasts did. I think Maine voters saw the arrest -- or at least its timing -- as a heavy-handed ploy to get their support for the draconian measure. Those of us who value our freedom owe all who fought the measure -- and in particular the 72% of voters who turned it down -- a hearty thanks.

MUSINGS:

On Greg Benford's comments about the Harper's continuing attacks on science fiction, I say ignore Harper's. I think Harper's schedules the articles because of the vitriolic letters they will draw. Who cares what a bunch of elitist literary snobs think. The only people constantly worried about their reputations among the establishment are preachers and politicians. I see no compelling reason for SF writers to act the same way. The best response to make to Harper's is don't buy, read or recommend it.

The so-called Cyberpunk school of SF writers has been getting a lot of press recently. The two things I see binding them together is a Leftist mentality similar to the Green Party in West Germany and the influence of Philip K. Dick. While discussing this with Dick Geis he mentioned that Dick's theme of the separation of the mind and body was reflected clearly in the writing of many in the Cyberpunk school. Associat-

ed with that is the Dickenian concept of the mutability of reality, a theme which is certainly played out in Gibson's NEUROMANCER. Who would have thought that such an off-beat, though original, thinker as Philip K. Dick could end up being the godfather to a whole literary movement? In a way it's not surprising when in some respects the world is more and more beginning to resemble a Dick novel.

Finally, when publishers' estimates are that by the year 2000, over 50% of Americans will be functionally illiterate, the U.S. and Canada get into a trade war with each other and the American publishing industry and consequently its writers end up the big losers. The Canadians announced tariffs on American books, magazines, computer products and a host of other goods as a reaction to American tariffs on Canadian wood shingles and cedar products. It is estimated the Canadian action could cost the publishing industry in the tens of millions of dollars. This shows why free trade is the only way to go. If the U.S. insists on a tough protectionist trade policy we will be risking a world-wide depression that will make the 1929 crash look like a Sunday picnic.

THE PSYCHOPATH PLAQUE

By Steven G. Spruill
TOR, 1986, 252 pp., \$2.95

This is another tightly plotted SF/thriller from Steven Spruill. It concerns a mysterious plague that drives humanity insane. It is set in a future when mankind has discovered other intelligent races and Spruill suggests how interspecies diplomacy might be.

The ending was somewhat of a letdown for me, but despite that, Spruill always keeps the action coming and the narrative well paced. If you want reading that'll keep you awake try THE PSYCHOPATH PLAQUE.

I'm happy to see THE PSYCHOPATH PLAQUE back in print. I was afraid it might have gotten lost in the shuffle following Dell's unfortunate decision to cancel Jiq Frenkel's line. Kudos to TOR. I hope to see more from Steven Spruill.

SINGULARITY By William Sleator
Bantam, 1986, 199 pp., \$2.95, Juvenile

SINGULARITY is a nice pleasant read. It is a juvenile, but Sleator's prose is so readable the "G" rated handling of the story shouldn't bother anybody.

The story centers on twin teenage boys who stay in their late uncle's house for what they thought was going to be a two-week summer vacation. It turns out their uncle, Ambrose, was a strange recluse whose house and property are even stranger. Their adventure soon takes a sinister twist as they find a place where time seems to speed up. This discovery leads to events that will forever alter the twins' relationship.

Sleator's strength in addition to his smooth, seamless story-telling ability, is his talent for characterization. The twins are drawn so completely that by the end of the book you feel as if you had met them in real life.

My only objection is that their relationship with the neighbor girl is unrealistic. However, I believe this is the result of the inherent limitations of the juvenile form. I would like to see Sleator try his hand at adult SF.

Bantam has published one other book by Sleator, INTERSTELLAR PIG, which I thoroughly enjoyed. Its plot is more

complex than SINGULARITY'S, which tended to be predictable.

If you know of a youngster who likes SF or likes to read, buy these two books by Sleator; they're just the kind of books I loved when I first started reading SF.

AFTER THE BEYOND By Charles P. Flynn
Prentice-Hall, 1986, trade paper, \$8.95

This book recounts experiences of people who almost died and came back to life. Nearly all had similar experiences, seeing a "White Light" or tunnel, sometimes a bearded man, other times they floated above their bodies. AFTER THE BEYOND tries to assemble these experiences and give them coherency and provide some answers.

