

# SCIENCE FICTION

# REVIEW

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INTERVIEWS: ALEXIS GILLILAND JOHN SHIRLEY

ORSON SCOTT CARD

ELTON ELLIOTT

GENE DEWEESE

NEAL WILGUS

CHARLES DE LINT

DARRELL SCHWEITZER

RICHARD GEIS

ALLEN KOSZOWSKI

WILLIAM ROTSLER



# SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW

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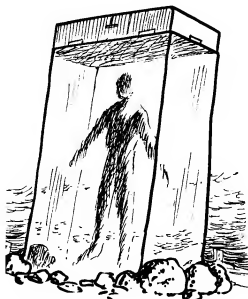
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# ORSON SCOTT CARD

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### # LETTER FROM ORSON SCOTT CARD

546 Lindley Rd., Greensboro, NC  
27410 October 4, 1986

'Orson Scott Card's SHORT FORM, a magazine devoted to criticism and reviews of short SF, fantasy, and horror stories, will begin publication with the January, 1987, issue.

'SHORT FORM will include: "You Got No Friends In This World," Card's continuation of his long-time column in SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW; Charles de Lint's "Urban Thrills," a column devoted to reviews of contemporary and dark fantasy; a high- and heroic-fantasy review column by Darrell Schweitzer (well-known to everybody); a hard-SF review column by Maia Cowan of LAN'S LANTERN; a review of children's and young adult's SF and fantasy by not-

ed author and SFMA president, Jane Yolen; and occasional features and reviews by Janrae Frank, Francois Camoin, and perhaps even the feared poison pen of Sue Dennin, frequent contributor to CHEAP TRUTH. SHORT FORM will also piggyback occasional short fannazines like CHEAP TRUTH and ADEQUATE SCIENCE FICTION.

'All of this will come by first class mail for one year to those daring souls who send their name, address, and \$10 check to: Orson Scott Card

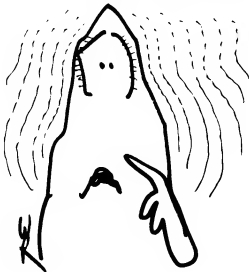
SHORT FORM  
546 Lindley Rd.  
Greensboro, NC 27410

'If you are an editor of or contributor to an anthology or magazine that you would like to have read for review, please send a copy, either directly to the appropriate columnist or to the above address.



# HUGO

We won  
a HUGO?



**NO!**

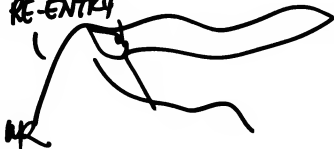
HEY, LET'S FACE IT—  
GETS HAS A LOCK  
ON THE HUGO

HE BOUGHT  
FANDOM  
IN '68  
WITH MONEY  
FROM  
HIS  
GAMBLING



WASTED MONEY!

IT'S ON  
RE-ENTRY



# ALIEN THOUGHTS

## RICHARD E. GEIS

Since this is the last and final issue of SFR as a Geis title--- it is always possible that sometime in the vast reaches of time ahead someone will think, "Gee, SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW would make a neat, logical title for a magazine, and I've never heard of it being used before..." (probably next Tuesday) ---certain matters must be taken up, tossed around and disposed of.

There is the matter of SFR subscription obligations. My impulse is to say, "Fuck'm!" and walk away. But that's not ethical, moral, or nice.

So instead, as indicated last issue, those remaining, unfulfilled SFR subs will go the way of all flesh---into THE NAKED ID. Which is to say and declare, that all of you loyal and nervous subscribers will receive my controversial, mind-bending personal journal instead of SFR, and...AND...you will receive two (2) issues of THE NAKED ID for each issue due on your SFR sub! Now, I ask you, is that fair? (A rhetorical question! I did not expect to hear any loud no's! Shoot those people!)

And, yes, I will be reading and reviewing some sf and fantasy and things like that in THE NAKED ID. Not much, but some. My core interests are myself, my writing, my freedoms, my appalling obsession with macro economics, sex, current events and controversies. Quite a lot to cover in 8 pages, eh? I'm down to it.

Now as to---  
"What the hell is going on here?"

Oh, it's you.

"Who else talks to you in your fat head, Geis? Of course it's me. Alter Ego. Ring a bell?"

I vaguely remember you, yes.

"Oh-ho! How distant, how formal, how shitty! I do detect a desire in you to terminate our relationship. I do detect--- My God! You're closing down SFR! Geis, have you turned in your

sanity? Have you gone around the bend and into the sewer? I go to sleep for a few months and look what you're doing! No, no, I can't allow it. SFR cannot die."

Too late, Alter! The deed is done! The die has been cast, and your fat is in the fire.

"Let me delve into the synapses here--- \*Gasp!\* Well, let me check the memory hole. \*Groan!\* I'll try to override the willpower node--- \*AAAAARRRRGGG##!\* How did you do that?"

I'm a man of iron and arthritis, now, Alter. Fused bone and sinew. I have only to sit at this typewriter for a while and my pain overcomes my ambition.

"Arthritis? Is that all? All you do is load up on pain-killers, take a lot of cod liver oil and alfalfa tablets, go on a no-animal-protein, high-veggie, high-fruit diet, and all will be well. You'll lose weight, your health will improve and your pain will go away."

No, Alter. There is a sadder, bitterer, more poignant reason for killing SFR than those other reasons. "Oh? What?"

Science fiction fandom doesn't want me anymore. I-I haven't won a Hugo for years! And today I received FILE 770:61 from Mike Glyer, and he printed the horrible truth---the voting run down for the latest Hugo Awards. In Best Semi-Prozine SFR came in fourth behind LOCUS, SF CHRONICLE and NO AWARD!

"Behind even No Award? That is hard to take. That really is a message, isn't it?"

There's worse to come, Alter. In the Best Fanwriter category, I came in third, behind Mike Glyer and...and...No Award!

"Ahhh! The unkindest cut of all! To think fandom could treat the great and noble Geis like that! A slap in the face, an ice pick in the ego! To vote No Award over Richard E. Geis! I see how you feel. That is sacrilege!"

Exactly. Another reason to leave, to pick up my fanzine and go home. I'm hurt, Alter. I wanted one...one last H-H-Hugo!

"Awww, don't cry, Geis! I hate to see an old fucker like you cry."

I can't help it. I'm wounded, cut to the quick, humiliated before all of fandom. There truly is no justice.

"Well, you had a long run, you won a lot of awards, you had the admiration and respect of the entire field... What more do you want?"

Nothing. Nothing. I retire to the fringes, to let new blood, more ambitious fans fill my niche in sf review publishing. I wish them well. I go now, into the golden sunset, into the oblivion of---

"Oh, Christ, Geis! Knock off that shit. You forget I have Access. I know what lurks deep in the hideous depths of the your mind, down, down in the slime of your warped ego. I know what lurks---"

All right. I hope to be a best-selling author. Satisfied?

"Yeah, but you won't be. I also know you've got a life script which limits your success. You're



not comfortable with too much money or work, Geis. You're afraid of the pressures wealth would impose, and you're not sure of its advantages. You're still not leveling with your readers."

True. I look upon novel writing as a source of money to support more important activities like semi-pro and amateur journals and book-buying and time-to-read. So I'll be publishing something--some kind of review/opinion journal for as long as I am able. I may even change the title of THE NAKED ID again. But depend on't, it won't be SFR or THE ALIEN CRITIC or PSYCHOTIC again.

"I'll be seeing you in THE NAKED ID, Geis. I'm going back to sleep now--"

What? I didn't say you could do dialogues with me in TMI! That's MY zine!

"Our zine. I'm too much inextricably intertwined in your psyche, Geis, for you to cut me out completely. See you when you least expect me. Have fun."

\*Sob\* I expect I will.

Now as to those other mundane matters to be mentioned: Artwork. I still have an enormous lot of artwork which I will retain and use in THE NAKED ID, as best I can. But artists must be patient and long suffering.

In the meanwhile, please NO MORE ARTWORK OF ANY KIND, FROM ANYONE. When and if the time comes, I'll ask.

Artists will receive two copies of the issue of THE NAKED ID in which their work appears.

But, ah, if any artist out there wishes their work returned, please let me know, and it shall be done.

After a period of say, a year, the thousands of unsold back issues of SFR, THE ALIEN CRITIC, RICHARD E. GEIS, CONSPIRACY NEWSLETTER and UH. Well, that's all, will be taken to a secret place and recycled. I will again, for the first time in ten or twelve years, see the north wall of my basement again.

That's about it, folk. SFR is dead, long live THE NAKED ID.

It's been a Trip. And it's been a Revelation. And it's been a Marvel.

I'm not done yet. I must thank everyone who contributed to SFR over the years. All you professionals and all you non-pros who write well enough to be pros. All you artists and cartoonists. All you letter writers. All those who traded with me.

Trades. That reminds me. I won't be trading THE NAKED ID with sf fanzines, clubzines, comixzines, or personalzines.

## AND THEN I READ....



### BORIS VALLEJO's FANTASY OLYMPICS - 1987

This is his fantasy calendar, a year-long project for him, based on a mythical olympics between humans and monsters, dragons, a robot.... Each extraordinary painting features a nearly nude male or female human, with an emphasis on ideally developed muscles. In fact, homosexual males should find January, March, May, the magnificent two-page centerfold, August and December of special interest.

I find all of these perfectly developed humans a bit of a bore, since there isn't a bit of difference between them except heads and skin color within each sex.

Still, the technique is exquisite, the composition fine, the color wonderful.

For calendar purposes these are great paintings.

This calendar is published by Workman and costs \$6.95. 1 West 39 Street, New York, NY 10018.

### KEEP WATCHING THE SKIES!

Volume II

By Bill Warren  
McFarland & Company, Box 611,  
Jefferson, NC 28640

This is, obviously, Vol. II of the on-going, exhaustive and endlessly fascinating chronicle of American Science Fiction movies.

Vol. I covered 1950-1957, and this latest volume, about twice the size of the first, covers 1958-1962.

This is what might be called the junk, schlock and B-C-D-movie era for sf and fantasy. I have no doubt Bill is hard at work (still a young man) on later years and further volumes.

It's a never-ending job, and Bill Warren is probably the one and only man capable and qualified to do it.

Why? He's incredibly knowledgeable, encyclopedic, detailed, in his commentaries on each movie, and witty, sharp-tongued, and funny, too. He has a perspective and he doesn't ever lose it. You may disagree with him on a small point, but his overall judgements are flawless. As for instance his description of Pat Boone's performance in JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE EARTH (1959):

The rest of the cast is mostly along for the ride, including Pat Boone, who doesn't even stay in character--he doesn't even attempt a Scottish accent--but he's completely harmless and even appealing in a great-big-little-boy way. He sings well and doesn't bump into things, occasionally entering into the spirit exuberantly. But he's not believable.

The writing is not formal, and is very, very readable. A great combination of information, entertainment and perception.

These volumes are not cheap, however. Vol I is 485pp. and costs \$39.95 + \$1.50 shipping and handling. Vol II is 816pp. and also \$39.95, with shipping and handling at 75¢ if you buy both books. Both volumes as a set are \$65.

These books are the definitive reference/commentary books on sf movies, and should be in every respectable library in the world.

### TRICK CINEMATOGRAPHY

The Oscar Special Effects Movies

By R.M. Hayes \$25.95

McFarland & Company  
(Address above)

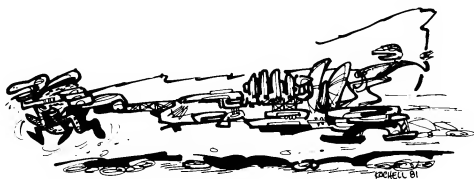
Most of this volume is lists of credits for special effects work. The movies credited from 1927-28 to 1984 begin with THE JAZZ SINGER and THE PRIVATE LIFE OF HELEN OF TROY to 2010 in 1984.

Every year has a Comment by Hayes, and they are very candid and honest, and interesting.

Every picture has a full and complete listing of credits, from every actor, the producer, director, etc., to such as Miniature Supervisor, Dubbing Mixer, Color Consultant.

This book is obviously for Reference and Specialists.

# RICHARD E. GEIS



# WHERE IS THE CUTTING EDGE OF SCIENCE FICTION?

## HYPERING THE "POST-MODERNS"

Michael Swanwick is one of the most talented new writers of science fiction, and in his recent *Asimov's* article ("A User's Guide to the Post-moderns," August), he did a good job of calling our attention to some very fine young writers of the group whose emblems are mirrorshades and Roby Dick. His article was so cheerful and well-intentioned, so lacking in malice, that it seems curiously even to think of refuting it. If he had declared his article to be a preview of one small group of youngish sf writers, I would have had no quarrel with it.

Alas, however, he asserted on these writers' behalf that "all science fiction leading up to and culminating in their generation is—let's face it—dead." The writers he praises are, he says, a "new generation," with a "new vision of how science fiction ought to be written. They will, he predicts, 'seize control of the future of science fiction,' plot its directions and aims and goals." He writes of them as "subversives," like revolutionaries storming a fortress.

The effect of this hyperbole is to inflate the importance of these young writers far beyond reality. Being one of them, Swanwick might naturally wish these writers were producing the most important work in the field of science fiction today. Some of them in fact are producing important work, and there is much talent and potential in this group; but no more talent, and no more potential, than in any other group of writers who happened to first attract notice in the same five-year period.

In other words, while Swanwick is correct in detail—the writers he names are certainly worth looking at—he is hopelessly wrong in the large picture he attempts to draw for us. If you'll bear with me for a few pages, I'll show you why I believe Swanwick is wrong. I'll even take the risk of telling you who I think ought to—and quite possibly will—storm the fortress, seize control, and plot the directions and aims and goals of science fiction.

Don't make any mistake on one point, though. I'm not merely offering an alternate view, a set of contrary opinions while modestly admitting that nobody can be "right" or "wrong" on matters like this. I'll agree that nobody is likely to be absolutely right, but on some matters they can be absolutely wrong. Swanwick's "Guide to the Postmoderns" is about as accurate as would be a history of the world written by a monk in 12th-century Venice. For his time, he might be erudite, cosmopolitan, up-to-date, well-informed—but he would almost certainly produce a "history of

the world" in which the doings of the Venetian aristocracy and the rulers of other cities of northern Italy loomed as the most important events. This is understandable; you cannot fault a historian for inflating the importance of the community he lives in. But if you believe that, his history really is a history of the world, reading it will only increase your ignorance.

If you read Swanwick's article, and believed it, you are likely to get the following inaccurate or misleading ideas:

1. There is such a group as the "Humanists."
2. Cyberpunks and "Humanists" are doing something new.
3. Cyberpunks and "Humanists" are the best of the new writers of science fiction.
4. Everybody who isn't a Cyberpunk or a "Humanist" can cut bait and go home, because these guys are where it's at. The others are either old or wearing propeller beanies.
5. Science fiction writers are all agog with admiration or annoyed at the antics of these "groups."
6. The Nebulas have recently been a battleground between these two rival camps.

## DISPOSING OF SOME FALLACIES

What is a "group" of writers? You can define the term several ways.

Writers can form a social group: They correspond or meet together, read and criticize each other's work. One thinks of the Minneapolis group led by Will Shetterly and Emma Bull and showcased in the *Llavec* books; the Moscow Moffia (in Idaho, not the USSR), who have formed around Dean Wesley Smith; the Colorado workshoping group centered around Ed Bryant. Shall we reach farther back in time? The stor-

ied Futurians; the Inklings; Virginia Woolf's Bloomsbury group; that tight little society of London playwrights and actors that spawned Shakespeare and endured the early obnoxiousness of Ben "Marian" Jonson.

Note, though, that these social groups do not necessarily write alike. For that, writers sometimes also form an ideological group: They deliberately write about similar themes, or flout the same conventions, or attempt the same sorts of novelties. Like various movements in painting—Cubism, for instance—these writers don't necessarily have to like each other or meet socially; what they share is a view of what art ought and ought not to be.

Think of Coleridge and Wordsworth, or Byron, Keats, and Shelley. They belonged to a social group of writers; they also belonged to an ideological group. The membership of these two groups was not identical. But the groups were undeniably real.

Writers can also be formed into critical groups: Regardless of whether they ever met or read each other's work, or, having read, liked it, critics detect some sort of similarity in their work and so declare them to be a "generation" or a "movement." These groups can hardly be said to exist, except as critics create them; the members of the group are free to absolve themselves of any responsibility for the nonsense written about them. The critical grouping of writers can be enlightening or it can be hopelessly wrong; most critical groups lean toward the latter category.

Cyberpunks are both a social and an ideological group. They proclaim themselves willingly, and some have worked hard to attract as much attention as possible to their would-be movement.

"Humanists," on the other hand, are merely a critical group. They only seem to exist as a group because the Cyberpunks attacked them as one,



BY ORSON SCOTT CARD



and because Swanwick declares them to be one.

Some of the writers so named, like Kim Stanley Robinson, find the whole idea of being a member of a group more than a little offensive; others, like John Kessel, seem to be more amused by it. Only I take it at all seriously. There are some "Humanists" who are members of various social groups, but no real group comes close to following the boundaries Swanwick offered. If there ever is a "Humanist" group, it will be because Swanwick created it, not because it already existed when he started talking about it.

I remember reading Thomas Disch's ignorant and mean-spirited attack on the "Labor Day Group" in the February 1981 *Fantasy and Science Fiction*; I took particular note, since my name was lumped in with those of Varley's, George R.R. Martin's, and others'. The very fact that Disch thought we were a group was proof that he had not read very much of our work--none of it, I am quite certain. He had never, at that point, had any correspondence or conversation with any of the others, beyond perhaps a handshake at a convention. And some of them, I am quite sure, were revolted at having their work so thoughtlessly equated with mine. The "Labor Day Group" cannot be said ever to have existed except as a critical fiction. The same is true of the "Humanists." If they actually were a group, they would never accept Swanwick's membership roster--it would be unthinkable for such a group not to include Michael Bishop, Ed Bryant, Gardner Dozois, Jack Dann, and many others; if the Cyberpunks can reach back into ancient history and name John Shirley, the "Cyberpunk generation" of writers, it would be absurd not to allow the same privilege to the "Humanists." If, that is, they actually wanted to be a club.

Still, Swanwick isn't utterly wrong on this point. I think that when he names the "Humanists," he is reaching for a valid ideological group. The reason he misses the mark is that he thinks the "Humanists" must be opposed to the Cyberpunks--after all, the Cyberpunks are attacking them, aren't they? The trouble is that upon close examination, the supposed boundary between Cyberpunk and "Humanist" does not exist. Bruce Sterling's best work has little about it that you would recognize as being particularly Cyberpunk; some of the best Cyberpunk-style stories I have read are written by "Humanists" like James Patrick Kelly (see his stories "Solstice," "The Prisoner of Chillon," and "Rat"), John Kessel (has Sterling ever written a story as outrageous, offensive, and chilling as the *Big Production*?), and Michael Swanwick himself.

All of these writers, Cyberpunk and Humanist alike, share a common ideological base with "older" writers like Ursula K. LeGuin, Samuel R. Delany, and Damon Knight. They all look outside science fiction for at least some part of their definition of what makes good fiction good. They consciously, deliberately allow the literary mainstream--which is to say, the critical mores of college literature classes--to influence their work.