Unfortunately the book is hobbled by religious New Age dogma. Flynn insists on interpreting these experiences from a pseudomystical, quasi-Eastern point of view. If you're a mystic, or into the New Age, then you might find this book useful. If not, you might still find it worthwhile if you are interested in the near-death experience or studying comparative religions or the New Age.

One comment on the near-death experience itself: It is possible that the images/visions people get in this state is a defense mechanism of the human brain similar to what the nervous system does when the body is under severe pain. The brain feeds out friendly imagery like the nervous system shuts out too much pain. Another explanation is these images are the result of lack of oxygen to the brain.

The author makes a big deal of how people who undergo these experiences usually change afterwards. They become more "spiritual" and more successful in their careers. This can be explained rationally. Any situation where people undergo tremendous stress can change their behaviors. I suspect studies of the survivors of prolonged hostage situations would find similar changes. A person becomes aware of mortality and that spurs some people on to be more energetic in accomplishing their goals -- or adopting new ones. It would be interesting to do a study on second- or third-generation atheists who undergo a near-death experience and how they differ from persons brought up in a religious household. I suspect that changes in behavior have more to do with remembering what their parents taught them as children and acting on that. In essence, the near-death experience acts as a basic childhood "life script" reinforcer.

THE BABYLON GATE By Edward A. Byers
Baen Books, 1986, 246 pp., \$2.95

It is the near future and several humans have banded together to rule the Earth through a psychically-augmented device, in Earth orbit, called the Babylon Gate.

Only the protagonist knows a way to regain the high ground. He goes underground in an attempt to find a way. Although the Gate was never fully realized enough for me, I found the writing taut and suspenseful. Despite a slight sluggishness in the middle, THE BABYLON GATE should prove interesting.

FOR SALE

Listing continued from p. 32

NURSES WHO SEDUCE THE YOUNG
1970 (3) Case histories.

YOUNG GIRLS WHO SEDUCE OLDER MEN
1971 (1) Case histories.

WOMEN AND BESTIALITY 1971 (1)

SWAP ORGIES 1971 (1) Case his.

NURSES AND YOUNG MEN 1972? (1)
Case histories

THE TWINS HAVE MOTHER 1972 (3)
*Peggy Swenson

THE HOT KIDS AND THEIR OLDER LOVERS
*Peggy Swenson 1971 (1)

CAPTIVE OF THE LUST MASTER 1971 (2)
*Peggy Swenson

PLEASE---FORCE ME! 1971 (2)
*Peggy Swenson

NAKED PRISONER 1972 (2)
*Peggy Swenson

DADDY'S HARLOT 1976 (3)
*Sheela Kunzer

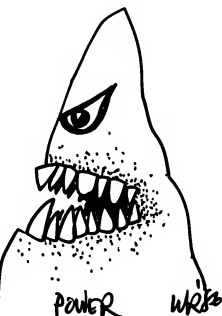
HONOR THY PARENT 1976 (4)
*Sheela Kunzer

DAISY CHAIN NEIGHBORS 1981 (1)
*Randy Guy

HOT WIFE FOR HIRE 1981 (1)
*Randy Guy

THE LIBRARIAN'S HOT LIPS 1983 (2)
*Randy Guy

THE TWINS NEXT DOOR 1982 (2)
*Randy Guy



SFR: Victor who? That may be a common question when readers begin this interview because your name is not yet well known. Let me begin, then, by noting that you are the author of two titles in the SPACEMAYS series from Berkeley -- #13, JONITA RISING! (1984) and #17, THE CAR-NADINE HORDE (1988), both of which were Procehsee Award nominees. Both were credited to "John Clev," as are all the SPACEMAYS titles, so your name is not directly associated with your books. You've also published a serial called SAUCER SLUTS in the bi-weekly Los Angeles pomsheet IMPULSE in 1977. And your most important work to date, THE JEHOUAH CONTRACT, has been published in Germany but not yet in this country. I'll also note that you are well known in that tiny community of Discordians who hang around New Libertarian and other anarcho-SF neighborhoods.

With that introduction, let me start at the beginning and ask about SAUCER SLUTS. How did you come to write it and place it in IMPULSE?

KOMAN: In January of 1976, I was vacationing at my parents' in northern California. They'd decided to take off for the week and I was left alone with my 01-ymptic portable and no women. I had just read an enormously amusing article in PENTHOUSE entitled "Confessions of a Lady Pornographer" by Florence King. She revealed -- with an engaging wit and style -- the ins and outs of writing porn on a monthly schedule. I recommend the article as being almost as important as that new book from Locomanics.

Though I had never read a true "porno" novel in my life (my sister's copy of MYRA BRECKENRIDGE had been my only foray into the genre of printed sex), I thought I had enough raw information from the article to take a few fantasies in mine and stitch them together into a novel.

The first day -- a Saturday -- I wrote 30 pages. The next day I wrote 25. My folks returned and I headed back to Los Angeles. Back to the reconvened women's restroom I was renting on Sorority Row across from UCLA. There -- amidst the pink carpeting and walls -- I finished SAUCER SLUTS three weeks. The original impetus for the book sprang (as a lot of my ideas seem to) from an off-hand comment by Samuel Edward Konklin III. He had come up with several book titles that he declared would sell no matter what the content was. SAUCER SLUTS was one of them. STAR VIRGIN was another, which subsequently became the title of a jiggie film that was neither little noted nor long remembered. They probably came up with the title independently -- that is how the Zeitgeist works.

I hadn't thought I'd really finished SAUCER SLUTS at that time (Feb. 1976). I'd written about 40,000 words and had come down with a raging flu (something I do quite often while writing -- I tend to overwork when I do work). The book sat fallow until I'd moved into the Anarchovillage in October of 1976 and my neighbor J. Neil Schulman asked me to read it. He told me that it was finished and that I should retype it and send it out. I went to various bookstores writing down the addresses of porno publishers, probably made one of the bigger social gaff-

ses of my life by asking Ray Bradbury's agent if he knew of markets for such nov-els, and started sending out copies of the manuscript.

Except ...

Except the porno publishers either rejected the book, said they bought in-house only, or had vanished without a forwarding address. So (blithely) I decided to hit the big-time. I sent the ms. out with a cover letter extolling the book as a trendy, "trashy," ROCKY HORROR-type SF/porno spoof.

You can imagine the reception it received. And the lasting reputation I invoked. When I introduced myself to Jim Frenkel at WorldCon, he immediately pointed a finger of rage at me and said, "You wrote SAUCER SLUTS!" He proceeded to inform me that I had no ability to write a novel nor even any comprehension of what a novel was and that I should stick to short stories until I got it right. I smarted for some time from that blistering, but my lesson in attempting to emulate the Great Chutzpah himself (J. Neil) was well taken. I didn't take it as a personal assault and, in fact, Mr. Frenkel has since had kind words to say about THE JEHOUAH CONTRACT. Hearing those words felt good.

How SAUCER SLUTS GOT TO IMPULSE, a singles-ad tabloid that sells on street racks in LA, is proof that it's not who you know, it's whom you know. Another Anarchovillager (who shall remain counter-economically nameless) contracted as a typesetter to the publisher (who, it turns out, had once been responsible for the Essex House publications of Phil Farmer's classic erotica -- small world, eh?). Since IMPULSE ran "reader-written" fiction, he managed to get the book serialized into thirteen installments. I even got paid by installment -- just like Charles Dickens. Unlike Chuck, though, I wasn't in a position to hold out for enormous sums for the denouement.

SFR: Does SAUCER SLUTS have a future? Will it be reprinted or expanded to book length?

KOMAN: Actually, it has been reprinted. It's the only work of mine that has been printed in two different media. Hustler Paperbacks bought it and published it in 1980. However, the publisher thought the title SAUCER SLUTS was "too coarse" and asked for an alternate. I had picked Hustler as a possible publisher because their first book was entitled SPACE WHORES. That wasn't coarse? "Short". So I sent a list of about twenty alternates including STARSHIP TROLLOPS, SEX KITTENS FROM BEYOND THE STARS and other less impressive choices. Hustler finally merged two of my choices and came up with the title STARSHIP WOMEN. Now, that's class ...

Incidentally, SAUCER SLUTS has been my most beneficial work in that it gained me an LASPS Panquet as my first professional sale and also gained me entry into SPWA (that was my test of them). (It also earned me my most scathing review to date by none other than "Yipes!" Richard E. Geis!)

SFR: NO TO SPACEMAYS! How did you get into writing for a multiple-author series like this? Who else has written SPACEMAYS

titles? Who is John Clev?

KOMAN: I will tell you who is John Clev. He is the man who stopped the motor of the Cops -- wrong guy. In reality, he is the man who started the motor of my still-toddling career. It's fairly common knowledge that "John Clev" was the pen-name that Andrew J. Offutt utilized for the SPACEMAYS series. He had used it before for his Grove Press CRUSAIDER novels. And he is not "Jarrod Costmck," despite what the LAWLESS WORDS book jackets imply.