The result of this influence is sometimes very good, and it is sometimes very bad, but it does make the entire group apart from those who are completely unaware of mainstream lit-

erature, and those who, like me, are aware but somewhat disdainful of it. That is the real literary argument; unfortunately, the Cyberpunks and "Humanists," who, together, we might call the "literary fiction movement" or "Li-Fi," are likely to win it by default, through such articles as Swanwick's. For the most powerful weapon a critic can use to attack his literary enemies is silence--and the rivals because the Li-Fi ideological group are conspicuous by their utter lack of mention in Swanwick's article.

You will note that he carefully avoids taking sides between Cyberpunk and "Humanist"--what else could he do, since he belongs in both camps, as do many others. What matters is not what he says about the writers he includes in his article, but rather the fact that he includes them. However they might quarrel, they all regard each other's work as worth talking about. They hope, by dominating the terms of the critical discussion, to determine the canon of "respectable" contemporary science fiction in precisely the same manner that academia has determined the canon of "respectable" contemporary literature. The affect on mainstream literature has been suffocating; the danger is that we, who will find ourselves gasping for breath as the Li-Fi writers, having captured critical attention, ignore the overwhelming majority of the science fiction that has been written today, both new and old, and pay attention only to each other.

This is not a conspiracy--there is no reason to doubt that they believe that what they are ignoring isn't worth noticing, and that what they pay attention to is really worth all the attention they give it.

But, sincere or not, they are wrong.

They ignore the overwhelming majority of the best science fiction being written today, because it does not bear the earmarks of intense concern to satisfy mainstream literary paradigms, while they take seriously some pretty mediocre stuff, merely because it was written by members of their ideological group. For example, a failed story by a writer who is trying to be "literary" is worth discussing; a brilliantly successful story by a writer who does not make an obvious bow toward Li-Fi is ignored. How else to explain their embracing *Blade Runner* and disdaining Sucharitkul? Admiring Rucker but ignoring Resnick? Trumpeting Gibson's "triumph" in 1984 while conveniently forgetting David Brin's even more spectacular performance such a short time before?

Don't misunderstand--I admire and enjoy Michael and Rucker, and Sterling very much, and have said so elsewhere on many occasions and in great detail. But the ratio of successful stories to unsuccessful stories in their body of work is not markedly different in Sucharitkul's, Resnick's, and Brin's. Moments of brilliance; moments of embarrassment--what writer doesn't have them? But WalDROP, Rucker, and Sterling are Li-Fi writers; Sucharitkul, Resnick, and Brin are not. The ideological distinction is clear, in the works themselves and in the attitudes of the Li-Fi critical community.

Perhaps the most pernicious dogma of the Li-Fi ideology is that they



have a monopoly on concern about artistic values in fiction. Few of them are willing to believe what I know to be true: that Sucharitkul, Resnick, and Brin are deeply concerned with the very artistic questions that the Li-Fi set care so much about. "We're different from all the others because we care about literary values," say the Li-Fi tracts, but the truth is that they're different from all the others because they have adopted a certain set of literary motifs, tokens, hand-signs, and shibboleths, largely borrowed from academia. One is sometimes reminded of the Pentagon bureaucrats who, whenever they are threatened with a spending cut, accuse the budget-cutters of not caring about a strong national defense--when in fact the budget-cutters may be even more concerned about a strong defense, but have found a better way to do it. Sure, Li-Fi writers care about the literary quality of their work, but I have never met a writer who does not.

Far from being rebellious, the Li-Fi writers are generally very conservative in their literary values--Cyberpunk and "Humanist" alike. Few of them challenge the generally accepted canon of respectable mainstream writing. When Swanwick invokes the names of Faulkner and Nabokov as the "big leagues" that only the bravest of writers would try to join, he betrays his Li-Fi allegiance. There are more than a few of us who, while saluting Faulkner's and Nabokov's achievements, fully intend to do something better--by attempting something different.

Who is the revolutionary, the writer who wants to turn science fiction into something "just as good as" the failed experiments and decadent repetitions of a century of moribund mainstream lit--by imitating what they did? Or the writer who learns from everybody, keeps what he likes, and tosses the rest of the baggage overboard?

Li-Fi writers are a genuine ideological group. We who do not belong to that group, however, are not a group. We ought to be given a single label. We are merely "everybody else."

#### HOW OLD IS YOUNG?

Swanwick's generational boundaries are as misguided as his ideological ones. For instance, it is absurd to declare Bruce Sterling to be of the "new" generation, and Elizabeth Lynn to be of the "old." Lynn and Sterling were both on the ballot for the Camp

bell Award for best new writer in 1978. James Patrick Kelly, member of Swanwick's "new" generation, published his first story around the same time as John Varley. What sort of "generation" is this, separated from its predecessor by a few paper-thin months?

Valid generational boundaries cannot possibly be drawn until many years afterward—if they can ever be drawn at all. It is wise to remember that Kate Wilhelm, Damon Knight, Gene Wolfe, John Varley, and George Martin to name just a few "old" writers have all published their best work of their careers in the 1980s, and some of the writers Swanwick writes of will undoubtedly not produce their best work for a decade more. Writers are usually placed in the generation in which they produced their best work, or had their greatest influence. Wilhelm, Knight, Wolfe, Varley, and Martin will almost certainly be remembered as among the premiere sf writers of the eighties—right along with Gibson and Shepard. Yet some who are already listed by Swanwick as being major writers of the eighties will surely be remembered, if they are remembered at all, as writers of the nineties or the early 21st century.

We're all so very young, after all, most of us live so long. Is Frederik Pohl a Futurist? He was a writer of the seventies, when with *Man Plus* and *Gateway* he became the only writer ever to win the novel Nebula two years in a row? Or is he a writer of the eighties, when he is arguably doing his best writing ever?

Swanwick is wrong to give even a moment's credit to the notion that those writers whose work was first noticed before the eighties are "past" writers. Nobody's a "writer of the past" until he's dead. A writer who is alive and working today is of the present generation. It is inconceivable in the extreme to announce anyone's literary death. When he writes his magnum opus in his seventieth year, you'll look like a fool for having written his literary obituary.

#### WHAT TO LEAVE IN, WHAT TO LEAVE OUT

Does this labeling of "groups" and "generations" matter? Very much, I think. For when an article like Swanwick's appears in a magazine as important to the field as *Isaac Asimov's*, it carries great authority. Let those named as "Cyberpunk" and "Humanist" be pleased or disgruntled with what Swanwick said about them—in terms of their careers, that article does them nothing but good. Yet it does incalculable harm to the majority of the best young writers of science fiction today. They may well read that article, see that their names and their works are not deemed worthy of mention, and wonder if they are somehow less important than the writers Swanwick names.

Swanwick's list of New Writers Worth Discussing will seem to some of them at least, to be the Book of Life, and all those not included are literally either dead or not yet born.

And it just ain't so, folks. The writers Swanwick lists are, with only a few exceptions, very talented and have produced some brilliant work. They have also produced a lot of slight work, and some real clunkers,

too. How much of their work is brilliant? How many really competent—not just "interesting" or "promising"—novels have they produced? Try this list, which I believe is complete:

**Excellent Novels by New Li-Fi Writers:**  
William Gibson's *Neuromancer*  
Rudy Rucker's *The Secret of Life*  
Howard Waldrop's *Them Bones*  
Kim Stanley Robinson's *Iceheaven* and *The Wild Shore*  
James Patrick Kelly's and John Kes-  
sel's *Freedom Beach*

You may argue with my choices, adding some here, subtracting some there, but if you know these books you will understand the level of competence I am insisting on. Beyond originality or freshness or boldness, they must have craftsmanship. A structure that works. Climax and closure, clarity and coherence. It is possible to be original, fresh, and bold, and still write an incompetent book; these books, however, are very good by every standard. Except for the Rucker novel, they are also their authors' first or second novels.

Compare them now with some of the outstanding work coming from other writers who are unarguably of their "generation" (as Swanwick uses the term): i.e., they emerged in the eighties—by not of their group. Most of these are also first or second novels:

**Excellent Novels by Other New Writers:**  
Michael Ruhe-McDowell's *Emprise* and *Enigma*  
Leigh Kennedy's *The Journal of Nicholas the American*  
Steven R. Boyett's *The Architect of Sleep* and *The Geography of Dreams*  
Mike Resnick's *Santiago*  
John E. Stith's *Memory Blank*  
Stephen Brust's *Brokedown Palace*  
Sheila Finch's *Triad*  
John Maddox Roberts's *King of the Wood*  
Megan Lindholm's *The Wizard of the Pigeons*  
Tim Powers's *The Anubis Gate* and *Dinner at Deviant's Palace*

Every book I have just listed is at least the equal of most of the books I placed in the Li-Fi list—in their originality, their freshness, and, above all, their craftsmanship. They also tend to have more of the attributes that I value most highly: penetrating clarity, responsible moral vision, believable societies, and compelling, unrelenting tension that

makes them, not only admirable, but also unflaggingly entertaining.

Except for the Powers and Lindholm novels, I dare say these books are unknown to most members of the Li-Fi group. Swanwick offers a brief mention of Tim Powers and nods to "significant writers I've had to leave out" (and you can be sure that the ones he thought were really significant are definitely included); otherwise there is no hint in Swanwick's article that he knows of these writers, or even that he thinks he needs to mention them in order to make the cutting edge of science fiction. There is no hint, in other words, that non-Li-Fi writers could possibly be as important, as vital to an understanding of the newest generation of science fiction writers, as those Swanwick lists.

I believe those two lists combined give an idea of what is going on among the best science fiction and fantasy writers who have emerged in the eighties.

#### HYPOPIA

Why weren't these non-Li-Fi writers mentioned by Swanwick? Obviously, because they don't belong to the group he was talking about. Like our supposed "Humanist" critic, Swanwick is oblivious to their existence. There was no malice in the omission. But the omission still invalidates his account. If Swanwick had actually presented an overview of the best new writers of the eighties, these writers could not have been left out of his article. That they were left out is proof of narrowness of vision.

I speak not of Swanwick's vision alone. Almost the entire Li-Fi community ignores most of these books. When they think of "other" writing, the sort of stuff they don't bother discussing, they generally think of "popular sf." The names they toss about contemptuously are Brin, Niven, Zahn, Chalker, Hogan; they hold up Palmer's *Emergence* as the epitome of propeller-beanie writing. They generally assume that all writing which isn't demonstrably Li-Fi is *de rigueur* the "kind of stuff Niven does" and therefore not worth reading.

I should note that these "popular sf" writers are often better than the Li-Fi group thinks—generally, the Li-Fi group doesn't understand what it is in "popular sf" that it values and audience value so highly. That's fine—the "popular sf" writers are generally just as contemptuous of the Li-Fi set. It's an old argument—it dates from the 1960s.

Yes, that's right, the 1960s, folks. That's the last time it was even close to being true that the sort of science fiction was divided between Old Wave and New Wave writers—the equivalents of today's "popular sf" and Li-Fi writers. Yet that's how most Li-Fi writers seem to perceive the field today, when it is hopelessly untrue.

#### WHO'S REALLY NEW?

"Humanists" are unquestionably in the literary tradition of the New Wave of Le Guin, Knight, Delany. The Cyberpunk faction of Li-Fi pretends to



be as innovative and rebellious, and certainly is as noisy, as Ellison and Spinnrad were, but the fact is that the Cyberpunk rebellion consists of nothing but the dogmas of the 1960s. They are no more "revolutionary" than the Soviet nomenclatura. I search in vain for any Cyberpunk philosophy more novel than tired old squeals of technophobia and a general air of bored cynicism and omphaloskeptic angst. If the Cyberpunks were really outrageous, they would have old New Wavers like Spinnrad climbing the walls. Instead, Spinnrad is leading the cheering section. Surely that should be the kiss of death for any Cyberpunk claim to the flag of revolution.

The Li-Fi group is just as old-fashioned and quaint as the "popular sf" writers; they all follow decades-old traditions. Nothing is really wrong with that—novelty is not a virtue. There are many fine stories yet to be told within both old traditions. The problem is that Swanwick and some other Li-Fi writers claim that they are, as a group, doing something new—and they are not.

Do you want to see real innovation? Look at Ursula LeGuin's *Always Coming Home*—in form and media the project was genuinely daring and new. Or read Frederick Turner's *The New World*—what Li-Fi writer has even dared to attempt a true, non-science fiction epic poem? For that matter, what Li-Fi writer has been bold enough to reach for real magnificence, like Brian Aldiss's *Helliconia* books or Gene Wolfe's *Book of the New Sun*? Compared to these innovations and achievements—all in the 1980s, mind you—the Li-Fi writers approach insignificance. How in the world can anyone consider them to be charting the "directions and aims and goals" of science fiction? There are giants and seers in this place; the rest of us are children who can't yet guess how tall we'll grow or how deeply we might dream.

Even if you are determined to omit anyone who achieved prominence in the field before 1982, the Li-Fi group does not have the field to itself. The non-Li-Fi writers whose excellent books I listed (and these are just the best of the novelists—there are many others, some of whom have been published only in shorter forms) don't belong in either the New Wave or the "popular sf" camp. Some, like Tim Powers, are consciously trying to create fiction that partakes of some "literary" techniques, but avoids those that interfere with clarity, tension, and identification; others are simply writing what feels right to them. Whatever their intent, they all seem to be achieving a successful synthesis of both traditions. Their books may not all appeal to you as much they do to me—it would be surprising if they did. But you cannot understand the "new generation" of science fiction without them.

(NOT A MODERN SCIENCE FICTION WRITER)

There is no such group as the "Humanists"—it is a critical fabrication.

Li-Fi writers are not, as a group, doing much that's new.

Some of the Li-Fi writers are among the best of the new writers, but



there are many other new writers who are at least as good, and some who are better. Most of the Li-Fi writers are among the talented but not-yet-accomplished majority.

As to the 1984 Nebulas, which Swanwick makes much of, and the attitudes of other sf writers, most members of SFWA (the Science Fiction Writers of America) were surely as surprised as I was to learn from Swanwick's article that the 1984 Nebulas were a one-on-one contest between *Neuromancer* and *The Wild Shore*.

Since my own favorite among the finalists that year was *Thien Bone*, I am perhaps more inclined to remember that there were six novels on that ballot, not two.

It is also good to remember that *Neuromancer* did not win with "embarrassing ease." That is an unjustified insult to every other finalist on that ballot. To my knowledge, no novel has ever won the Nebula as the first choice of a majority of SFWA members. There have always been more SFWA members who preferred some other book to the one that won. I have no reason to believe 1984 was an exception, and neither does Swanwick.

Moreover, anyone who thinks the Nebulas are a one-on-one contest between one group of sf writers and another is living in a dream world; most Nebula voters had no notion that such groups as Cyberpunks and "Humanists" existed, and of those who knew of the groups, precious few cared. They just voted for the books they liked. That's what the award means. The Nebula is a recognition of merit, not a trophy of war.

#### WEEKS' THE HARM?

The Li-Fi writers have their manifestos and their celebrants, their journals, slogans, icons, and battle cries. They are a small group, an intense group, a loud group, a talented group. Through hype such as Swanwick's article, they may even succeed in becoming the "in" group. But their agenda is not the agenda of science fiction as a whole. They are barely discovering the questions; they certainly do not have the answers.

Swanwick's article could have been an excellent introduction to this quarrelsome family of fine young writers. There would have been no harm in this, because these writers are almost as good as Swanwick says they are, and some are better. Modesty forbade Swanwick from giving himself his due, but he is one of the best of them. Their work is often exciting;

even when it fails, it is almost always worth reading.

Yet if you were to read every word written by every one of them, then, while you would have read some of the best science fiction being published today, you would also have read some of the worst.

And if you were to read nothing but their work, you would certainly miss the majority of the best and most important science fiction of the eighties.

By claiming it was an overview of the best "new" writing of the eighties, Swanwick has turned his article into hype. Though he certainly intended nothing of the kind, he has ended up promoting his friends at the expense of other new writers whose work is just as deserving of attention. I have already named some of them. There are many others—Karen Joy Fowler, Lillian Stewart Carl, Rebecca Brown, M. Coleman Easton, Will Shetterly, Edward A. Byrnes, Andrei Zein, Wayne Chmura, Bob Buckley, David Zindell, Dave Sneds, Jim Alkin, Brad Strickland, Harry Turtledove; if I were writing an overview instead of refuting one, they are certainly among those whose work I would present as the best of the new writers'.

And, while Swanwick's article won't harm the careers of the writers he mentioned, it might easily end up causing some personal harm, for some of the writers that he praises may actually believe that they are as important to the field of science fiction as Swanwick says they are. The more they believe that, the more it will hurt when a more accurate perspective is forced upon them.

#### UPS AND DOWNS

There is only one real Cyberpunk, and his name is William Gibson. He has written a series of vigorous, dazzling stories set in a high-tech future where computers interface directly with the human brain. It is a plausible, compelling vision, a powerful milieu. But it is not a literary movement.

There are many writers who admire Gibson's work. A smaller group shares his values. An even smaller group occasionally imitates his style or sets stories within his milieu.

But Gibson's cyberfuture is no more compelling and is somewhat less believable than, for instance, the milieu of Lucius Shepard's Central American stories. Shepard, too, has excited admiration, and already a few imitations have cropped up—stories of jungle wars in the Americas, with high-tech weapons, helpless citizens, and dazed, stoned soldiers.

Just as Gibson's "future" is really a jazzed-up look at the drug culture of the sixties, so Shepard's "future" draws heavily on memories of the Vietnam War. That's perfectly natural. When science fiction writers of the fifties wrote stories about "future" wars with Russia, they were really writing about World War II, with the righteous allies fighting to the death with an apocalyptic evil empire. Our near-future stories almost always speak most eloquently of the recent past.

Shepard's work is excellent and important; more so, I dare say, than

Gibson's, without taking an ounce away from Gibson's undoubted achievement. Yet neither of them is a literary revolution, except insofar as every writer with a clear, fully-developed vision is a revolution.

The time will soon come, unfortunately, when Gibson's imitators will have flooded the field with so many ersatz-Gibson stories that Gibson's own work will seem derivative and trite. If Gibson does not branch out--and soon--into something that does not sound like more of the same, he will find that all this talk of a "movement" was swamp gas. The audience will be looking for another novelty. Jaded with cyberpunkery, they will turn away from the first, best Cyberpunk.

In fact, if recent literary history is any teacher, that will happen whether Gibson broadens his work or not.

The careers of many "hot young writers" seem to follow a similar trajectory. When they're new, their writing is such a surprise that they attract a lot of attention. They are told to tell their friends ("Have you seen what this new guy is doing?"), and the new writer's power and vision and voice are sharp as lightning, powerful as thunder.

But after a while the novelty wears off. When they were new, it was easy to overlook the flaws in their work. Now, though, the cracks seem to be crevices; we hardly notice what is solid; we have eyes only for the places that are crumbling away.

A shift of metaphors: Instead of jumping on your bandwagon or joining your parade, people start to heckle you.

From criticism to scorn, from scorn to cruelty, the long knives come out, and they lie in wait to cut you up in literary alleyways.