I am a fan of serial writing, having read 700 Savage novels during one high school year and the Lensman and Skylark series during summer school. Not to mention Heinlein, Raymond Chandler, Asimov, Cherryh and others. However -- during one of Neil's and my frequent outings to bookstores, where we'd grab novels, read their opening lines aloud and groan in pain or cheer with surprise -- I pulled out a copy of SPACEMAYS #3 and showed its garish, lurid cover to Neil. "Look at that title," I hollered. "ESCAPE FROM MACHO! Who the hell writes these things, anyway!"

I soon found out.

In August of 1982, I spoke to another friend of mine (who had sacked out on my couch a few nights some years before), Nick Yermakov. He had received a postcard from Offutt (as had several other SPWA members) asking whether he'd be interested in writing a book under a house name. Playboy Books, it seems, had been enormously enthusiastic about the SPACEMAYS series, and wanted a novel a month. Andy knew he would be hard-pressed to turn out good work in that time, so he asked for help.

Nick couldn't participate for the happy reason that he was under contract for several books and had no time. He suggested I drop Offutt a line of inquiry.

I did. Andy wrote back to say, "Sure -- why not, send me an outline." So I went out and bought the six existing novels in the series and read them all, taking copious notes and getting a feel for the style. As with most adventure novels, the heroes had little time for bureaucrats, which pleased me. However, as with a good deal of SF, it assumed that there is some sort State that can control all these worlds (although Offutt's Ultimate Secret turned the whole notion on its head -- but I didn't know it at the time).



I figured that it was time to introduce an anarchist into the SPACENAYS universe to see what would happen.

As a STAR TREK fan from the very beginning, one thing always bothered me -- even before I'd ever heard the word "Libertarian." I have always considered the Prime Directive to be an odious concept. As someone who has spent his life from the age of five or so waiting for aliens to visit Earth, I think that a law rule or custom forbidding "interference" with a race's development is the result of the most brutal and ignoble motives. It's "White Man's Burden" sneaking into SF. If the Earth is under a similar quarantine, I want to go in and mess it up, to see what it's like, and if it's interesting it to the max! The SPACENAYS series had the same sort of rule (though I didn't know at the time that Offutt had secretly postulated the rule to be motivated precisely by foul and plundering motives). I wanted to probe its validity.

The alleged purpose of both the STAR TREK and SPACENAYS "Prime Directives" was to preserve the cultural richness of "backward" planetary cultures. The reasoning is usually that such races "aren't ready" for Galactic culture and science. This, I suspect, is the same reasoning used by some people to allege that blacks aren't "ready" for freedom, that slavery or that the Third World isn't "ready" for high technology. Sentients are sentient and there's no such thing as a race not ready for the benefits of space travel, technology, life extension, intelligence increase or freedom. Thus was born Marekallian Eks, the Mindrunner.

I'd had the idea for some years, but when Andy gave me the opportunity to write a novel and the series had a Prime Directive, I decided to strike. What, I postulated, is the absolute most important commodity of all? It ain't a yellow metal. It ain't organic. It ain't really even property as such, being immaterial in nature.

It's knowledge. And with it, sentients can nudge nature around so that mountains can be moved, diseases can be obliterated, and any race can lift itself up by its bootstraps. Marek smuggled knowledge to Protected planets in defiance of TransGalactic Order's "Protection." One of the main items he smuggled was the ability to gain and retain even more knowledge, the telepathic boosters common in the series.

And lest you ask why Marek was also a little-than-moral tom-whore, here's Andy's universe and he had postulated that it was grey. Bad people sometimes did good things, good people sometimes did bad things, and motives were obscured under layers of falsified intentions. Now as it may offend certain hard-core colleagues of mine, I had fun thinking that universe. I didn't consider myself to be "a villain in my own eyes," but if I were Marek, I probably wouldn't have much respect for a race's ancient relics -- not when I'm helping to usher them into a world of health, joy and plenty. What good is "cultural diversity" if your baby is dying of something that Galactics found a cure for centuries ago? What value is "self-determination" when it serves to keep a feudal ruling class in power? Once anyone gets into space, freedom is hers. "What tyrant can tell you when you can just him/her thrusters and move to the Oort layer or beyond?"

I'd trade every cracked piece of an-

tique crockery or tarnished religious icon for a working stardrive and I'd rob graves to do it. I want to leave Earth and I'm not going to be wimpy about it.

SFR: By the time you came to write JON-UTA RISING! there were already twelve books in the series. Was it difficult to fit your story and your style into the already formulated "John Cleve" mold?

KOMAN: No. When Andy gave me the go-ahead to do an outline, I bought the six existing novels at the time and read them all to pick up the feel of the narrative, the slang and all that stuff. Then I went to look for in writing classes but that a writer or just about any reader can pick up naturally, by osmosis, if she lets herself. By the time I was done, I had a pretty firm idea about what Andy wanted, what he was intending, and what I could contribute that might be a new angle. I started with the first chapter, which he requested as a sample along with the outline. It struck me from his descriptions that the alien Jarps had such graceful, long fingers and narrow hands that one of them would just naturally have to be a pickpocket. That's how Scarseek came about; the opening line of the book appeared on the phosphor, and I was off. The rest of the chapter flowed -- poverty, despair, the theft of something important and from that rather Hitchcockian McGuffin cascaded the rest of the novel.

A lot of what passes for good, enjoyable writing is merely taking an idea, situation, or emotion and looking at it from different angles. I observed the condition of the Jarp slaves, noted that a very few were allowed to become free-men, and postulated that one would wind up being so aggressive and vengeful that it would become a top-notch pirate. This was begat Captain Darkblood. I might have done a whole book about it if the series had lasted.

Through every step of production, by the way, Andy was overseeing everything's work. We submitted a third of a novel at a time which he would read, fiddle with and send back for a second draft. He understands writers -- we were paid a chunk for every third written and for every third corrected. -- A writer's nearly 100 pages of notes -- a Walter's Bible of sorts -- that Andy collected amongst us to keep things straight. He also made stylistic changes to the manuscript -- usually involving nothing more than a change of a word or a case -- that I incorporated in subsequent drafts. I can never have done this as fast as I did without a word-processor.

An amusing challenge for all of us was to keep the book we were working on current with the books that were still in process but that were slated to be published before ours. There were Shocking Revelations in #9 (IN QUEST OF QALARA) that I didn't know about until a week after I'd turned in the outline for #13. It was like that all the way. Something came up, a quick change was dictated, and we reacted -- usually with success.

In answer to part of your previous question, some of the other SPACENAYS writers that I know about were Jack Haldean, Dwight Swain, Robin Kincaid, G.C. Edmondson and others who either wish to remain nameless or whom I can't recall at the moment. I never communicated with any of them except via Andy.

I am extremely grateful to Andy for giving me the chance to work on something that -- as far as I can tell -- is the closest anyone my age could come to experiencing what it was like to be writing for the pulps half a century ago. He called SPACENAYS "A PLANET STORIES for adults," and I think that he was more than right. For the readers it was an adventure series with its own vast background and color. For the authors (at least for me), it was a taste of being part of the team of writers overseen by an experienced professional, turning out work that was fun under incredible deadlines.

It was pure pulp.

SFR: Jonuta was killed in SPACENAYS #9 but he rises again in #13 as a clone with a memory transplant via computer. Interesting situation, but to my mind Jonuta is dead, dead, dead, and the clone is a totally separate person, even if he does inherit Jonuta's mind. But the story seems to imply that Jonuta is Jonuta, even if he was killed and replaced. Which way do you look at it? Does it matter?

KOMAN: I think this may be the fundamental question of "What is a person?" Is Neal Wilgus the sum total of his body, memories, ordered thoughts, and other components? Or is he a creature of light -- spirit, not matter? How the hell should I know?

In one mood, I suspect that all that we are is contained in the electrochemical ordering built up over time in our brains, much as a pocket calculator accumulates strings of ones and zeroes while switched on and operating. When you die, it's as if someone has turned off that calculator. The physical components are still there, but the ordering has disappeared. The electrical forces holding the chemicals in their precise alignments are gone. All those little ones and zeroes are no longer there. Your soul, so painstakingly created, grown and nurtured for decades, is gone in a few moments. Randomized, dispersed, dissipated. The horrifying waste of such a thing as death is almost too unspeakably abysmal to bear. It is the ultimate inefficiency.

At other more optimistic times, I consider that we may be seeing only a part of the spectra of life. Perhaps there is such a "thing" as a soul comprised of your essence and your mind. Perhaps it is as difficult to detect as a quark -- yet as important to the Universe as any other force. Take your pick.