Yet even the critical guggings are better than what comes next: silence.

I was at a convention in Denver in those halcyon days when I was still a "hot new writer." George Martin and I had a few moments of conversation. I had come in second for a couple of Hugos by then, but I was ruefully doubting that I'd ever win. "Oh, losing isn't so bad," said George. "Just wait till the first time you don't even get on the ballot."

That day came, and I remembered his words, and he was right. It hurt. I was writing much better than I had back when I was regularly getting nominations. My novels *Working*, *Chronicle* and *Bart's Hope* were ambitious, for me at least, and certainly better than any of my nominated work had been. Yet as far as I knew no one in the entire world had read the books.

In fact, almost no one had. I wasn't hot any more. Three months after my latest book came out, people asked me what had happened to me, why I hadn't written anything in years. It was as if I had written my words on water. Then, after a while, people took note again. I have tried to find the difference in my own work. I don't think that the main difference is there. I think it is a pattern of the community, not of the individual.

The fact is that the same cycle has been followed, more or less, by

many other "hot young writers." It happened, to one degree or another, to George Martin, Carolyn Cherry, Barry Longyear, Somtow Sucharitkul. Swanwick's article is proof of that, if you want proof. At one time or another, each of these writers was the best thing since corned beef. Swanwick seemed almost oblivious to their existence.

The same thing will happen to William Gibson and Lucius Shepard. The long knives are already slicing away at them, but soon enough even the nastiness will fade. "Oh, another Gibson novel," they'll murmur. "It just can't be as good as *Neuromancer*." "Whatever happened to Lucius Shepard?" they'll ask, even though he'll be writing as well and publishing as much as ever. Someone else will be called the "cutting edge of science fiction."

It will have nothing to do with their talent or skill. They are both getting better. Their only problem is that they aren't getting any newer.

Fortunately, this phase doesn't last long. If you can hold on and keep writing, trying new things, learning new skills, the audience will come back, they will notice you again. Not with the white-hot excitement they felt when you were new, but perhaps with the far deeper and longer-lasting understanding that comes between a mature storyteller and his natural audience. When they want you for your stories, not for your novelty, then it becomes a marriage instead of a fling--it will last. There may be ups and downs, but you'll never shout in a vacuum again.



#### RIVERS OF FICTION

One type of writer discovers his voice and vision early, and never wavers from it, regardless of what the rest of the world is doing. Kurt Vonnegut, R.A. Lafferty, Philip K. Dick, Isaac Asimov, and David Bunch come to mind.

It happens that Vonnegut's quirky voice caught on with a large public, as did Bradbury's rhapsodic storytelling style and Asimov's clean but irresistible prose. Their narrow focus and idiosyncratic manner did not bar them from a wide audience.

Dick's style and vision found disciples among the most talented young writers, so while his audience was not large in his lifetime, his

fame and influence will be felt for years to come. Lafferty and Bunch have remained minority tastes--though we who savor their work find it wonderfully rewarding.

None of these writers has shown the slightest sign of wavering from the course they charted in the first three nanoseconds of their literary Big Bangs.

Among today's young writers, Felix Gotschall, James Blaylock, and William Gibson seem to be following that same path. Each writes stories that are instantly recognizable as his own, so that if you like one of his stories, you will probably like them all; and if you hate one, you will no doubt hate the others, too.

They are like rivers in a canyon. They cut deep; they carve away out of stone; they flow forever in the same channel.

At the other extreme, the writer is like a river on a level plain. He may run in a familiar channel for a while, but when flood season comes you never know where the main flow will end up. You have to keep revising the literary map, because he'll never stay in the same place for long.

Think of William Goldman, who has ranged from literary novels to thrillers, from comedy to fantasy to science fiction. It is as if he seeks in each novel to master a new genre, and twist its familiar icons into unaccustomed shapes.

Or think of John Hersey, who has written some of the finest science fiction of our time--*White Lotus*, *The Child Buyer*, and *My Petition for More Space*--while also writing journalistic fiction like *Hiroshima* and *The Wall*.

Even though they are not generally acknowledged as science fiction writers, both Hersey and Goldman have matched the best writers in our field--and in any other field they tried. They are not bound by any channels; they simply flow over the formidable levees publishers erect between the commercial genres. They cannot be contained. They almost never write the same way twice.

That is the pattern Lucius Shepard has followed from the start. His Central American stories are leading to one exquisite and agonizing novel, but then he will be through with them all along, he has been writing other types of story, and will continue to do so.

Bruce Sterling, supposedly a Cyberpunk, likewise plays this game like a basketball player whose elbows are everywhere, commanding the genre to stand back and give him room to shoot. The author or co-author of "Dinner at Audoghost," "Green Days in Brunel," "Storming the Cosmos," and *Schismatrix*, while not always successful, is also not easy to predict.

Neither tendency is absolute, and neither is better than the other. Mary Renault is no less brilliant a writer of historicals because all her stories have been set in ancient Greece, nor is James Clavell the worse for having focused on the orient. Robert Perker's Spenser and Gregory McDonald's Fletch reveal no poverty of imagination, any more than Melville should have been ashamed for writing about the sea. Great rivers can flow through deep and narrow canyons.

Still, I can't help but feel more excitement when I think about the future of Karen Fowler, Jim Kelly, Lucius Shepard, Sheri Tepper, Mike Resnick, Steven Boyett, Rebecca Brown, John Stith, Bruce Sterling. I may not like everything they do, not everything they attempt, but I think they will succeed, but they will never be repetitive or dull, and as they grow they will probe all the boundaries of storytelling and teach me things I never knew were possible. They'll fill all over the landscape, while the old channels labeled "Cyberpunk" and "Li-Fi" and "popular sf" will eventually be dry.

#### IS THERE ANYTHING NEW UNDER THE SUN?

Maybe.

Two 1986 novels, John Maddox Roberts's alternate-universe fantasy *King of the Wood* and Mike Resnick's western/detective/mystery/space opera *Santiago*, have both used genre epic heroes with stunning results. (I speak not of the literary form but of the protagonist.) It's an ancient tradition, dating from Hector, Achilles and Gilgamesh, but applied to science fiction it feels powerful and new.

We have long had romantic heroes—the wandering knight errant/cowboy/space trader who stumbles into adventures and wins through superior virtue or dumb luck.

The New Wave brought us the rogue, who doesn't give a damn, and the common man, who is perpetually baffled as greatness is thrust upon him. (For my fellow pedants, let us identify these as Frye's "Ironical" and "Low Mimetic" fictional modes.)

The epic hero is far more than any of these. He is chosen, anointed without ever asking for the job, but then he willingly consents to act out his assigned role—none of the winning and reluctance that have diminished genre heroes from Paul Atreides and Thomas Covenant to Brin's Postman. The epic hero is flawed, he can fail, but he accepts his assigned role and fulfills it as best he can.

The epic hero is not mindlessly violent; he is no Rambo. He recognizes what is possible and does not attempt more; he causes no more damage and takes no more risk than that which he cannot avoid.

The epic hero begins, not as the king, but rather as the champion of the king; yet still he has the responsibility for all the people in his care. Unlike the rogue heroes of the Cyberpunks, the epic hero knows that some things are worth dying for, and some things are worth living for; unlike the common-man heroes of the Functionists, he also knows that some things are worth killing for. He is, in other words, neither a cynic nor an idealist. He sees what is desirable and possible and does his best to achieve it. He often suffers. Sometimes he fails, he even weeps—but he does not whine.

Above all, he is keenly aware of honor and good fame. It is not hype when he wants his story to be told; he lives a life that poets write about, and he seeks out others whose exploits are worthy of stanza and couplet. The good opinion of honorable men and women is the only reward he expects, because it is the only reward worth having.

Both Roberts and Resnick wrote novels that explicitly followed this pattern. In the process they threw out many bad habits that have deep roots in our genre. The result is a storytelling of remarkable power and vigor, and a moral vision of abiding truth. I cannot predict whether their novels, and others like them, are the beginning of a major shift in the literary forms of science fiction and fantasy, or merely brilliant aberrations. But if we are going to have a revolution, I vote for this one.

The epic hero stands for something. He is, in fact, a grown-up. Grown-up heroes have been in short supply in science fiction. Most of our heroes have been children, adolescents, or single men and women unable to create and sustain permanent relationships. They have no roots, no future, no home, no connections. Some few may want to grow up, but they haven't, they don't, they can't. Cyberpunks and other li-fi writers have blindly followed the tradition of adolescent heroes, without exception. Gibson's heroes are no more adult than Niven's or Bradbury's.

Yet the grown-up protagonist is beginning to show up, even where the writer is not explicitly writing an epic hero. Kate Wilhelm's *Buyman's Pets* features a protagonist who remains utterly bound to his marriage even after it has officially ended—a responsibility he has undertaken until death, regardless of the divorce decree. Frederick Pohl's *The Coming of the Great Cats* begins with a hero, but their path through time leads inexorably to stability and commitment; his characters grow up.

The grown-up hero figures in what may well be the best novelet of 1986, Geoff Ryman's "O Happy Day," which appeared in *Interzone*. The *First Anthology* (St. Martin's). The brutal act set among honor-knights who survive by helping the ruling women in their Hitler-style extermination of violent men. The hero follows the epic paradigm in almost all details; when he makes connections, it is a truly revolutionary act.

The sudden appearance of the grown-up hero in science fiction is a significant, substantive change. One has only to compare these works to the best, most mature novel yet produced by the Li-Fi group, Jim Kelly's and John Kessel's *Freedom Beach*. Unlike Gibson's morally dead hero in *Countdown*, Kessel and Kelly are reaching for a grown-up protagonist; their psychologically adolescent hero longs for a permanent connection. But he cannot sustain it; it remains out of his reach. *Freedom Beach* is a complete, superbly written, satisfying novel; but it remains a story of adolescent frustration—in short, a completely traditional science fiction story, however it is decorated with excellent, imaginative writing.

On the other hand, Leigh Kennedy's *The Journal of Nicholas the American*, certainly as literally admirable as *Freedom Beach*, does bring its protagonist to adulthood. Nicholas, the sole member of the last generation of a family of empathic heroes, takes responsibility for his family and, in a way, for all of society, at great cost to himself. Part of the cost has been an inability to commit himself fully to a woman; in this he resembles the

hero of *Freedom Beach*. But in *Nicholas the American*, the hero crosses the boundary, and makes the commitment unto death, not once but twice.

The Kennedy novel is not necessarily "better" than the Kelly/Kessel book. They are both brilliant, admirable. But *Nicholas the American* has something that *Freedom Beach* does not—a hero who, by the end of the book, wins not only my sympathy but also my respect, my admiration, my awe. And, I must admit, he also wins my love. How long has it been since you truly loved the hero of a story?

Resnick, Roberts, Ryman, Wilhelm, Pohl, and Kennedy have all brought their heroes into adulthood. I've also found the same kind of adult hero in Stith's *Memory Blank*, Boyett's *Architect of Sleep*, and Lindholm's *Wizard of the Pigeons*. They all make the commitment unto death, either with a society, as in Resnick's and Roberts's epic tales, with a small community, as in Ryman's and Lindholm's stories, with a family, as in Wilhelm's and Pohl's, or with a friend, as in Boyett's book, or with a lover, as in Kennedy's and Stith's. And the commitment matters. Even when it "fails," it works: it exalts them. It makes them joyful, even in the midst of grief.

I believe in that. I think that's the true heart of it. And within our little genre of sci-fi, it is a genuinely revolutionary tale to tell. It isn't the property of any club or "inner ring." It is available to any writer with the ambition to reach for it and the skill to bring it off.

So I urge you: Ignore the hype surrounding any particular group of writers or kind of story. No one club or inner ring will ever have a monopoly on the writing of the great tales of our time. The real revolutions often go unheralded, or are spoken of by only a few; they are discovered in retrospect, while the fashions that loomed so large at the time are soon forgotten. The writers who matter in any age, the ones whose stories change the communities that receive them, are not the young or the old, the new or the traditional, the revolutionary or the conservative, the elitist or the popular, the mannered or the plain, the daring or the timid.

The writers who matter are the ones who tell the truth as best they can to whatever audience will listen. The stories that change us are the ones we are about, believe, and understand.

I believe that it is shameful to honor or despise a story because of the kind of tale it is, or to praise or attack a writer because of the group he belongs to. Such an attitude only impoverishes us, for it bars us from such that is good and gives us nothing we could not otherwise have had. Or, to paraphrase Paul:

Do not stifle inspiration, and do not despise honest stories, but bring them all to the test and then keep what is good in them and avoid the bad of whatever kind.

—1 Thessalonians 5:21

# INTERVIEW WITH

# JOHN SHIRLEY

BY TAKAYUKI TATSUMI

Takayuki Tatsumi is a 31-year-old Japanese citizen currently working on his Ph.D. at Cornell as a Fulbright Scholar. He has won awards in Japan for his scholarly work (his fields are American Renaissance writers, particularly Poe and Melville, postmodern critical theory and science fiction) and for his SF writings. Tatsumi is an assistant professor at Keio University in Tokyo and a respected literary critic whose writings and interviews have appeared in America in *EXTRAPOLATION*, *SF STUDIES*, *SF GRONICLE*, and *THE NEW ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SCIENCE FICTION*, where he has two entries, one on Poe and one on SF in Japan.

Recently Tatsumi has become interested in that group of writers known by various labels including the Mirror-shades Group (their preference) or (to the rest of the SF community) the Cyberpunks. Tatsumi has conducted a series of interviews with some of the leading figures of this movement, including William Gibson, Bruce Sterling, and John Shirley. These interviews have been appearing in Tokyo in HAYAKAWA'S *SF MAGAZINE*.

John Shirley is no stranger to these pages. A prolific writer with a singular personal vision, Shirley is a major influence on the work of Gibson and Sterling. He is a surrealist and street-smart visionary with one of the most unique voices of modern SF, as his seminal novel *IT COMES A WALKING* and the recent sociopolitical extravaganza *ECLIPSE* will attest.

Tatsumi's insightful interviews with William Gibson and Bruce Sterling can be found in the first issue of *SCIENCE FICTION EYE* (edited by Stephen P. Brown and Dan Steffan) due in January.

portends a radical cultural reawakening in our genre that we hope will transcend the genre and make it possible for us to write science fiction that is read outside the genre, that is transgeneric.

**TATSUMI:** Last time I met Bill Gibson, he was unwilling to use the term cyberpunk. At the panel I just attended, you seem to prefer the term.

**SHIRLEY:** Well, we use it for convenience and, I suppose, because there's something startling in the term. It raises eyebrows. It makes people say: "God, what could that possibly be?" -- so that maybe they pay a little bit more attention to it. In that sense, of course, it's a cheap gimmick. We use what we must use in order to focus attention on the better aspects of the movement. We don't take the term very seriously.

Gibson doesn't want to use it because he doesn't want to be pigeon-holed. He realizes that he's been held up as being the quintessential cyberpunk. He really is the embodiment of it, and that is exactly why he resists being pigeon-holed that way. He doesn't want to be dispensed with: "Oh, it was just that cyberpunk." Just the way some people dispensed with the Angry Young Man, in that aspect of literature: "Oh, such and such a writer was only putting on the fashionable Angry Young Man posture." They only take them seriously in the context of the Angry Young Man. So he wants to avoid that kind of trap. But still he has more or less the same ideals of those of us who acknowledge the term, and he likes our writing, and we like his.

**TATSUMI:** The element of anger in cyberpunk did not come up in my interviews with Bill Gibson and Sterling. You seem to criticize that much better than they.

**SHIRLEY:** I think that cyberpunk obviously has a kind of energy, a kind of tone, that we associate with an angry reaction to things. Anger in itself is not useful. It's what the anger is reacting to -- there are ideas underlying the anger. Ultimately that part will probably fade out of cyberpunk to some extent. It's a kind of fuel that we are using to get the thing (to use a corny science fiction analogy) out of the bounds of gravity.

**TATSUMI:** Before reading *ECLIPSE*, I read your letter to *CHEAP TRUTH* which criticizes someone's negative comments on *NEURONANCIER*, saying that the anger of the punk movement is not a pretension but its essence. I expected you to be the kind of writer who appreciates experience more than imagination. But by reading your work, I found your style experimental and imaginative. It was real and surreal. How do you relate your non-fiction with your fiction, the imaginative thing and the real or actual thing? Are you making a clear distinction?

**SHIRLEY:** I often write on the same themes, when I'm writing non-fiction. I tend to take my non-fiction writing less seriously. I don't think I'm as good at it. To me, when I write non-fiction, it's almost always very informal.

**TATSUMI:** But very exciting.

**SHIRLEY:** When I write an article, I try to infuse the excitement of a face-to-face confrontation and the passion of a personal discussion, when people are really fired up, into it. I think that I probably talk about things that are ephemeral when I'm writing non-fiction.

When I was arguing with Ellison I was pretty young, in my mid-twenties. A lot of it was because I felt science fiction was too complacent, and I was attacking people for the sake of it, because I was trying to generate a dialogue. Because I was bored. Because I felt the field was not fertile anymore, due to its complacency. And also to generate an interest in my fiction, I suppose. Unconsciously I may have done it partly for that reason, to be frank. The argument with Ellison was by accident. Somebody said: "You're imitating Harlan Ellison." Because I was strident, and Ellison was strident, and we were the only two people in the field, almost, who were writing non-fiction passionately, I had to be imitating him. Because these wimps had never heard of it before Ellison. They

**TATSUMI:** I have to confess that I did not recognize you when I attended the cyberpunk panel at NASFIC last summer. But I was attracted by the clarity of your explanation of what's happening in SF in the eighties. What do you think of cyberpunk as a subgenre, or as a movement?

**SHIRLEY:** So far it is a subgenre. I don't think it will take over and dominate the field, but I think it will have an important long-term influence. It will not make the field over into its own image, but it will improve it. Rip-les will spread out into the more conservative elements of science fiction. Cyberpunk is not important for what it is now, but for what it will become. It



had never heard of Genet or Hunter Thompson. I was more imitating someone like Hunter Thompson, if anybody, or Tom Wolfe. So I reacted by saying: "Fuck you! I'm not imitating Ellison. Ellison is a good writer, but he's not trying anymore, he's exploiting his notoriety." I said a lot of things that were exaggerations because I was pissed off. Then Harlan, of course, reacted by writing that I was completely fucked up and I was a complete asshole. I can't think of any other way of putting it. He was totally down on me, because he does not brook any negative response to him very far. So then it escalated and became ridiculous.

The fight with Ellison was childish, really. It was fun, but then Harlan took it too seriously, and, uh... the truth is that I have a lot of respect for him and the things that he's accomplished. But at that time I was interested in making waves because I felt it was a healthy thing, and disrupting things for constructive reasons. It was a punk thing to do. I was in punk music at the time; I suppose the influence was there.

**TATSUMI:** Steve Brown called you the father of punk SF.

**SHIRLEY:** I suppose I wrote some of the earliest things that are connected. The story "What He Wanted" was a very purist story in a lot of ways, but I was young. But despite it's being something juvenile, I think it embodied the kind of attitude I was trying to revive. I thought that science fiction had so much potential that it wasn't using, potential for revolutionary ideas, and I was trying to revive it. So I decided to use punk imagery to do it. I identified with the story. That probably is the first story where I did it. That was in the mid-seventies, so I guess it was the first. It was kind of like Patti Smith punk, or Stooges punk, and also some Frank Zappa influences. So it was like combining those two rock eras. It's a very old-fashioned story now, but at the time it was progressive. Then my novel CITY COME A'WALKIN' was rock-n-roll oriented; there is a lot of punk imagery in it.

**TATSUMI:** I'm interested in your sense of the real and imaginary. For most of us, being able to live the street was a dream that was unlikely to come true. Just as becoming a professional musician must be the same kind of dream for most teenagers. At that time, your real experiences coincided with our visions of alternatives. So you seem to be living a kind of imaginary...

**SHIRLEY:** I was living the things that other people were imagining living? Well, to some extent. I was in a lot of bands. I did live on the streets. I was involved in some illegal street activities, some other stuff I can't go on about. I was in jail a few times. It was a real bad thing for me, because I could have ended up in prison for a long term, and it was only real luck that kept me out. But it was educational. I did learn a lot from it. I lived in a cardboard box in the streets of San Francisco for a week once; that was educational.

**TATSUMI:** Do you consider that kind of experience as actual experience or a part of your fictional world?

**SHIRLEY:** It was actual. This happened to me. But I'm not boasting, it was something I fell into because I was poor. I had no money and I couldn't deal with authority so I couldn't keep a job. I couldn't go to college because I couldn't deal with authority. It is a personal problem that I have, not because I am a romantic figure or anything. But still,

it was a useful influence on my writing, and I think probably on the textural quality of my vision of reality or something. I identify with the underdog a lot more. I understand the underdog in the lower echelons of society better than somebody who hasn't lived like that, I believe. I'm glad that I don't live on the streets anymore, but I'm glad that I did then.

**TATSUMI:** Steve wrote me a letter in which he says that you were always short of food and money. That you were living a kind of chaotic life.

**SHIRLEY:** Yes, it was very chaotic. Until five years ago, when I had children by my ex-wife. She had twins, and then I decided I had to be responsible and make sure I had a steady income so I could continue to pay child support and to see the kids when I can. So I changed my lifestyle to accommodate that. I had already changed it somewhat, but I really made an effort to be fiscally responsible.

**TATSUMI:** In your short stories, you range from drug fantasy, in "What He Wanted," to hard SF like "Will the Chill." I am always conscious of the variety of your style.

**SHIRLEY:** I was younger then, too, and I had not developed a definite style. I was experimenting with different voices. I think I have it more under control now. I found a manner of writing that is probably the one I was intended to have. I don't think I mastered hard SF at all. I managed to make it sound like it.

**TATSUMI:** In the sense that Bill Gibson thinks that it's sometimes safe to be writing hard SF, despite his ignorance of the correct use of...

**SHIRLEY:** He's not ignorant about it, he just doesn't go into the details that much, as much as a hard SF writer would. He hasn't studied as much as they have. But he's usually not inaccurate.

**TATSUMI:** Are you trying to increase the variety of your style from now on?

**SHIRLEY:** Not really. I'm trying to work up a really definite cohesive control over my writing that incorporates all the best elements. Of course, I might occasionally write a pastiche of some kind.

**TATSUMI:** You seem to be really conscious of plot structure. Your endings are always shockers.

**SHIRLEY:** I think such things stand out in the readers' minds. They're more memorable. Of course, I want them to remember my stuff.

**TATSUMI:** A technical requirement.

**SHIRLEY:** In a way it's a technical requirement. It's also a mark of pop literature. I haven't grown out of that yet. I was raised on pulp writers in a lot of ways, and it's probably a bad influence. But I'm growing out of a reliance on gimmicks, into a more mature writing that is still entertaining. I want to write something that's very mature, in depth, literarily sound, with strong characterization. But I don't want to give up the entertainment value at all. Like the better thriller writers. I'm influenced by people like John Le Carré these days, and Len Deighton in his better stuff, and Trevanian sometimes, and Lawrence Sanders.

**TATSUMI:** Hard-boiled?

**SHIRLEY:** Yeah, I like a lot of them, Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler, of course. Richard Stark, who is actually Donald Westlake. He's a great hard-boiled writer. The heroes of his books are criminals, talk about your anti-heroes. The hero is an armed robber, a guy named Parker. Parker's attitude is: "That's the way I am, and I'm going to be practical about it." It's a series of books about a criminal, and at the end of the story he always succeeds in getting away. He's the hero. Which is a kind of punk thing to do in itself, to write such a thing. They're really neatly written, starkly written.

**TATSUMI:** On the other hand, despite the diversity of your style, many of your stories seem to have something in common, maybe the problem of death, as in "Under the Generator." "Gunsbot" demonstrates how psychological illness brings about physical death, while "What It's Like to Kill a Man" treats the matter as a TV show. A recreation of the image of death seems to be your persistent topic. How do you place the role of death in your fiction?

**SHIRLEY:** Well, I think about it a lot, I admit. I was traumatized real young by the recognition that death is inevitable. I've always had a problem accepting it. My father died when I was ten, maybe that had something to do with it. Maybe it sort of flung mortality in my face. So, I thought, here's one of the pre-eminent problems of life, and our psychological confrontation with the reality of having to face it. I think we need to face it more than we do. So I decided that I wanted to explore it, because it's an important theme, and I suppose because it bothered me. I thought about it a lot. I visualized my



death, every day sometimes. I imagined that it could be this way, could be that way. I suppose you could pass it off as a morbid fixation. But I don't know, I think it's trying to comprehend the incomprehensible. It's incomprehensible that we could be subjected to utter annihilation after having been immersed in what to me is an astounding range of awareness -- the surprise and sense of rejection on the part of the universe, as if the universe rejects you. It's as if the universe is saying that it doesn't love you. Trying to deal with that is probably the reason I write about it. And, also, to slap people in the face with it, it wakes them up.

**TATSUMI:** It's not like Philip Dick's obsession with a sense of entropy. I think you are trying to resolve the problem of death by giving some answers, some new understanding.

**SHIRLEY:** Sometimes. I am trying to find reconciliation with death. I haven't succeeded, but I'm looking for it. It is, as Philip Dick has pointed out, and many other people, an integral part of the mechanics of existence.

**TATSUMI:** Do you have any specific vision of science fiction and religion in terms of either orthodox christianity or pop culture?

**SHIRLEY:** The use of religion in science fiction?

**TATSUMI:** Yes, especially NEURONMANNER, as well as SCHISMATRIX, as a kind of vision of something transcendental. What kind of transcendental experience might be seen in your fiction?

**SHIRLEY:** In the form of group consciousness. Collective awareness, shared awareness, the collective unconscious.

I have focused many times on the collective unconscious. CITY COME A'WALKIN' is about the Jungian collective unconscious, which may be a way of dealing with death. It's to some extent described in the rock-and-roll sections of ECLIPSE. "What is a Wand?" is about group minds. I believe in group minds. I've experienced them, and I believe they're real. I'm very sceptical about most psychic phenomena, but I suspect them to be a form of it.

**TATSUMI:** Do you think it has something to do with Gibson or Sterling's sense of that kind of experience?

**SHIRLEY:** To some extent.

**TATSUMI:** Do you think that's really essential to cyberpunk, as a subgenre?

**SHIRLEY:** Not necessarily. But I think that we are interested in an explosion of information that creates a kind of greater mind. Except, in their case, they're thinking of it as a sort of computer mind or technologically linked mind. In my case it's a little more literal. I think that it's an actual psychic. I also think that there's a kind of recognition of explosion of new consciousness that is common to Bill and Bruce, that is something like what you are describing.

**TATSUMI:** One of your fictional characteristics is a displacement of the optic image with the audio image, as in "The Almost Empty Rooms," where you write: "I concentrated on the narrow band of electric charges traveling Simon's optic nerve. I changed what he saw. I concentrated on the narrow band of electric charges traveling his audio nerve. I changed what he heard." We can locate such a displacement in one of your earlier works: "The Modern Transmutation of the Alchemist," in which you treated the theme of music by using a lot of improvisational images, particularly rat and dolphin. Do you find synchronicity be-

tween musical and literary expressions?

**SHIRLEY:** Yes. Rock rhythms are very influential in my style of writing, just as jazz was for Kerouac. Music creates imagery in my mind, and I try to create sharp mental images in other people's minds.

**TATSUMI:** On the other hand, one of your columns is entitled "Paranoid-Critical Statements," which has much to do with Salvador Dali. So that's an image of painterly...

**SHIRLEY:** That was a Dalian term, wasn't it? I had forgotten about that. I was trying to create a new way of looking at things so that everything you looked at seemed alien. All that was familiar became alien, so that you could gain new insights into life by absolute objectivity, through the paranoid-critical method. I did this in a series of short stories, like "The Almost Empty Rooms" and "Tahiti in Terms of Squares." I was trying to shake up the average person's sense of what is real, and to find new insights through what is normally considered a paranoid attitude about reality itself.

**TATSUMI:** So it doesn't have much to do with Dali's paintings?

**SHIRLEY:** He was trying to take mental images and realize them photographically. They were images of things which were not normally perceivable as real objects. So I was trying to do something similar, perhaps in reverse. Take real objects and make them surrealistic, real events and show why they're surrealistic, absurd. I was trying to sharply crystallize imagery.

**TATSUMI:** Painting and music happen to you simultaneously -- the visual image and the physical image.

**SHIRLEY:** I try to create painterly images. I'm influenced by the surrealists in the way that I create scenes, and by film-makers. I'm influenced by Max Ernst, De Chirico and Yves Tanguy, and to some extent Dali, Magritte. I'm not a surrealist, but I'm influenced by the way that they concretized imagery. I create a scene in terms of visual composition, filmic and painterly. Or I try to.

**TATSUMI:** Another characteristic of your work might be called the animation of the inhuman, which you called the collective unconscious. We can find that in the city in CITY COME A'WALKIN'. Useful is this technique in your fiction?

**SHIRLEY:** It's like a symbolic materialization of the notions of what the collective unconscious is. It's almost cartoonlike in that book, kind of simplistic. But that's what I was trying to do. I was trying to get across Jungian ideas with cartoonlike simplicity in order to convey them efficiently. I was trying to animate them, to bring them to life. I was trying to visualize ideas.

**TATSUMI:** You seem to be obsessed with giving a face to something abstract.

**SHIRLEY:** I wanted to make it work. Later I'm more into conventional story-telling, in a way, because I have different concerns. I'm interested in making social and political statements more than abstract metaphysical statements. So I am writing in a way that's appropriate for social and political statements, more about the real world.

**TATSUMI:** So you were thinking of fiction writing as a kind of mimetic or representational thing.

**SHIRLEY:** At that time I was. I can still write that way. I have a book com-



ing out that's like that called A SPLENDID CHaos. But books like ECLIPSE are more about the real world.

**TATSUMI:** Your collaboration with Bruce, "The Unfolding," deals with the animation of INA. What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of collaboration?

**SHIRLEY:** The disadvantage is that they will interpret my ideas their own way, and they will not necessarily be my ideas any more. There'll be some distortion. The advantage is that it probably improves my style to some extent and Bruce helped me bring some things into focus that were blurry. Gives me insights into my insights.

**TATSUMI:** "The Belonging Kind," as well as "The Unfolding" were originally written by you.

**SHIRLEY:** Yes.

**TATSUMI:** You share something with other cyberpunks. For example, the image of mirrorshades buried seamlessly within one's skull was originally invented by you in 1980. On the other hand, you are not as willing to import Japanese things, unlike Bill or Bruce, except for the metaphor of sumo or judo. Do you have any specific opinion about these things?

**SHIRLEY:** I'm not as well educated about Japanese culture and influences as they are. I think it more in a new mainstream novel. A science fiction writer writing about contemporary life, in this case, in a mainstream novel called SOMETHING REAL. One of the characters is Japanese. I think Japanese culture is going to be increasingly influential in Western society. Especially Japanese ability to adapt to technology, and Japanese styles of organization. Their style of corporate organization is going to be very influential.

**TATSUMI:** What about the image of mirrorshades. Do you like that image yourself?

**SHIRLEY:** Yeah, but only for a while.

**TATSUMI:** It's exciting. And Bruce and Bill imitated you.

**SHIRLEY:** They're not imitating me. It's a parallel development to some extent. I mean, perhaps I influenced them some, but Bill is more influenced by Thomas Pynchon, for example.

**TATSUMI:** In reading your SCINTILLATION and THRUST articles, I found you quite active as a science fiction fan writer. I like to consider your critique and your fictionalization of science fiction convention in your Paranoid-Critical Statements to be a manifestation of your sercon fanatic. How do you think of fanatic in general?

**SHIRLEY:** "Sercon fanatic," Jesus! This is an insult!

**TATSUMI:** Why?

**SHIRLEY:** Fandom is deplorable much of



the time. It's concerned with trivial things. They even have trivia panels that draw more attention than anything else at a convention. They've got their heads up their asses, too many of them, and they have bad taste. I'm talking about organized fandom, the ones who attend a lot of conventions. Some of them are great people, some of them are intelligent. But too many of them are narrow-minded and interested in the lowest common denominator in science fiction and fantasy. However, I think there's a lot of untapped potential in them. So I've tried to reach them through fan magazines, to find people amongst them who aren't dillards.

TATSUMI: Don't you enjoy acting in fandom?

SHIRLEY: Yes and no. You can't help but enjoy the attention that you get at conventions. Writers get very little direct feedback, so it's fun to see how you feel that you're real. I'm hypocritical about fandom. There are good things and bad things about it, and I recognize them both. Unfortunately, the bad things too often predominate. Still, I use conventions ruthlessly.

TATSUMI: You appear to me much more concerned with fan activity, fanfics, than Bill or Bruce.

SHIRLEY: That's because it's free publicity for my work. It's not just that I'm trying to make money or promote myself. I am doing those things, but it's also because I think I'm writing books that aren't getting enough attention and deserve attention. I work hard on them, I want people to know about them. When I write in these magazines, it promotes them a little bit. Also, I have things to say to these people. So it's many things together. It's fun, too. It gives me a forum where I can shout. I am also a performer. It's a habitual problem I have. It's a disease. Performance is useful sometimes. It's the bat that hits the ball where you want it to go.

TATSUMI: That's what I use performance for. The ball is the idea, the performance is the bat. I'm trying to learn to be a better batter without swinging wildly, to be a laborer metaphor.

TATSUMI: One of your chief involvements with fandom might be your concern with the systems of SF awards.

SHIRLEY: I used to write about the fact that I thought they were given to the wrong people. Ballard never got one. Poof. He's a great writer and he never got one. That condemns the process right there. Bruce Sterling hasn't gotten one yet, and he deserves one five times over. There are exceptions, Gibson. Obviously I think I should have gotten a little more recognition in that department, but that's not my main motivation in complaining about it, because I don't really take them very seriously in the long run. I would much rather get the NBA, or the Pulitzer, or the Nobel prize for literature. Science fiction awards are like a little game that we play. It's like little kids playing Pulitzer Prize. We will pretend that we have credibility, we'll give ourselves our credibility. Since we are going to do it, we should give it to the right people. It's kind of pathetic.

TATSUMI: You must have some opinion about this year's Nebula.

SHIRLEY: I don't think Orson Scott Card should have won, I think Bruce Sterling should have won. I think Norman Spinrad should have been nominated. Norman should have won an award, he's a good writer.

TATSUMI: What about this year's Hugo nominees?

SHIRLEY: I don't remember who they are. It's not me, I can tell you that, so there is an implicit criticism of them. I think Bruce Sterling is one of them. I think he was nominated. He should win, he probably won't though.

TATSUMI: What are you working on?

SHIRLEY: I just finished the second book of the ECLIPSE trilogy, ECLIPSE PENUMBRA (actually it's called *A SONG CALLED YOUTH* trilogy), which Bluejay Books is going to bring out. I'm going to write the third book, called *TOTAL ECLIPSE*, in which the conflict comes to fruition and the resistance overcomes the fascists. I've written a novel called *A SILENT CHAOS*, that Franklin Watts is publishing. It's a paranoid-critical novel. I'd forgotten that ever used that term. It's the only inter-planetary novel I've ever written, or ever will.

TATSUMI: You've already published several mainstream novels.

SHIRLEY: One, *THE BRIGADE*, which is a thriller, really. That's about it. I've published a horror novel.

TATSUMI: What about your mainstream short stories?

SHIRLEY: I've published a few short stories in obscure underground and avant garde magazines that I've forgotten about. The story "Onshout" is not really science fiction; it appeared in *OUL* magazine.

TATSUMI: You don't plan to collect all of your short stories?

SHIRLEY: Of course, I'd love to. But it's hard to sell a collection of short stories and I haven't found the editor to do it. I'm just not famous enough yet. You need to have a big following, and they need to know that they can make money by putting one together before they'll buy it. Bill Gibson, of course, has one that just came out, because he won several awards and was very hot instantly, deservedly.

TATSUMI: How many short stories have you written?

SHIRLEY: Scores, dozens, I don't know. I've written maybe two hundred. I've published maybe sixty, at the most. Most of the ones I wrote that I didn't publish I threw away. I also threw away a couple of novels.

TATSUMI: And you are going to play in your band, too.

SHIRLEY: I left my old band in New York. I'm starting a new band, but I don't know what it'll be called. It's going to be ballsy music, that isn't very loud, because I want my lyrics to be heard. I don't want to destroy my voice like I used to have to. Still, it's going to be ballsy, like the Velvet Underground used to be. The Velvets, a lot of the time, actually weren't very loud. I'm going to do something like that. It's hard to describe. I tried to give up performing many times, because I think it's probably a juvenile adjunct to my personality, but I am unable to completely give it up. It's frustrating to me.

TATSUMI: What is frustrating?

SHIRLEY: It's frustrating not doing it. The desire to do it is so strong in me. When I see a concert, it tears me apart because I can't perform. Sometimes I think some people were genetically intended to be performers. Maybe it's psychological, I don't know.

TATSUMI: I feel sometimes that it is really hard to define you as a science fiction writer or musician. You are also thinking of yourself as a "belonging kind" of music and of writing. You feel a kind of animation of the collective unconscious.

SHIRLEY: When I'm performing. When a singer performs in a rock band, and he really gets the audience involved, I think that he becomes a shamanistic incarnation of something out of the collective mind. He has to let himself go and let it take him over. I've only achieved it a few times in my life, but I believe that something happened there that was extraordinary, a kind of possession. Maybe it comes entirely from my mind and not from other people's minds. It does not matter, though, because it's effect on the crowd is profound. Its importance is profound. It's a thing that has been missed. I think Hitler missed the same phenomenon. I think that other people have used it to excellent effect. It's more than just leadership. You let something take you over and you personify it. I think it is a kind of shamanism. It's hard to achieve, all the elements have to be right. I describe it in *ECLIPSE*.

TATSUMI: So you might be another incarnation.