On the third tentacle, does anyone ever really die as long as her life touches another? You can't imagine the queer sort of thrill that went through me when even so insignificant and ephemeral a novel as SAVING SUTHER was published. "Now," I thought, "I am immortal." At that point, an immaterial, immeasurable, non-corporeal thing was let loose on the world. An idea. More accurately, a string of ideas -- or a mish-mosh, if you prefer. Those ideas are being carried to people I have never met, and an idea from that book or any other is absorbed by a reader, it becomes a part of her. It is incorporated into her soul. Once an idea is communicated by print or word or picture or aught else, it becomes the common property of the human race -- of all sentient beings -- forever.

Could an immortal ask for much more?

To answer your question, if Jonuta is only his memories and those memories can be recorded completely and can be flawlessly transferred to a clone, then I'd say that Jonuta was reborn. However... who was in the clone beforehand? If the brain were not "permitted" to develop normally, it might not be a proper vehicle for Jonuta. If it were "allowed" to develop along with the body, it may have attained consciousness. I deal with precisely this problem in yet an as-yet-unsold novel entitled DEATH'S DIMENSIONS, an expansion of a story I wrote for GALAXY a long time ago.

SFR: BETWEEN DEATH'S DIMENSIONS AND SPACEWAYS, however, there's THE JEHOVAH CONTRACT -- which we should now turn to. Having read the manuscript, I know it has a hardboiled-but-aging private-eye/assassin as the narrator and that it takes place in 1999 in an America that's definitely on the skids. Let's start with Dell Ammo, that hardcore private assassin. What was your "inspiration" for him?

KOMAN: I've always enjoyed the films' versions of Raymond Chandler novels, and Robert Mitchum has always been the quintessential Marlow. Around that time I was working in a bookstore and was given a copy of the Philip Marlowe story by a friend and fellow AnarchoVillager. The character sort of assembled himself out of a desire to write a Chandler tribute with a snafu twist (dozens of writers had already done so) yet with a few deviations of my own. I think that the assassin has always gotten a bad shrift in literature, even though the tides of history can quite often flow around the act that I and my friends label "recall with one ballot." What would happen, I thought, if I made an assassin the hero of a novel?

SFR: As the title implies, Dell Ammo is hired to assassinate God -- how did you come up with that unlikely (or inspired) scenario?

KOMAN: Have you ever been awakened on a Saturday by Jehovah's Witnesses pounding on your door? I had been becoming growingly repelled by Judeo-Christianity over the years, much more beyond atheism into a positive anti-theism. I chose not merely to ignore God, but to take an active interest in his removal from human affairs. For Dell Ammo to be anything more than one of a number of "assassin protagonists" -- let alone for him to be the Good Guy -- he'd have to stand out from the crowd. He'd have to take on someone Big. And since he was implicitly an interfaith assassin, he'd have to take on the biggest authoritarian bastard on the block.

SFR: THE JEHOVAH CONTRACT is aptly subtitled "A Theological Suspense Novel," and a variety of theological positions are considered during Dell Ammo's search -- with the so-called "pagan" religion coming out the winner. Does this reflect your personal theology? Or is it just a convenient fictional ploy?

KOMAN: A little bit of both, I suppose. Though I am an atheist, I have a fondness for the pagan roots of humanity. I was already hanging around with witches and the like before I started the novel, and had been getting fed up with Cross-eyed Christianity over the years. The paternalistic, anti-woman nature of Judeo-Christianity, Islam and nearly every other current religion indicated to me

that Jehovah was a sexist son-of-a-bitch (oops, giving away a plot point there) and his child born of incest (or was it bestiality?) wasn't much better.

A couple of books that led me in the direction of a pagan slant to the novel were Merlin Stone's WHEN GOD WAS A WOMAN and Robert Graves' THE WHITE ODDESS. When I read these books and discovered who YHWH really was, who his Mother was, and who his brother was, the pieces of the story had to fall into place the way they did. I knew the outcome of the book by the end of the first chapter. How Dell got there, though, was a constant surprise. I did want to get witches on a space shuttle, though -- I've always liked the idea of merging science and magic.