SHIRLEY: When the right moment... I have experienced it. I think I have experienced it. I may be kidding myself -- no, I experienced it. Something happened in those moments, with certain crowds. Something possessed me, I felt it. It was an element that connected everyone in the room into one unit. It was the missing link for everyone. But I can't do it at will. It happens from time to time. It's happened even at public speaking events, but mostly in music. Mick Jagger, in his greatest moments, did it a lot, and Bowie. Also Jim Morrison is probably the best example of it. Bruce Springsteen does the shamanistic thing very well. I like him okay. I've never been motivated to buy his records, but when I see him, I see him doing this great thing, and I like him as a person, from what I know of him. I approve of him. So far I haven't seen him do anything pompous. I haven't seen him exploit things pompously; I haven't seen him espouse any causes that I didn't think were just. I think he's a good man.

TATSUMI: Okay, thanks a lot.



# RAISING HACKLES

BY ELTON T. ELLIOTT



## INTRODUCTION:

One last reminder about ELLIOTT'S BOOKLINE: By the time you read this #3 will be out. It features an interview with Isaac Asimov about the Foundation Series and a letter from Piers Anthony on his success in science fiction, seat belts, why he left Del Rey Books, plus the usual news, reviews, opinion, and much more. The subscription price is \$10 for ten issues in North America, \$20 overseas. All overseas copies are shipped by airmail. All checks, in U.S. dollars only, payable to: Elton T. Elliott. My address is:

Elton T. Elliott  
ELLIOTT'S BOOKLINE  
1899 Weissner Dr., NE  
Salem, OR 97303

The magazine is going along fine; the frequency is whenever I get 8 pages done, so far about every 8 weeks. Number 3 should have a print run of about one-hundred.

Finally, since this is my final column, I thought it only fitting it should start with a review of the final novel in the Foundation/Galactic Empire Robot series by Isaac Asimov:

FOUNDATION AND EARTH By Isaac Asimov  
Doubleday, 10/03/86, 356 pp., \$16.95

The Foundation Series, forty-five years in the making, ends with FOUNDATION AND EARTH -- maybe. (More on the "maybe" later.) Isaac Asimov started the series before the U.S. entered World War II, before computers, the atomic bomb, and space travel. Through all of the years and all of the changes, Asimov's writing has remained the same in one important area: He is still the smoothest stylist the field has ever seen. In fact, I think the seeming ease of Asimov's writing has caused him to be overlooked in recent years by SF critics. I suspect this novel will also be dismissed, and that isn't fair, since FOUNDATION AND EARTH, in some ways, is as revolutionary a novel as the field has ever seen. More on that later.

FOUNDATION AND EARTH takes off almost immediately after the end of FOUNDATION'S EDGE. Golan Trevize, former Council member from Terminus, has just decided that the galaxy must not be ruled by either the technocrats of the First Foundation on Terminus, or the mentalists of the Second Foundation on Trantor. Instead, he has decided in favor of a mass planetary mind originating on the planet Gaia, which wants to convert the galaxy into a mirror image of itself, called Galaxia. Trevize, however, fancies himself a rugged individualist and is troubled

led by his decision. He believes Galaxia has limitations but is not sure why. He is also troubled by evidence that somebody has removed all information from the galaxy about the existence of Earth. Somebody powerful enough to destroy library records on Trantor and maybe tamper with the mass mental memories of Gaia herself! Trevize believes the key to the dilemma posed by Galaxia, lies on Earth. He sets out on a quest to find the lost, legendary home planet of the human race. Accompanying him are his friend, the mythologist/historian Janov Pelorot and Pelorot's companion, a Gaian woman named Bliss.

What they find is surprising, although inevitable in hindsight, especially if you've read ROBOTS AND EMPIRE and the pivotal story in Asimov's conception of his future history: "That Thou Art Mindful of Him" (FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION, May, 1974). The ending also ties together the history of the Foundation with that of the Robots, the Spacers, and the novels of the Early Galactic Empire.

In addition, it opens up an entire new area of speculation which has caused one reviewer, Ben Chow of LOOKS, to say, "FOUNDATION AND EARTH begins to tie up a lot of loose ends and is most exciting for what it portends." That's the reason for the qualifier in the first sentence of this review. Maybe it is the end of Asimov's Future History, or maybe it isn't. Whether Asimov writes any more Future History novels after that -- especially, a sequel or sequels to FOUNDATION AND EARTH -- might depend on how frustrated he is to be locked into concepts four decades old, how eager he is to write something different, and how eager his editors are for more Foundation novels.

FOUNDATION AND EARTH shows no signs of tiredness. In fact, quite the opposite. FOUNDATION AND EARTH is, as I've already mentioned, one of the most revolutionary novels in SF. Asimov manages something so unique in the narrative, as Trevize and company are searching through the backwaters of the galaxy to find Earth, that so far nobody in SF has even noticed it. It is a further refinement of what he did in the Foundation Trilogy and FOUNDATION'S EDGE. Let me elaborate. The great majority of novels fall into two groups: novels of character, most often found in Academic/Literary novels, or novels of action/adventure, the dominant form of commercial fiction. Sci-

ence fiction novels solve the dramatic resolutions almost always by action, almost never by thought, and if thought is present, it is there to set up the action. Asimov does the opposite. Rather than having the key dramatic moments in FOUNDATION AND EARTH expressed through action, they are expressed through thought, contemplation and rhetorical argument. Folks, this is not easy to do. In this respect, FOUNDATION AND EARTH is just as revolutionary as anything the cyberpunks have ever done. (Although Asimov's concerns would not be out of place in Bruce Sterling's marvelous cyberpunk novel, SCHISMATRIX.)

To accomplish this, Asimov has had to go back to one of the earliest forms of literature, the Socratic Dialogue. This is necessary, because in order to work, any drama needs tension, and the only way to get tension out of a novel whose major thrust is toward thought and not action, is to have two characters take opposite viewpoints and argue. Asimov does this and is able to get dramatic tension without physical action.

This is far more difficult to pull off than a cleverly plotted space battle. The author has to be thinking at all times, which in most SF and Fantasy is not always a given. The sides chosen have to be interesting and well thought out. Fortunately, Asimov has done both.

The central argument concerns the level of cooperation needed in a society for it to survive, again similar to SCHISMATRIX. The Gaian woman, Bliss, argues for a galactic mass mind (Galaxia) to prevent wars, and Golan Trevize argues for a rugged individualism, with a loose social order to maximize individual rights and freedoms. I cannot imagine a more important issue facing humanity, either now or at the time of the novel, twenty thousand years from now. I suppose it is no secret that I'm a libertarian (small "l", the Libertarian Party is a joke). Obviously, I support freedom and liberty, only in times of crises might the concerns of society outweigh those of the individual. And it is here that Asimov has seemingly loaded the dice. Without telling how the argument comes out, for that is central to the end of the novel, and without telling which character says the following, I will quote what I consider to be the most persuasive argument for the Gaian side:

"Hyperspatially, the Galaxy is a point -- and so is all the Universe. We have not visited any other galaxy, and, as far as we know, no intelligent species from another galaxy has ever vis-

ited us -- but that state of affairs may end someday. And if the invaders come they are bound to find ways of turning some human beings against other human beings. We have so long had only ourselves to fight that we are used to such internecine quarrels. An invader that finds us divided against ourselves will dominate us all, or destroy us all. The only true defense is to produce Galaxia, which cannot be turned against itself and which can meet invaders with maximum power."

-- FOUNDATION AND EARTH, PP. 355-356.

An intriguing argument for the other side is found in James H. Schmitz' novel, *THE DEMON BREED*, wherein a discussion about how the government in charge of the Hub (the place where most of the action in Schmitz' stories takes place) does not actively support "longevity programs, eugenics projects and the like." One character says:

"...man evolved as a very tough, alert and capable creature, well qualified to look out for what he considered his interests. The War Centuries honored those qualities. They're being even more effectively honed today. I think it's done deliberately. The Overgovernment evidently isn't interested in establishing a paradisaic environment for the harmless citizen. Its interest is in the overall quality of the species. And man as a species remains as dangerous, as voracious a creature. The Overgovernment restricts it no more than necessity indicates. So it doesn't support the search for immortality -- immortality would change the creature. In what way, no one can really say. Eugenics might change it, so eugenics projects aren't really favored, though they aren't interfered with. I think the Overgovernment prefers the species to continue to evolve in its own way. On the record, it's a good well. They don't want to risk eliminating genetic possibilities which may be required eventually to keep it from encountering some competitive species as an inferior."

-- THE DEMON BREED, pp. 136.

I did not choose the above quotation at random. James H. Schmitz wrote mostly for John W. Campbell, an editor notorious for inserting his own concepts and opinions, in his own words, into the stories he bought. It is possible the above quote owes as much to Campbell as it does to Schmitz. Isaac Asimov worked very closely with Campbell during his early years as a writer. In fact, it was Campbell who suggested that Asimov turn a story idea about the decline and downfall of a galactic empire (originally inspired by Edward Gibbon's *THE DECLINE AND FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE*), into what became the *Foundation Trilogy*. As much as Asimov was helped by Campbell, they had their differences, mostly over politics, and Asimov chafed, understandably, over the fact that Campbell would sometimes interleave his own thoughts into Asimov's stories. This had a dramatic impact on Asimov's entire *Future History* series, particularly the *Foundation* stories. Asimov recounts, in *THE EARLY ASIMOV*, what happened to his story, "Homo Sol."

"I did not like Campbell's attitude concerning humanity vis-a-vis other intelligences and it took two revisions of 'Homo Sol' before Campbell finally let me close enough to what he wanted. Even then, he inserted several paragraphs, here and there, without consulting me, in the final version."

"I tried to avoid such a situation in future ... I began to think of stories involving a galaxy populated by human intelligences only ...

"... the fact is I was only trying to avoid a collision with Campbell's views; I did not want to set up a situation in which I would be forced to face the alternatives of adopting Campbell's views or a found then repugnant and failing to sell a story (which I also found repugnant)."

-- THE EARLY ASIMOV, pp. 203-204.

It seems to me, that in a sense, Asimov is holding a Socratic Dialogue with John Campbell's ghost, in which one side (Galaxia's) represents his own views and the other, (Trevize's) in some sense those of John W. Campbell. The conclusion of *FOUNDATION AND EARTH* certainly seems diametrically opposed to Campbell's viewpoint. Such is the power that Campbell had over those he worked with that over a decade and a half after his death, he still is there as a voice of support or opposition in the writings of many authors, not just Asimov. The ending of *FOUNDATION AND EARTH* does foreshadow a breaking free of Campbell's shadow, and so I hope that if any sequels are written, maybe the side of less control can get a better chance. Or at least without Campbell's ghost so obviously around, more of a sense of ambivalence could be hinted at.

I enjoyed *FOUNDATION AND EARTH*. The ending promises exciting times, but mainly I like it because it is a novel of unrelenting philosophical concepts that can force you to think, to confront uneasy thoughts, and maybe admit the possibility of solutions that are in themselves unnerving. It is a novel that could only be done as Science Fiction. No other genre of fiction is as concerned with the future, and given our age of rapid technological change, no other genre is as pertinent.

This novel deserves every consideration at award time, if for no other reason than that it makes you think, and isn't that what Science Fiction is all about!

#### MUSINGS:

■ The recent plethora of mergers and purchases in the publishing industry is not good for writers or readers. A.G. Bertelsmann of West Germany now owns Doubleday, Bantam and Dell. I think it will hurt writers to have independent markets disappear, and readers'll have less of a choice. I also dislike seeing that much of America's publishing power be nominated for Hugos. The Best Editor Hugo is a joke until the fans start nominating book editors. Let's nominate Don Wollheim and some of the rest.

■ I applaud Lester del Rey's decision to refuse the posthumous Hugo given to Judy-Lynn del Rey. She and Don Wollheim and many others have worked in SF as book editors for decades and most have never been nominated for Hugos. The Best Editor Hugo is a joke until the fans start nominating book editors. Let's nominate Don Wollheim and some of the rest.

■ Ballantine is still reeling over Judy-Lynn del Rey's death. The major profit center for the company was the Del Rey SF line. Some say panic has set in, top executives have been fired, print runs have been cut. Whatever the case internally, they have lost the number-one selling SF author of the eighties, Piers Anthony. Ballantine should consider switching to a multiple-editor system like Tor's, before they lose more of the market.

4E 2B 70:

On Friday, November 17, 1986, in Los Angeles at the Biltmore Hotel, Forrest J Ackerman is throwing a celebration commemorating his 70th year on Earth and 60th in Science Fiction.

I was one of five-hundred that Forry invited, and I thank him. As of now, October the 8th, it looks like I'll be unable to attend, so I'd like to thank Forry publicly for the impact he has had on SF, the SF Cinema, and on my career.

Without Forry, the SF field would look a lot different. In addition to his coining the word sci-fi, Forry was in the forefront of getting SF fandom off the ground. He was one of the first to actively write the magazines and others fans. He was one of the first collectors and now owns probably the world's largest and most important collection of SF and related memorabilia. He also started the tradition of wearing costumes at SF conventions.

Forry's magazine, *FAMOUS MONSTERS OF FILMLAND*, inspired many young readers, who later became movie directors, producers, and screenwriters. Among those who have acknowledged Forry's impact and influence, are George Lucas, Steven Spielberg and Stephen King. I think it is safe to say that there would have been no *STAR WARS* or *E.T.*, without Forry. Or if they were made, they would have been far different without the inspiration that *FAMOUS MONSTERS* supplied their creators. And of course, as a consequence of those pictures, many fortunes in visual and written SF, would not be as great.



In written Science Fiction, Forry's contributions have been largely overlooked. As we all know, it is very easy to overlook the Forrys of the world. In fact, sometimes I think Forry doesn't give himself enough credit. The bookazine concept that he pioneered with Perry Rhodan is so radical that today most in SF do not realize its potential. Only Forry could come up with a concept so far ahead of its time that, even in a field which deals with concepts ahead of their time, it would be unappreciated and almost unrecognized. The idea of a series story which serves as the anchor for a magazine in paperback form, was so original that it passed through the SF field unrecognized as the ground-breaking work of genius it really was. (Sometimes I think even Forry doesn't quite realize what he did.) If I had the opportunity to edit an SF paperback line, I would bring his concept out of mothballs. Oh, I don't mean the Perry Rhodan stories, they are rather pedestrian, but the feeling of family and community that Forry brought to the bookazine. In that is the secret of what brings readers to the field, keeps them there, and sometimes turns them into fans and writers.

I remember my first attempts at reading SF: *THE BLACK CLOUD* by Fred Hoyle,

STAR BORN by Andre Norton. They were enjoyable enough, but not so compelling that I had to buy more. And then I picked up the Perry Rhodan series, #6 and #9, and shortly after, all the others I could get my hands on. Forry opened up the world of SF, made it seem fun, and made a rather brash kid feel at home. For that if nothing else, I thank Forry. But he also, through his editorials (particularly, the one about John W. Campbell's death), brought a sense of SF's history to the series. I think it was this more than anything, that turned me into a fan, into someone who has an ongoing love affair with SF. And if, in later years, it has turned more into a love affair with what SF can be, rather than what it is, it still goes back to that store where I first picked up two paperback with gaudily colored covers.

Thanks, Forry, I'll never forget your hospitality those several weeks in 1982 when I visited you and your lovely wife, Wendy (who deserves all kinds of praise for the superlative job she did in translating all those Perry Rhodan episodes from German into English. It is difficult to make works from another language exciting, but Wendy did.) I wish that the interviews I did with you had been published as a biography, but it was not to be.

I remember you discussing with me your philosophies, why you've been a lifelong atheist, and the special responsibility you believe that decision has given you. I don't pretend to have all the answers to all of the mysteries of our universe, and all the others that might possibly exist, but I do know that you have always been unfailingly friendly to me, and have acted more like how a Christian is supposed to, than most who profess to be one.

Happy birthday, Forry, and I plan to celebrate your hundredth with you -- on the Moon in 2016!

#### FINAL WORDS:

Well, this is it. After almost ten years, this is my last column for SFR. I have had something in each of the last forty issues. That is enough. I had planned to stop my column with this issue in any case, so even if REG continues SFR at a later date (which I consider unlikely) I won't be along for the ride.

It has been an enjoyable ten years. A few images stand out in my mind.

I remember riding up to Dick's house for the first time (around the fall of 1975). An acquaintance, who had also never met Dick, told me that when one met such an august person, one would talk about what that person was interested in. Since Dick had mentioned wood stoves in the last issue of SFR, she told me that that was all we should talk to him about. Hey, I was almost nineteen, I knew what such a Big Name Fan and Secret Master Of Fandom wanted to talk about: galactic empires, robots, weird technological inventions. How times change. I don't remember much about that first meeting. I do know that today Dick and I talk about politics, economics, sports, and the business side of publishing, when we aren't discussing one of our novel projects. I don't think we talk about galactic empires and robots very much (we leave those to Asimov), although most of our novels turn on weird technological inventions.

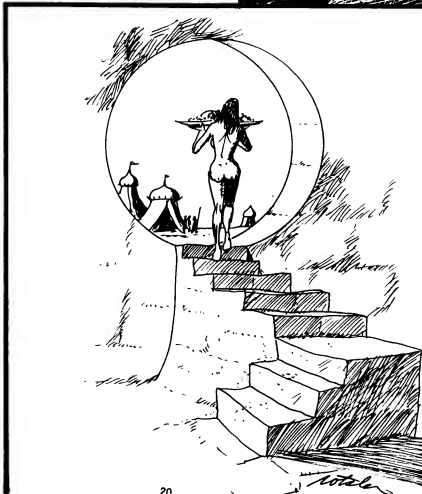
For five years, from '77 to '82, I wrote a news column for SFR. I eventually

ly went on to do "Raising Hackles." Both columns gave me opportunities I wouldn't otherwise have had.

The news column led to a similar one in GALAXY, which eventually led to other contacts which included my agent, Joe Elder. The opinion column, especially my articles on Fantasy, raised many hackles. I received a couple of strange letters in the mail. I've also received many compliments at conventions and elsewhere, from readers who tell me that they don't necessarily agree with everything I write, but they do look forward to my columns. My attitudes on Fantasy have mellowed over the last several years. In fact, I'm currently working on a novel that "ahem" some might consider Fantasy. It might even be the first part of a trilogy, maybe even a series; we'll see. Of course, I still consider it Science Fiction -- well, maybe Science Fantasy -- since Greg Benford tells me the artificial world construct I've set the novel on is structurally unsound. Oh, well.

It has been enjoyable and it's hard to believe it's been ten years. Thank you, to the many readers who've sent cards and letters. I also want to thank those who have subscribed to ELLIOTT'S BOOKLINE. It's the sort of magazine I've always wanted to do. I'll see you at conventions, in BOOKLINE, and look for Richard Elliott's novels and also Elton Elliott's on the newsstands, in the bookstores, and who knows where else -- maybe the lobby of the Orbital Hilton Circa 2010, or thereabouts.

Goodbye. Remember, this is not The End, just a New Beginning.



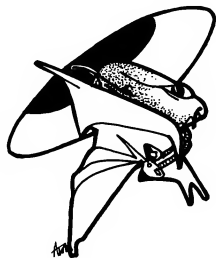
oh?

YEAH, YEAH, IT'LL  
BE GREAT!  
FUR BEANIES!

WE'LL  
CLEAN  
UP!



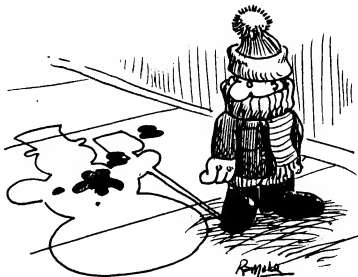
I ONLY NEED  
TWENTY MORE  
OLD ZIP CODES  
TO COMPLETE  
MY SET....  
YOURS MAY  
BE ONE OF  
THEM!



YUM -  
BREAKFAST  
KIDNIES!



LITTLE INSECTS EATING  
MY GOLD! I'VE BEEN  
BUGGED BY THE IRS!



# PAULETTE'S PLACE

THE DANDELION CAPER (Juvenile SF)  
By Gene DeWeese  
Putnam, 11/86, 160 pp., \$12.95

REVIEWED BY PAULETTE MINARE'

This sequel to BLACK SUITS FROM OUTER SPACE, which I reviewed in SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #58, is another intriguing fast-paced adventure. The same young, almost-twelve year-olds, Calvin Willeford and friend, Kathy, again become involved with aliens, this time from different planets. The BLACK SUIT aliens had acquired the Diefenbacher place from Calvin's real-estate-agent mother, who was glad to unload the lonely, marshy country place.

Calvin and Kathy, to satisfy their curiosity about the use of the property, pedal their bikes out to the weed-choked acreage. There, in the apparently deserted house, they see curious marks in the dust underfoot, hear sounds like dogs' toenails clicking on the bare floors, and smell a peculiar swamp-sweat odor. After a frightening encounter with invisible aliens who communicate by squeaky sounds, they leave the eerie place and meet a yellow, long-haired, friendly cat named Dandelion. The cat is not only intelligent but is capable of speech, and instead of claws, has retractable fingers.

On a later visit, they discover the strange marks and sounds are made by a green, five-foot, lizard-like creature who is first invisible and then suddenly visible. Calvin appropriates a small, lumpy box lost by him, which imparts an aura of invisibility about the owner, but there is a problem -- the invisible one is blind. Gene DeWeese gives a plausible, scientific explanation for this phenomenon. The children, by trial and error in connection with intelligent reasoning, learn to control the device.

When on a visit to Cal's Uncle Hal, they learn that Hal has had encounters with UFOs in the past, and that he knows Dandelion. He has a watch which signals Dandelion by turning her collar blue. This collar turns out to be a spaceship; the inside is larger than the outside because of the "dimension folding principle," enabling it to take the three aboard.

Mr. Craystock, one of the lizard creatures from the planet Daskhor, has acquired the old farm for sinister purposes in relation to inhabitants of Earth. More adventures follow when Cal's mother and Dandelion are kidnapped and taken to the Diefenbacher place by Craystock's

agents. After harrowing experiences, the factor which enables them to escape, is called "the observer/observed interaction."

Young people and older ones as well, will enjoy THE DANDELION CAPER, where the "good guys" encounter the "bad guys" of outer space. Mysterious developments continue to unfold, keeping one's interest at the peak. This book, with very readable print, would make a most welcome gift.

THE GHOST OF 29 MEGACYCLES

By John G. Fuller  
Signet, 07/86, (c) 1981, \$3.95

REVIEWED BY PAULETTE MINARE'

Scientists have for years proclaimed that when the brain dies, there is no means left with which to perceive, but now they are reconsidering. Nobel prize winner, Sir John Eccles, Wilder Penfield, and others, after years of neuro-physiological studies, now maintain that the mind is separate from and also independent from the body, the mind serving as a link to the physical world.

Human bodies and the material world are not as solid as they seem, but are composed mostly of empty space. Since hundreds of TV and radio signals, carrying music, speech, and pictures, are able to travel through solid walls and through human bodies, people live in both a physical body and an etheric one simultaneously. Mind and soul already exist in space, but the physical body does not, as explained in this book.

Since photons, tiny omnipresent units of light, can take on either solid or non-solid form, then it is quite possible for the physical body at death to be transformed into an intangible entity, and the mind continue to exist like a timeless wave of light or energy.

In 1981, the author, John G. Fuller, author of travel books, received a letter from George W. Meek, founder of an organization called Metascience, which conducted research into the paranormal. Meek wanted Fuller to write a book about his projects. His goal was a two-way contact with discarnate scientists and technicians to bridge the gap between the two worlds, by using technical information and advice from these spirits as a guide in building electronic equipment capable of recording their voices, eliminating the need for spiritualist-

mediums. His project was called the Spiricom Communication Project.

Discarnate entity, Dr. Swann explained this problem:

"Our work is done mainly through thought or mind energies...directed in a certain focus...There can be the combination of certain energies to create what you call voice. And that is the problem we are dealing with..." (P. 47)

In 1980 came a breakthrough: A two-way conversation between William O'Neill, an electronics technician, and the discarnate Dr. Mueller, was analyzed by several speech and electronics experts and found clearly to be two separate voices. A 1982 story carried by United Press, published after a press conference with O'Neill, began "...man may some day be able to have televisionlike conversations with the deceased..."

In January, 1983, German electronics engineer, Hans Otto Konig, without pre-testing or rehearsal, made clear auditory two-way contact with spirit entities; these experiments were repeated later.

What does Spiricom communication hope to accomplish? Accumulated wisdom of history can aid immeasurably in saving the earth from ruin and destruction. In addition, the knowledge that life and learning go on after death, will deter a good many crimes, including murder and suicide. There is no escape, if one is destined, in the next world, to gain in knowledge and evolve upward. Among scientists, new questions are being raised about the nature of matter.

Why are there so many, and so varied fundamental particles? Some are massive and others have virtually zero mass. By reading this book and others cited, readers can form their own opinions.

THE MIRRORSTONE (Juvenile)  
A GHOST STORY WITH HOLOGRAMS  
By Michael Palin; Illustrated  
by Holograms by Alan Lee  
Conceived & designed by Richard Seymour; Alfred A. Knopf; 11/86  
Price unavailable.

REVIEWED BY PAULETTE MINARE'

I have space to mention this innovative book, the first to use holography in the plot. There are seven three-dimensional full-color holos. The action-packed, suspenseful tale would make an unusual gift for the "one who has everything."

# THROUGH NO FAULT OF OURS WE ARE PRESENTING LETTERS

## # LETTER FROM IAN COVELL

2 Copgrove Close, Berwick Hills,  
Middlesbrough, Cleveland, TS3 7BP  
United Kingdom July 6, 1986

"Thanks for SFR #59 -- another good ish. Especially for the interview with Powers and Blacklock; neither of whom I intend to read. Let me explain that: I've read one of Powers' novels, and attempted a second. I haven't tried Blacklock at all but Powers says (p. 19) "by the time I'm finished with a book I'm sick of the characters... I hate them..." -- let me tell Powers that as a reader I feel precisely the same way about his characters; when he explains the type of character and plot he produces I'm not surprised I dislike his books so much; what puzzles me is why he imagines I should like them!

"Blacklock on the other hand, has this thing about women; or rather, he doesn't. The man has been married for thirteen years but he still feels men can't draw them because men "don't understand women" (p. 24) -- this is absolute rubbish. There may be a case that women can picture all aspects of a woman's life naturally, but to deny you can't at least portray those aspects anyone can observe in another person, be they male or female, is to deny a writer's true gift: observation. If Blacklock feels none of his books have so far needed women, then I suggest he's simply eliminated half the human race from the chance of participating, and on that basis, I will not seek or read his books. (Some may think this rather an extreme reaction but absolutely nothing either Blacklock or Powers says about what is in their books, or intended by them, makes me want to read them either. For what they exclude, and what they include, this interview is perfect to judge whether to buy their work.)

"What I find strange about Benford's article -- another excellent analysis of SF and "literature" and the attitudes to each -- is that I can't read his work, finding it dull and "lacking in wonder," especially TIMESCAPE, whose lack of popular acclaim I perfectly understood. Yet the man has produced some excellent and insightful nonfiction about the SF field. Odd.)

"John Brunner says it all for me, and possibly quite a few people in England. The problem is how to distinguish between a government/leader and the people in general. I wouldn't like the world to think that Maggie Thatcher in any way represents my views. What was most disturbing was the American raid on Libya, designed to kill Gadhafi but which managed instead to hit civilian targets -- from street interviews screened on our TV (from America) the impression seemed to be that the only good Libyan was a dead one, because all Libyans back terrorist activity; the truth being of course that Gadhafi promotes it, and anyone in his country

who disagrees finds themselves somewhat -- structured on what to do about it. [Those people who oppose Reagan and Thatcher are in the same boat; a recent series of attacks on Hippies who wanted to hold a festival at Stonehenge to celebrate the Solstice has been met with aggressive force, media blitz; attacks and general "hail hippies are drug-addicted and dirty and dangerous and should be kept under control;" there's no room for outsiders any more, not even outside.]

"(I won't even attempt to go into the Falklands mess; we stole the Islands and for a time were going to return them, now "we've" changed our minds and drained billions of £s turning it into a fortress.)

"Paul Anderson pisses me off, as usual, when he tries to talk about politics. Soccer fans are numerous in my country, what I believe he's talking about is soccer "hooligans," or to give them their generic term: "thuggish testiculars." These...well, I suppose "people" is close enough -- these "people" are not fans of any sport at all, they are violent minded "people" looking for a crowd to infiltrate. Let us leave aside the fact that countries who promote their sports teams as national war-substitute squads [made easy by abbreviating the phrase "The English football team is playing the Argentinian football team" to "England against Argentina!"] then whip up national fervor to fever pitch and don't expect trouble off the pitch are...naive.

"I think I'd simply be going in a circle were I to answer Schweitzer on his point of Tolkien/Morris and fantasy; perhaps fantasy has burgeoned given the successful loan of LORD OF THE RINGS, but LOTR is based on Morris -- without him, Tolkien might not have produced the (rather attenuated) form he did. I wonder whether Schweitzer would consider LIEUT. GULLIVER JONES important as an influence on E.R. Burroughs -- I mean, the book was barely known until twenty years ago, so it can't be all that important, can it?

"Gene DeWeese's attack on MOONDUST AND MADNESS (p. 45) is very good, and seems -- at least to me -- to prove my index was right. During a project, I constructed a table of authors done like a graph -- along one edge were genre elements like: Thriller, Romance, Adventure, Horror, SF, Erotic ... and then down (like a crossword) were the same elements. This constructs a series of boxes, which can be labeled "SF/Erotic" and "Adventure/Horror" [and, of course, "SF/SF," "Romance/Romance" on the diagonal; in that set of boxes you put pure quill authors],

anyway, it was obvious after I'd drawn a set that the boxes "SF/Romance" and "Romance/SF" (eg) are not the same type of book at all; the emphasis in each is on the first element -- now, the book he damps is Romance/SF (as was Jacqueline Susann's godawful YACRO about a decade ago) and the others he admires -- IBIS and THE LOVERS -- are SF/Romance.

"STARMEN: As has been pointed out, hair doesn't contain DNA, so the whole film is nonsense; on another level, why does he have to race across country to get to a ship that is only going to wait there for brief instants -- wasn't there something about this being a contact mission?

"I wonder what Elton T. Elliott thinks about the current near-civil war in Israel based on a swinsuit advert? Fundamentalists Jews objected violently to the ad and burned it, painted it, and, reviled it; subsequently, their temples were daubed with Nazi slogans by other Jews. The poster has been withdrawn, but thousands of people -- especially the younger Israelis in the up-and-coming professional class -- are annoyed and sickened. (Especially since last year the same swinsuit company used ads that had an even briefer costume than this years' and there were no objections. I'd suggest it's another symptom of increasing repression and intolerance throughout the world...)

"I'm disturbed by Varney's demolition of SO LONG AND THANKS FOR ALL THE FISH. I know some of the circumstances of how this book was written (and the fact Adams fell in love himself), and while I didn't like the other books, I quite liked this one. It's essentially an epilogue, something to wrap everything else up so people will stop asking him for a sequel. It also answers many of the questions he was asked about the early books. It is a nice goodbye, not perfect, but then few books are.

"Most of the rest of the reviews are the type I like, even when I wouldn't get the book to read myself, at least it gives information (enough) to sort out what kind of book it is and, usually, whether it's something to look for. It's unfortunate that I can (just) afford to buy the authors I like, and have nothing extra to go after works of interest, but if I had, this sort of review section would be one to watch.

"Anyway, and this here. I was going to comment on Lowndes' strange phrase (p. 55) "a bizarre and erotic tinge (sad-SF rather than sex...)"; and query why erotic includes sadism as a sub-reflection, but on reflection, won't.

BLOCKED WRITER  
BEING ENCOURAGED  
BY HIS AGENT.



'P.S. Has anyone pointed out that Anderson's GAME OF EMPIRE is a straight rewrite of Kipling's KIM?'

((I can understand Powers' feeling of hating his characters by the end of a novel; sometimes characters don't come to life and it's a drudgery to keep them alive in your mind and on paper. As the author you simply tire of them, don't like them, want to get shut of them as soon as possible, yet there they are in chapter 34-35-36-37. And sometimes a novel goes on too long---is plotted too loosely---or is beyond the writer's natural length, and the story becomes a drag to finish.

((A writer has to have empathy, has to be able to get inside the skin of a character---male or female---and see the world from his/her point of view. Difficult, but not impossible.

((American foreign policy, based as it is in hidden and disreputable priorities and serving similar interests, appears non-rational and ad-hoc and at times insane. There is probably method in its madness but the public face of it (which its critics never get past) is admittedly immoral, illegal and, probably, fattening. To me, the media and the politicians are all playing a highly paid game of Fool the Publics.))

# LETTER FROM HOWARD COLEMAN  
POB #8712, Austin, TX 78713  
Sept 14, 1986

'I just returned from the Worldcon a couple of weeks ago, where once again, people who read only novels prevailed in awarding the short fiction Hugos. I don't know who prevailed in awarding the semi-prozine Hugo. A nomination list including SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW, LOCUS and INTERZONE, fer Chrissake, should probably have included the Atlanta telephone directory, since that publication lists SF bookstores and is read by the requisite number of readers.

'What I'll remember from Confederation (not necessarily in order of importance, but maybe so):

'A con hotel that seemed to remind everyone of the sets from ALIENS.

'An excellent piece in the Atlanta JOURNAL (by the political guy, not the one by the Lifestyle nitwit), which covered Congressman Newt Gingrich's address to the fans and their reaction before he "beamed back to Clayton County."

'A pizza shop owner who caught on real fast to fandom and stayed open on Sunday, when everybody else was closed.

'Michael Whelan's obvious discomfort at winning his unprettiest Hugo in a row.

'Jim Burns, sitting more-or-less unnoticed at the Forbidden Planet table in the huxter room, signing copies of his outstanding art book, LIGHTSHIP.

'A lump in the throat at the lesson delivered by a Grand Old Man, Mr. Lester del Rey, that these Hugo things are not just pats on the back, they are awards for work of special merit, and that to present them for any reason other than

that special merit demeans both the award and the recipient.

'No Karl Hansen (Carl to his friends on the program-printing committee) and no Lucius Shepard. Ouch. I would actually love to see these guys, you know?

'Amy Thompson's amazement at finding a whole roomful of people at a con who actually read magazines.

'A wonderful masquerade -- wonderful because it was on TV, and you can turn TV off.

'I feel myself moved to reflect. About a year ago, you published a letter from J.R. Madden, who bemoaned the lack of interest in fanzines among members of the Baton Rouge SF fan club. About two weeks ago New Orleans won the 1988 Worldcon. About seventeen years ago, I wrote from Baton Rouge to the Ghodlike editor of SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW requesting knowledge of any other fans in the state of Louisiana, and he published the plea! (Wow! I mean, my name and everything!) I got one answer, from a guy in Shreveport with whom I corresponded for a bit before the draft (you remember the draft -- that's how Rambo got his big chance) sucked him up into the USAF, and he vanished. Now there is a fan club in Baton Rouge. Another Nolacon. Goodness.

'If SFR has to go, Geils, there at least ought to be a wake.

'P.S.: I'm enclosing a review of Gibson's BURNING CHROME. "Now's the time to strike," I said to myself, "since the certain sign of death is on cyberpunk: the Cyberpunk SF panel is as firm a fixture at conventions as the Worldbuilding panel." Nothing can survive that kind of attention.



# LETTER FROM ADRIANA I. PEÑA  
205E Victor Pkwy  
Annapolis, MD 21403 08/29/86

'One thing that I can say for your zine, is never boring. Some of your contributor's comments infuriate me, some of them I agree with, reluctantly, and some I luxuriate in. Which means that you are doing your job well.

'I specially enjoy Orson Scott Card's column in short fiction. Even though I have not read over half of the stories he talks about, it is possible to learn a lot of the craft of writing by following him. The man is a natural teacher. Specially like his insistence that writing well-crafted, safe stories is not enough, that you have to take risks, try to do what you have not done before, even if you trip and fall on your face. As Nietzsche says: "What does not kill you outright, makes you stronger."

# LETTER FROM DARRELL SCHWEITZER  
113 Despalde Rd. Stratford, PA  
19087 Sept 25, 1986

'Now I find myself writing my very last LOC to SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW, and I find I don't have that much to say. It is truly the End of an Epoch, and it is not much use continuing the running arguments. The folding of SFR will have a major impact on the other magazines in the field as the outflux of SFR refugees begins to take up residence elsewhere. I suspect THRUST will become very crowded and Steve Brown's new EYE ON SF will become a major successor, with perhaps even some of the fanzine spirit. I am well taken care of, my book reviews in ABORIGINAL SF, fantasy commentary in FANTASY REVIEW and small press magazine reviews in a new Zine Orson Scott Card is starting. (He signed my Speaker to the Dead to "a fellow SFR refugee.")

'But I am sure the final issue will be filled with regrets about the passing of SFR. One irony is that in #60 I began to realize what a good columnist Neal Wilgus has become. He does very well with real and bogus news reporting. I hope he will continue elsewhere.

'But we will all miss you and the distinct personality SFR has always had. Your other small sines don't make up for the loss. I suppose, though, that run of SFR #63 onward will only be found in the library of John Charteris, that character from Cabell's books who collected great, unwritten works such as THE AMBER STRAITS (by Louis Taylor), MACHEN'S THE HILL OF DREAMS, MILTON'S KING ARTHUR, etc. He reputedly has a copy of the LAST DANGEROUS VISIONS, and now, in his periodical copy section, a bound set of SFR beginning with issue #63 right there with the 1980s issues of GALAXY and the post-World War II UNKNOWN.

'I suppose I can put in a final, optimistic note on the Americans as Warmongers argument: Rambo is betrayed for political reasons. This is significant. It is true that Americans are forgetting some of the experience of Vietnam. But this is, to some extent, dictated by the world we live in. After all, in a world full of armed robbers, one must go armed. No one objected in the early 19th century when the British cleared the Caribbean of pirates -- most of whom were either killed on the spot or hanged with only the briefest formality of a trial. It needed doing. Similarly, the bombing of Libya needed doing and I would have to put myself in with the majority whose only regret is that we didn't kill Khaddafi.