Let me add a comment on how a writer's mind works. All if the elements of a story -- an assassin of God, a Chanderlesque hero, a pagan denouement -- did not come into sharp personal focus until I could envision the Goddess Herself. That moment came when I heard a pop tune by Bob Segar entitled "Still the Same." To me, that song communicated an essential aspect of the Goddess -- Her elusive nature, Her allure, Her governance of the laws of chance. From that song, the personality and image of Ann Perrine was absolutely fixed in my head and the novel exploded out of me, page by page. Possession, perhaps?

SFR: JEHOVAH has been translated into German and published by Heyne as DER JEHOVA-VERTRAG: DIE VERSCHÖNERUNG GEGEN GOTT. How did that happen -- and what does that subtitle translate into?

KOMAN: Luckily, I took classes in German in college, so I could actually (with some difficulty) figure out what they'd done to my book (not much, thankfully -- it's a pretty accurate translation). The subtitle means "The Conspiracy Against God," which makes the book sound like a Brad Steiger/John Keel cult expose! I like it.

SFR: JEHOVAH is unique in being published in German while not being able to find an American publisher so far. Are publishers in this country that worried by the Moral Majority and the S-s-s-ven Hundred Club?

KOMAN: As with all human affairs, I'd have to say that some were and some weren't. The book has been rejected by many major publishers and has been explicitly turned down for anti-theological content by only a few. One editor liked it, but his company had just been bought by the largest Bible publisher in the nation. He had little hope of its being approved in editorial review. One of the bigger SF publishers told me that if they published the book, "we'd have our heads taken off in the Bible Belt." Meaning they'd lose their distribution. In a country where Dungeons and Dragons is considered a tool of the Devil, a book that advocates committing the Eternal Sin would seem to have a hard go of it.

Most of the rejections, though, were based on the editors' inability to categorize the book. The usual letter I received ran along the lines of "This is a fresh, original novel that breaks new ground with an intriguing approach -- we regret that it does not fit in with our current publishing needs..." Makes me

wonder what did fit in. But I see those every time I step into a bookstore.

How it got published in Germany (Bavaria actually, for you illuminati fans) is an interesting story. An agent in Germany, Hans Joachim Alpers, (Joachim? The conspiracy thickens!) wrote to me (and probably to many SFWA members) to ask whether I had any works that might do well with German readers. Knowing the centuries-old Germanic fondness for philosophy, theology and iconoclasm, I sent him a copy of JEHOVAH and DEATH'S DIMENSIONS, both what I would consider to be "Next Wave" SF.

I didn't hear from him for a year.

One day, I received a letter telling me that it had taken some time, but that DER JEHOVA-VERTRAG had sold. The open-minded, tolerant, German-speaking people -- with their long history of free speech -- had once more upstaged the censorious timid souls of superstitious, God-fearing American publishers.

Or was it that my page count simply fit the niche they had to fill in their publishing schedule that month?

SFR: Are you optimistic that you'll find an American publisher for JEHOVAH by the time this interview sees print?

KOMAN: I dunno -- has it, readers? Wouldn't that invalidate your previous question? I am currently waiting to hear from a publisher concerning a hard-sf deal. Though I seriously do believe that there are what C.S. Lewis called "watchful dragons" guarding the tastes and opinions of many publishers, I also believe that there is somewhere an editor daring enough to give the book a try. If there is not (or if I fail to uncover her or him), then I plan to publish the book myself on microfiche. As you know, Neal, I've been toying with the idea of micro-publishing for some time. The technology is there for anyone to publish her own book for less than fifty bucks! An Australian named John Zube has published -- (or brought back into print) hundreds upon hundreds of titles. All on microfiche, each of which he sells for a dollar. He did this in his spare time on a very limited budget! Each one of us could do that. I even self-published a book entitled (with great originality!) PUBLISH YOUR OWN BOOK FOR UNDER \$0! that contains a microfiche copy of the book I laid out on the paper copy. That's so people can be gently introduced to the concept.

The first American edition of THE JEHOVAH CONTRACT may very well be on microfiche. I wonder how the Hugo and Nebula Awards committees would view the eligibility of something so stiffly "futuristic!" Would they consider it a legitimate small-press book? Maybe I'll do that just to test the waters. The way I tested SFWA with SAUCER SLUTS. Time will have told when this sees print. I learned some years ago that a great magical amulet is "Who The Fuck Cares?" Once you can take the actions you want to take without regard to how other people feel, a life gets a lot easier. The only determinate is whether the action is right or wrong, not how many people it will annoy or discomfit, please or impress.

I try to live my life by that. And I still manage to get invited to social gatherings....

SFR: Thank you, Victor Koman.



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