'But at the same time, I don't think many people would like to be sent into battle by the sort of military that sent hundreds of marines into Lebanon to do nothing except sit around and be targets. You'll know the real cultural danger signs: the movies and TV shows (probably not books) where the hero is good and glorious if he follows the good and glorious leader and ignore (or eliminate) those cowardly traitors in our midst who dare protest. If this attitude prevails, then the world is in deep trouble. But right now, Americans don't trust their leaders. Rambo is betrayed by the politicians. The folks in ALIENS (which is very much an outer-space Rambo) are vilely fucked over by "The Company," which is a vaguely-described Big Corporate Government. The setting of that movie is quite typical of what the people seem to want to believe: the common soldiers are noble, good, and brave, but the government that sends them into battle is a bunch of incompetent crooks. I imagine many of the marines in Lebanon



felt the same way.

'John Shirley hasn't quite grasped (to turn to the darker side of all this) that Governments are seldom interested in the well-being of people in war zones, especially when they're a bunch of foreigners in a would-be or former client state. The United States government has no concern for the people of Nicaragua any more than the Soviet Empire does. Both sides are playing strategy. It was quite inevitable that, faced with American opposition, the Sandinistas sought aid in the other camp. It is the old familiar story. In Cambodia, the Khmer Rouge were surely the most destructive government in history, but the U.S. abstained from any serious opposition to them because they were at war with a Soviet client, the Vietnamese, and supported by the Chinese, whose strategic interests somewhat coincide with those of the Americans. Did anyone make the welfare of the Cambodians an element of policy? Of course not.

'Wiglus is quite right about the state of fantasy (Ozma's complaint). Indeed, most of it one sees in the slush pile (at AMAZING we got medieval fantasies about three-to-one to anything else) is that it is strikingly unimaginative. Much of the published stuff is too. Good work is being done, but this minority is hard to find among the great mass of ordinary stuff. Similarly, there is a certain amount of good fantasy published in the mainstream, as there always has been. That too, takes some searching out. Perhaps in fifty years someone will do an equivalent of the Ballantine Adult Fantasy series from this period, and in retrospect the '80s will look almost as fruitful as the 1950s, when Tolkien, White, etc. were publishing. But -- I'm sure REBECCA (DuMaurier) took a lot of imagination to write. The subsequent questions took none at all. The original elements became a formula, which served the needs of an audience, then passed away when the audience shifted to something else.

'When we complain about all the drab, dull fantasy out there, let us remember: This too shall pass away. I only hope that the good stuff will be remembered.'

((The bombing of Libya and the attempt of Khadafi's life was essentially a cowardly, bullying act by an administration needing a "victory" -- a cheap shot, an easy kill. This president will not do anything about Syria or Iran which are far more responsible for terrorism than was/is Khadafi,



because they can and would fight back and impose unacceptable casualties. Instead, for unexplained reasons, this president offers subsidized wheat sales to Russia (a reward for Russia's own subsidies to terrorists, its aid in Afghanistan, its subsidies to Cuba, Nicaragua, etc.). And of course new loans are in the works for the USSR. There's a reason for this schizophrenia, but you won't find it in the public media.

((Reagan and his cohorts lie and lie and lie, and the American public smiles and nods and doesn't care. Okay. We'll get more of the same.))

# LETTER FROM GEORGE H. SCITHERS  
OWLSNICK PRESS, Box 8243  
Philadelphia, PA 19101 08/10/86

'I am very sorry to read of your troubles with arthritis. I am very lucky that my arthritis is -- so far -- controlled by Tactin DS. I trust that this is one of the many drugs that you've already tried? Again, my sympathy.

'It's nice that Platt has no hot gossip about my departure from AMAZING, especially since he's been willing to make up his own in the past. Perhaps Harrison's ineffectual attempt to strangle Platt has frightened him into civilized behavior?

'In fact, doubling AMAZING's subscription list wasn't at all difficult: I started with about 750, and reached around 2,500 by the time I left. Unfortunately, what the magazine needs is to increase that 2,500 by 20 or 30 times. Pat Price may well succeed in doing just that -- I certainly hope so. He is, by the way, doing exactly what I recommended throughout my tenure as editor -- only he is doing it at the company headquarters in Lake Geneva, WI, where my suggestions cannot be ignored. The results of his first test mailing should be getting back to him by the time you read this.

'By and large, relations among professionals in the science fiction field are far more friendly than among other sections of the publishing business. I remember Joel Davis's initial surprise at how well science fiction editors uphold the field let alone with each other. Platt's behavior, luckily, is an irrelevant exception to that tradition of good feelings and good manners.

'My own contributions to the tradition of editing SF have been an extraordinary high percentage of individual rejection letters, the practice of showing authors galley, the practice of returning manuscripts after their contents have been published, really fast turn-around of rejected manuscripts, and a refusal of first sales in the two magazines I edited.

'Now, along with Darrell Schweitzer and John Stancourt, I am trying my hand at being a literary agent, specializing in the four genres of category fiction. (Inquiries welcome; but please, ask before sending any samples. We take 10% of domestic, magazine/book sales, 20% overseas or movie/TV; our contract permits any client to quit for any reason, with no waiting period.) Nothing special to report yet in the way of sales, but we're working on that.

'Stay wicked on Motansdays.'

((It does seem that the prozines are a dying breed. I suspect that newsstand distribution is a losing option. Subscription-only has a high-cost structure, alas. I don't know if there is a solution to the problem.))

# LETTER FROM ALEXANDER B. NEDELKOVICH  
Komaniski 18, 11080 Zemun, Yugoslav  
July 14, 1986

The Greg Benford article on academia vs. SF is partly right, but partly horribly wrong. 'We want your praise and we are not getting enough of it and that's because all of you inside the Louvre are idiots and those paintings inside all total crap and ours out here are better!!' No, Mr. Benford, that is not the right way to get that praise. I recommend, as a perhaps better way, to question (gently, kindly, comedically) the academic credibility and worth of the offending critic who has no idea how good literature that and that and that has been proved to be, mentioning Huxley, Orwell, Vonnegut, LeGuin, Bradbury, Keith Robert's PAVANE, Philip Dick's MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE, etc. etc. and taking the fight to our ground which we know, so that the offending critic can easily be shown to be talking generalities about a field in which he is an ignoramus. Try that way and you will probably defeat those who really are talking generalities about the field in which they really are ignoramuses. Explode the reputation of such an attacker (civily, in the politest language). After a dozen years of that, it will become known in academic circles that a blind overall charge at the SF hedgehog is harmful to the attacker. Embrace Sturgeon's Law really and defend just the best SF. And do not attack Literature as such. Yes?'

# LETTER FROM ALAN DEAN FOSTER  
THRAXX, INC. 4001 Pleasant Valley  
Drive, Prescott, AZ 86301 08/07/86

'One of the biggest hits in current Soviet cinema involves a courageous elder Russian agent who foils a dastardly CIA plot (there is also a TV serial with a similar theme). Upon being made aware of this, Sylvester Stallone suggested making a Rambo vs Koshinski film with two endings -- one where Rambo wins and the other in which he loses, for the two different audiences.

'After ROCKY, Stallone made a couple of interesting films; one in which he plays the manager of no-talent wrestler and another which documents the rise and fall of a Jimmy Hoffa-type labor leader. Both were critical and commercial flops, though both are watchable. No fool, Stallone promptly went back to giving the audience what they wanted from him.

'Cyberpunk-schmyberpunk -- as Billy Joel says (almost), it's all science fiction to me. As for it appealing to the next generation, this member of this generation (wherever the hell that is) finds NEURONMANCER to be grossing him well written, as did a lot of others. It's not rebel SF at all; just good old nuts-and-bolts science fiction. If it makes some old fogies uncomfortable with its language and suggested social setting, that's great. Isn't that what SF's supposed to do?

'One weapon Elton neglected to mention in his comments on the defeat of the Maine censorship referendum was the use of anti-referendum spots in movie theaters. There's a great deal of talk in the film business about how successful these proved to be and how and where to utilize them again. Just as the libraries and bookstores were able to show Maine voters books they wouldn't be able to read under the proposed legislation, so the theater owners were able to explain which films their patrons would no longer be able to see. I believe this is the first time Hollywood has used the theater as a weapon in its own defense. We'll be seeing more of it.

'Sorry about the demise of SFR due to your various aches and pains. At least your writing doesn't creek yet.'

((Those movie spots would have been far more effective on TV, I would think, since most movie audiences are too young or indifferent to vote, whereas the TV audience is substantially over age 21.))

#### # LETTER FROM LARRY NIVEN

3961 Vanalden Avenue

Torrance, CA 91356

08/08/86

'I'm sorry you're in pain, and I'm sorry that SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW is about to disappear. I'll miss it greatly.

'Don't send me any refunds or replacement magazines. You've been sending me these things free for almost twenty years, and I'm grateful. I think I've said it before: it was most flattering to be getting SFR that way, back when I badly needed the ego boost.

'Brunner's defense of the invasion of Afghanistan seems to have pushed a lot of buttons. The letter column says a lot of things I would have said if I were in the habit of commenting on other people's politics. Hell, there are bug-bearers in West Hollywood too, but I would oppose the invasion of West Hollywood by the Soviet Union. They've got worse habits than that.

'I'm going to miss Orson Scott Card's 'You Got No Friends.' He works awfully hard for what isn't likely to be a lot of money. So now he wants to publish independently? He should publish a collection of all these articles to go while seeking a home with another magazine. Someone among your competitors is bound to want it.

'Listen: The world always looks terrible when you're in constant pain. Put in a jigger factor for that and you may find the future looking a little brighter. (But if the Big Depression cuts our defense funding enough, we'll be a Soviet satellite before any of your kinkier predictions come through. And they're sexually repressive.)'

((The coming Depression will kill the Russian economy as much as ours (maybe more) and will force the USSR to shelve defense/offense plans as well. They won't be able to sell their oil, gas or gold, and will likely have rebellions on their hands among their satellites.

((I suspect a disarmament deal will be made Real Quick when the international economy turns sour.))

#### # LETTER FROM CHARLES PLATT

9 Patchin Pl., NY, NY 10011

August 8, 1986

'Thanks for reviewing LESS THAN HUMAN. I'm glad that, to some extent, you enjoyed the book. You are off-target in your guess about why I don't write "serious science fiction," however. Fear of failure has little to do with it; one can fail in any form of fiction, and in some ways it's easier to fail at writing humor in that maintaining objective control is so much harder.

'In fact, I would like to write science fiction more seriously, and have made several unsuccessful attempts to do so over the past ten years. What stops me is the inherent ridiculousness of science fiction itself. As a reader, I can suspend disbelief sufficiently to enjoy a reasonable range of SF. As a writer, however, I find myself immobilized by the central contradiction of the category: on one hand it pretends to be plausible, while on the other hand, in real terms, it cannot hope to be. Is it plausible to describe people fifty years in the future talking and acting exactly like people in the 1980s? Obviously not; so how can I believe in such work while I write it? Even if a story is set just a couple of years in the future, it is impossible to evaluate every trend, on a global scale, in order to write with true authority. Maybe I'm being literal-minded, but whenever I start writing science fiction I am struck by how false it is. It is wish-fulfillment masquerading as realism.

'Being unable to take science fiction seriously, I naturally tend to write satire, and plan to continue doing so. There is good reason to believe that LESS THAN HUMAN will not be the only novel by Robert Clarke to see print; his classic CHILDHOOD'S TROOPERS, long thought to have been lost, may yet be published. Confidentially, I can divulge that it attempts nothing less than a synthesis of every major science-fiction theme in one volume. Aliens, time travel, robots, mutants, nuclear war, UFOs, Atlantis, you name it, it's all there. In a sense, it is "the only science fiction novel you'll ever need." Of course, that slogan does not bode well for any future Robert Clarke novel; but I'll meet that problem when I come to it.'

((You can always write fantasy. The contradiction in SF is real and a problem for a writer: too much extrapolation and the present-day reader won't accept the story, too little and the writer feels like a fraud. That may be why Elton and I write near-future novels--usually about 10 years.))



#### # CARD FROM ROBERT BLOCH

2111 Sunset Crest Drive

Los Angeles, CA 90046

08/05/86

'Herewith, my last scrawl of ill. Just received the special "second" issue of SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW (the one without a Bloch postcard in the LOC) and while I'd like to say nice things about it, the news of its imminent demise must take precedence over anything else therein. I certainly understand the reasons for your decision, but it's still hard to contemplate a future without SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW -- that's the grimmest world view you could offer! SF will be poorer without it. But what I really want to say is thanks -- for SFR and for REG -- you've enriched my life!'

((Sorry about last issue: your card was misplaced. If I have enriched lives because of SFR/THE ALIEN CRITIC/PSYCHOTIC, etc., then I will not have lived in vain. I am indeed a noble person and I deserve a footnote somewhere. But, no, I'll probably be known as the man who wrote ORAL DAUGHTER or one of the other of my pomies. So it goes.))

#### # CARD FROM JOEL ROSENBERG

1477 Chapel, 8-4

New Haven, CT 06511

August, 1986

'Schulman still, alas, equates me not spending hours upon hours writing pages upon pages refuting his point by point with some sort of concession. That is not even a good filibustering technique. Still, it is a challenge to refute even one of his conceits in as limited a space as that on a postcard; I'll give it a try.

'Let's take his typical welfare libertarian rejection of the social contract.

'Most of us accept the notion of implicit contract, of agreeing to pay a reasonable price for that which we take from others, even absent a prior agreement on specific terms; the social contract is merely one aspect of that, applied to the society as a whole.

'Schulman rejects the idea of the social contract, saying that if he didn't sign an agreement, he isn't gonna pay. Well, then, I'm sure he'll now avoid using the facilities provided by others' adherence to the social contract -- the highway system, to name one -- since he avers to being unwilling to pay for them as the rest of us do: through our income tax, without cheating. He's going to find it a bit awkward, alas, getting around without using the taxpayer-provided ("public") roads.

'But maybe he can jump real far, even with his head -- but I digress: If, on the other hand, he continues to use the taxpayer-provided benefits (and the public roads are only a minor one) without acknowledging any concomitant responsibility -- and let's be clear; that exactly what he's doing -- he'll continue to be a social parasite, a welfare libertarian. Remember: Schulman isn't merely claiming that the present demands are unreasonable; he's claiming that since he hasn't signed a contract, he's not obligated to pay.

'On schulman's kind offer to trade me reading his two books for him reading two

of mine ... after having observed his use of logic and language in his rather remarkable SFR missives, I'll have to decline; I suspect he'd be getting the better of the deal.'

((We have no choice in re the 'social contract.' We don't make the rules and short of disobeying and spending lots and lots of time in jail, we are forced to live as others decree, in the main, in the public sphere. You really can't beat the system; better to learn all the rules and use them to your best advantage. That way you can live free in the private sphere.))



make the American people do anything if it is wrapped in the cloak of "public safety" and "protect the children".

((Take my advice: stay in the military and ride out the Depression, if they will keep you. When the Democrats get in they will cut the Defense budget drastically, and the armies in Korea and Germany may be brought home and disbanded.))

# LETTER FROM FERNANDO QUADROS GONCALVES  
18 Robinson St, #12, Cambridge, MA  
02138 August 18, 1986

'Ian Covell's point regarding my review of Heinlein's latest is of course well taken, at least as regards Heinlein's need of editing. Yes, some editor should have to him to cut out the garbage. But the fact is that it is well known that Heinlein will not submit to editing, having boasted in many interviews that he adds to all his contracts a clause to the effect that his prose is uncuttable. Given that, I feel that the choice is indeed between "unsatisfactory Heinlein or no Heinlein at all."

'Why is it that both Heinlein and Asimov have come down with the virus of wanting to tie all their work together in one coherent framework? It does seem to be good for sales though Asimov's latest doesn't seem to have sold as well as the others, judging by time on the best seller list, but it is getting to be boring -- and there is no reason for it, that I can see.'

((It may be a desire to make a coherent whole of a lifework, or it may be a desire to enhance the money.))

# LETTER FROM ROBERT A.W. LONDES  
717 Willow Ave, Hoboken, NJ 07030  
August 16, 1986

'Your "Read This!!" notice fills me with sorrow. Although I am agnostic on the question of whether prayer has an efficacy, Faith may not be all-important; if it does, then Hope and Love may suffice, so I shall pray for you. Of one thing we can be certain: There is no record of healing prayers doing any harm.

'The "Conversation with Fred Pohl" was very interesting, but I do wish that someone involved had been knowledgeable enough to correct yet another repetition of one of Fred's oft-reprinted errors. There never was any such magazine as SCIENCE FICTION STORIES QUARTERLY. Gernsback issued SCIENCE WONDER QUARTERLY in September 1929, dated Fall. In 1930, when he dropped the word "Science" from SCIENCE WONDER STORIES, he followed suit with the quarterly, which then became WONDER STORIES QUARTERLY. Elsewhere, Fred has described the cover of the issue that he's talking about, and it becomes clear that he is referring to the Summer 1930 issue of WONDER STORIES QUARTERLY. I wish someone could convince him of that.

'Orson Scott Card's long department retains its interest for me, even though I've stopped reading the fiction in ISAC ASIMOV'S SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE.

# LETTER FROM CHESTER TWAROG  
PSC Box 327, APO SF 96264-0006  
August 18, 1986

'No doubt you'll get reams of sympathy and many crying sorrows concerning your health conditions and the final (sic) issue of SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW. Yes, you may transfer my SFR credits to NAKED 10 credits.

'(Everyone's got opinions but mine should see print! I've submitted letters to you for two issues of SFR already! Perhaps, this time?)

'A. The Political Repression of America

'The military has a random mandatory urinalysis test for illegal drugs to "create" a drug-free military. Recently, President Reagan and Staff (who's really behind this?) want Americans to volunteer to urine testing to "create" drug-free schools, workplaces and government offices. Not submitting to this test implies "drug user." They, of course, are losing the drug war (increase in usage since the President has been in), so they are trying to use this Americanism propaganda to intimidate the potential user or force to stop recreational drug use, to stop drug crimes, to make America "drug free!"

'Recently a young teenage girl turned her parents in after hearing a drug abuse lecture at her church. The police arrested her parents on drug possession. Will others turn in relatives, friends, or other family members, too?

'Next, the military is requiring mandatory AIDS antibody blood tests, September 1986. A series of three positives on tests and the individual is sent to a USAF hospital for further evaluation (?). A refusal to take this test will "imply" homosexual or deviant sex behavior. A "homosexual-free" military? And if these tests prove successful, how long before "voluntary" AIDS testing in schools, government offices, and workplaces? A "homosexual" or "sexual deviant (oral, woman on top, etc.)" free America?

'I believe this is unconstitutional, illicit intimidation and harassment, lack of respect for individual integrity and self-respect, and against rights of self-incrimination! No one seems to think that a refusal to test means "I won't let the government intimidate me or compromise the rights of the US Constitution or Bill of Rights." Of course, a refusal means you're a subversive and must be dealt with. Remember McCarthyism? Is this similar to Nazism? This New American government fanaticism will eventually destroy America.

'I have twelve years in the military and looked forward to a career as a means for family economic/medical/housing support during your predicted world recession/depression scenario. However, I must now decide whether it is in my family's best interests to compromise my morals or submit to these detestable tests.

'B. In a recent letter to Charles Platt, I stated that you Earth dwellers cannot appreciate nor "know" the real Universe until you finally firmly establish yourselves off planet. I did so in response to his critique of what is "good" SF writing in REM #5. Though your SF is the most advanced "future" literature on Earth, your perceptions of what Universe is infantile and geocentric. The Universe is, minimally, four-dimensional, finite, based on the tetrahedron and not the limited cubical x,y,z (3-D) coordinate (horizontal/vertical (up/down)) system you presently use. All objects in Universe are in motion, moving in "curved" trajectories, and considered spherically. However, you consider objects at "rest," you view Spaceship Earth as a "flat" wall map always referring to "up north or down south," and see "sun up or sun down." In other words, you're limited spatially to a two-dimensional reality.

'It has been told to me that your system is evolved and works well enough in your everyday life habits and expectations. I have also been told that once you become established off planet, new terminologies and perceptions will eventually evolve to replace the antiquated "flat-Earth" views. However, in lieu of the projected world recession and budgetary restraints in the near future, the access to off planet development looks dim. That, of course, jeopardizes the process of evolutionary thinking and advancement for your species. Too bad, Earthlings.

'However, I do highly recommend study of R. Buckminster Fuller's SYNERGETICS.'

((If you take their money, you work by their rules. The option is to quit, start your own business, and make your own work rules. Since alcohol "breathalyzer" tests are legal and apparently constitutional, and nobody much raised a ruckus in that area, the ground was laid for drug testing. The government can

I read nine issues in a row, from cover to cover, and while I did find a few stories worth the effort, there just weren't enough of them to give me any desire to continue. The editors, letters department, and book reviews give me my money's worth (as well as the occasional "Viewpoint" article). I'm afraid that, these days, I'd much rather read about science fiction than read current examples of it. That, I suppose, can be listed as a Minor Vice.

John Brunner's department is also saddening. Although I harbor no ill will, his political views, I've always found his opinions interesting to read; and I shall certainly pray for his beloved spouse, too.

'Darrell Schweitzer also remains interesting to read, and many of his opinions strike me as well put. So long as he's not belaboring his personal Devil, Hugo Gernsback, he comes across as very sensible indeed -- and I also appreciate his humor.'

((I have good days and bad days on the pain/arthritis front. The cod liver oil and alfalfa tablets food additives to my diet seems to have taken the edge off the extreme symptoms, but even if all pain/discomfort were gone I'd still not resurrect SFR; writing fiction is what I want to do with the rest of my life. Doing Mailings is a DRAG. Answering mail is a DRAG. In short, at my age I want to do only one thing -- ~~eat like a pig~~ write novels. Maybe I'll write novels about eating ice cream.))

#### # LETTER FROM SHARON JARVIS

SHARON JARVIS & CO., INC.  
Authors' Agents, 256 Willard Ave.  
Staten Island, NY 10314 08/11/86

'In the interview with Victor Konan, John Cleve's SPACEMAYS and Jarrod Constock's THESE LAWLESS WORLDS are mentioned in the same paragraph. I'd like to set the record a little straighter and explain the connection between the two.

'I was the then editor at Playboy Press who conceived the idea of the SPACEMAYS series. I went to Andy Offutt and asked him to create a space adventure that combined STAR WARS, STAR TREK and sex. Andy -- if you'll excuse the pun -- performed admirably.

'For the first half-dozen or so books, I invented most of the titles (especially #1, OF ALIEN BONDS; I can't remember who thought of #3, ESCAPE TO MCMXII) and I wrote the cover copy.

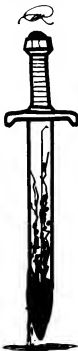
'Perhaps a year later, I conceived of another adult SF series, THESE LAWLESS WORLDS, and sold the concept to Pinnacle. The books, published under the pseudonym Jarrod Constock, were entirely written by Ellen Kozak, who says she is not Andy Offutt nor would she want to be.

'I invented the titles and wrote the cover copy (and I take the credit for the immortal line: "When a robot blows your circuits, is it sex or is it sabotage?"). Ellen and I certainly did not have Andy in mind when we created the bio for Jarrod Constock. If Victor Konan spotted a connection between the two series, the connection is probably me...

'P.S. Ellen Kozak also points out that the Jarrod Constock "bio" changed in

each book; also, she remembers that Pinnacle ran ads for LAWLESS WORLDS that said, "from the creator of SPACEMAYS." Pinnacle meant me, not Andy. Victor Konan is a perfect example of how readers give little or no thought to those of us behind the scenes. And, Ellen adds, little or no thought before putting his foot in his mouth.'

((Okay, thanks for the corrections and behind-the-scenes details.))



#### # LETTER FROM ELTON T. ELLIOTT

1899 Wessner Dr., NE  
Salem, OR 97303 August 1, 1986

'I find the recent Anarcho/Libertarian debate between Joel Rosenberg, et al quite interesting. Maybe my background in politics gives me an unusual perspective, but I find both sides wanting.

'In the last dozen years, I've been involved in politics at the grass-roots and state level. I've observed the players up-close-and-personal. I've seen seamy, underhanded, hypocritical backstabbing and all the rest of the slimy side of what is America's dirtiest spectator sport. No better argument can be made for the Anarcho/Lib worldview than the influence peddling (i.e. "kiss me" on this issue and I'll "give it gold" on your land variance), bribes (campaign contributions) and the various and sundry other corrupt practices that are the staple of day-to-day politics.

'Yes. The Anarcho/Libs are right. A state is inevitably corrupt and ought to be feared by all who would be free. My personal experiences are proof enough for me.

'They are also the reasons preventing the Anarcho/Lib world from ever happening. Why? Simple, there's too much money to be made -- or protected -- in a controlled society. Power and Force are the last refuge of the incompetent.

'Do Anarcho/Libs have blinders on? With the exception of the Memory Hole,

none of the "high profile" Libertarian organs look at capital hoarding as a source of ever-increasing Statism in and of itself. The multinational corporations have a vested interest in Statism. It is what protects them from younger, leaner, more efficient competitors. There is no law which regulates business in a draconian fashion and you'll find some "Bigwig" who has already made his fortune protecting his capital (i.e. wealth, i.e. power).

'Unless A/Lers can figure a way to reduce the political power of the Money Elite around the planet and/or change their attitudes, any truly free society is as likely as a logical argument from Jimmy Lee Swaggart, et al.

'Remember that when the next "liberal" comes along with another snake-oil cure for the ills of society. Check inside the can, you'll find the primary ingredients are force, power, privilege, and plenty of cushy secure government jobs. The war on poverty, by and large, didn't help the blacks, other minorities and poor whites, but it did provide employment for scads of sociology majors and ways for the Power Elite to siphon off dollars from their sworn enemies, the Middle Class and New Entrepreneurial Money. They are also adept at raising bogymen. The drug scare is a current example. It is just a matter of time until drug testing will be mandatory for every U.S. citizen.

'Another problem is the more virulent forms of Statism: Fascism and Communism. True, given World War II, and Hitler's designs on the world, and without some form of State, we'd all be eating sauerkraut. I would like to hear how the A/Lers would have defeated Hitler without large State-operated armed forces. It may have been possible, but I don't see how. Remember, Statism is insidious. As long as you have even one reason for it, it'll be an eternal fight to control it. George Washington recognized this; it's why he warned us about government being a fearful master.

'I'm not arguing that an entirely Statist society is inevitable or desirable, I'm pointing out that a total Anarcho/Lib society is doomed to failure because it doesn't take into account human nature. We are a warrior, mostly omnivorous, race. Rapaciousness is in our blood. How are most people going to obey social contracts when they eat food derived from killing. You are what you eat. I wish I were wrong on human nature, it'd be nice, but so would Santa Claus and S&W/Star Wars."

'This doesn't mean that I think Anarcho/Lib wrong. I believe it's the most moral view of human society yet articulated. (There are some other instances where it just wouldn't work, the Hanford Nuclear Waste Dump controversy, for one.) I'd like it to work. I try to observe certain aspects of it presently. I think, by and large we should fight the encroachment of the State at every turn, but I'm not doctrinaire about it. Some A/Lers are as dogmatic on politics and religion as Statists and fundamentalists. I dislike labels and distrust any philosophical system other than the one I think up myself -- and most of the time I don't trust those either.

I guess that's why, in theory, I like Science Fiction. It doesn't have, or lend itself to, any real definition or boundaries. It's the same with my politics; don't fence me in, don't label me. Most things that are labeled, are either for sale or are in cages at a zoo.

I live each day with passion, zest

and intensity; as if it were my last.

'Speaking of lasts: Thank you, Dick, for all the hard work you've done over the years in pubbing SFR and for putting something of mine in each of the last forty issues. In fact, Dick, we all thank you: Elton T. Elliott, Wilma Wright, Wesley Graham and Blake Southfork -- and all the rest that you or I know nothing about. We're sorry to see it end.

((Gee, I'm sorry to see it end, too, Elton. But I'm also glad it's ended.

((We share a similar view of Libertarianism. You see the logical impossibilities and improbabilities of the dogma, while I also see the instinctual element in mankind's social makeup, and I don't see any true libertarian societies in the past, none in the present, and thus think there never will be one in the future because if mankind hasn't had one so far, the conclusion is we won't, because it isn't possible for us.

((And I'm inclined to think that the Libertarian society is to Capitalism what the perfect Communist state is to Socialism--wishful thinking.))

TO ALL: I see lots of blank spaces left in this issue, and realize that I should have accepted that interview, those reviews, that article after all...

But it is now October 14th, the frost is on my nose in the mornings as I ride the bike to the post awful, and I'm too lazy to do any more typing, and Paulette is too wiped out... So I will fill in with some of that artwork I have languishing in the file.

Have a great holiday season. I'm going to have a pepper this year. Didn't like the oregano I had last year.

I can't believe I wrote that.



chad w. foster • 1982

HERE'S A TYPED REVIEW I ALMOST OVERLOOKED.

**AFTERLIVES**  
Edited by Pamela Sargent and Ian Watson  
Vintage/Random Hse, 1986, 494 pp., \$5.95

REVIEWED BY ANDREW M. ANDREWS

It is obvious, from the very beginning, of the editors' conviction to the short story form; and, although many could be "put off" by a collection of stories about the nature of death itself, and the burning question of, could there be an afterlife?, it is rewarding to know the intent is sincere; the production a thing of love.

What does AFTERLIVES mean to the reader? What is its effect on a reader's sensibilities? Former ANALOG editor Ben Bova once wrote that a story most convincing and most enjoyable to read is a genius piece; handsome, delicately bound; crafted with the pain of experience and wonder; a treasure of blatant sincerity.

There is J.G. Ballard's classic "Time of Passage," in which life is lived in reverse; the sure and sublime "Prom-

etheus's Ghost," by Chet Williamson (in which, no, not every ghost story has been written!); the frightening "Of Space-Time and the River" by Gregory Benford, in which earth's invaders restore a former earth previously unknown, and subject the meek to it; the bizarre (convincing! convincing!) "In Frozen Time," by Rudy Rucker, in which the space and time makes the man, quite literally; and wherein even death must be faced head-on, in Harlan Ellison's long and arresting "The Region Between."

This is a book you want to read slowly, given plenty of time, without distractions or interruptions. I think the authors intended it that way.

\*\*\*\*\*

chad w. foster '86



# ONCE OVER LIGHTLY

## BOOK REVIEWS BY GENE DEWEESE

**ENIGMA** By Michael Kube-McDowell  
Berkley, \$3.50

In *ENIGMA*, the first book in the Trigon Disunity trilogy, Earth of the twenty-first century received visitors from another star only to find that the visitors were from a colony that had apparently been established thousands of years ago by a now-forgotten Terran civilization.

In *ENIGMA*, the second book, Earth is searching among the stars for more such colonies and searching there and everywhere for a solution to the puzzle of what happened to that earlier civilization and how it could have vanished without leaving at least a trace behind for archeologists to find. Suffice it to say that answers to these and other questions are answered ingeniously in *ENIGMA*, only to be replaced by still more far-reaching and ultimately more important questions, questions on which *ENIGMA*'s survival may hinge. And unless *ENIGMA*'s ending is purposely misleading, the final volume of the trilogy will bring humans face to face with the still-mysterious beings that were responsible for the disappearance of that earlier civilization.

As in *ENIGMA*, the combination of plot, writing and character development is about as good as you're going to find anywhere, and in a way, the cover blurb comparing the author to "Arthur C. Clarke at his best" is not far wrong. While there are none of the incomparably spine-chilling individual passages that Clarke sprinkles throughout many of his books, there is an overall "sense of wonder" that is the equal of that found in almost any book you'd care to name except *CHILDHOOD'S END*. It never depends, however, on the turn of a phrase but grows steadily out of the story itself, building as events unfold. This one deserves a place on the final ballots for the Nebula and Hugo awards.

**HUYSMAN'S PETS** By Kate Wilhelm  
Bluejay Books, \$15.95

Several years ago, the late Stanley Haysman performed a series of prenatal genetic experiments on several pairs of human twins, apparently in an effort to produce some form of telepathic ability. Haysman's assistant is only now about to demonstrate the results of the experiment to the government, which has been secretly funding it all along. Meanwhile, however, a number of the twins who long ago escaped the laboratory grounds are, for reasons none of them consciously understand, secretly returning to the area around the lab. Before the "demonstration" is completed, it becomes apparent that Haysman's experiments were far more successful than his assistant, to his regret, ever imagined.

As always, Wilhelm's writing is first rate, and the multiple viewpoint thriller technique she uses this time has filled *HUYSMAN'S PETS* with suspense despite the fact that there is very lit-

tle physical action. The only problem is also typical Wilhelm -- the central character, this time an unsuccessful writer named Drew Lancaster, hired to write Haysman's biography, is too shiftless to be particularly sympathetic. Also, there are a lot of cheap shots at government and science in general (one of the villains, for instance, dreams of a luxury vacation at the Watergate Hotel), but for once the story is strong enough to overcome some drawbacks. In the end, you can't help but root for, if not the hero himself, then the experimented-upon twins he is helping.

**HIGHWAY OF ETERNITY** By Clifford D. Simak  
Ballantine/DelRay, \$14.95

Through their own peculiar abilities to see and move into other dimensions, present-day adventurers Jay Corcoran and Tom Boone become involved with a family of refugees from a million years in Earth's future. The family is trying to escape a mysterious race called the Infinites, who had been zealously and successfully pursuing their goal of talking all humans into abandoning their bodies and becoming pure intelligences, "incorporeals." One member of the family, Henry, had been half way to becoming an "Incorporeal" when he changed his mind, and now he's more a ghost than anything else, conversing by telepathy and able to travel unhindered throughout all space and time. Another member, Timothy, is determined to study humanity's history and learn just what it was in humanity's makeup that made it vulnerable to the Infinites' proselytizing.

The family members, however, are only the most mundane of the characters here. There are robots, of course, including a far-future group that is determined to wipe out all trees because they once heard that it would be trees and not robots who would eventually take Man's place. And Orseful, an alien with a mystical machine that can, like the magic mirror in *Oz*, show you anyone you can think of, and another machine to take you anywhere in space or time instantaneously. And The Hat, seemingly a full-size rag doll that occasionally comes to life.

*HIGHWAY* is sometimes a little too surrealistic for my taste, although it may be that Simak has simply taken Clarke's third law about the indistinguishability of advanced science and magic and gone further with it than even Clarke ever went. Another minor problem is that, except for Henry, the family members are not all that likeable. The other characters, however, including a large prehistoric wolf that attaches itself to Boone and occasionally plays with The Hat's unoccupied body, are more sympathetic. Also, everything is done on such a grand scale, with new surprises every few pages and just enough explanations and hints of further wonders off-stage, that it's hard to resist.



**TO THE RESURRECTION STATION**  
By Eleanor Arnason, Avon, \$3.50

If you've ever dreamed of reading a lesbian Regency space adventure that sounds like it could've been written by Florence (CURSE OF THE CONQUILLIENS) Stevenson, this is the book for you. Even if you haven't, you'll probably be caught early on by the innocently witty style, not to mention by curiosity as to just where the author is heading next.

To oversimplify the plot, half-breed fourth generation New Hope colonist Belinda Smith suddenly finds she is really Belinda Hemshaw, direct descendant of Captain Godfrey Hemshaw, who colonized the planet and whose mind still lives on in the brain of a creaky old robot in the ancestral mansion, which is in reality a persnickety and argumentative life boat capable of returning them to Earth in suspended animation. Belinda, after being forcibly separated from her lover Marianne, ends up on Earth along with the robot, only to find the planet has been taken over by intelligent mutant rats, one of whom (Shortpaw, son of Redfur and Sneakyfist) she begins to feel she is falling in love with.

Which should give you some idea. And to give you an idea of the writing, one of the most concise examples, though not necessarily the best, would be an excerpt from Belinda's thoughts after she's been forced to listen to some of the New Hope native rituals: "How silly the natives were, worshipping all those gods and magicians. It was much more civilized to worship a single god with no physical presence and hardly any personality traits."

"I may not vote for it for a Nebula this winter, but I'm certainly going to nominate it.

**FOUNDATION AND EARTH** By Isaac Asimov  
Doubleday, \$16.95

The hero of *FOUNDATION'S EDGE*, former First Foundation Councilman Golan Trevis, here sets out to find Earth, the fabled home of humanity, with its legendary and surely unreal giant moon and nearby spectacularly ringed gas giant. On the trail, he visits -- and is almost killed on -- a half dozen planets, including Aurora and Solaria, the Spacer worlds last seen twenty thousand years ago in last year's *ROBOTS AND EMPIRE*. As you might expect, he does indeed find not only Earth but the secret of who or what has been keeping Earth hidden, as well as what the true origin of Psychohistory was. (I'll only say that it was nice to see that my comment in last year's review of *ROBOTS AND EMPIRE* turned out to be a bit prophetic.)

FOUNDATION AND EARTH, however, is not nearly as good a book as either of the two books that it is, simultaneously, a sequel to. True, the last couple of chapters can bring a lump to the throat of long-time Foundation and Robot fans, but the trip to that exciting is at least a hundred pages too long. The Socratic-like dialogues that characterized ROBOTS AND EMPIRE and part of FOUNDATION'S EDGE are here stretched too far, are too often repetitive, and too often padded out with what could be described as soap-operatic nattering. Also, some of Trevi's adventures involve sex, and despite the after-the-fact logical rationales, those scenes seem oddly intrusive and self-conscious, the way that Heinlein's sex scenes and sex talk of recent years all too often are. (The romance between Elijah Bayley and Lady Gladia in ROBOTS AND EMPIRE and ROBOTS OF DAWN, on the other hand, fit right in, forming, actually, the backbone of the books. That, however, was romance, not sex.) (The romance in an Asinov book, that's the difference.)

In any event, for all Foundation and Robot fans, FOUNDATION AND EARTH should not be missed. It could, however, stand a fair amount of skimming, especially in the middle hundred-thousand words.

**GODBOOBY** By Theodore Sturgeon  
Donald I. Fine, Inc., \$14.95

GODBOOBY is, as virtually everyone in science fiction knows, Sturgeon's last novel. It's good, as is almost all the science fiction he ever wrote, but unless I'm a victim of nostalgia-distorted memories of things like MORE THAN HUMAN, THE DREAMING JEWELS, or "Thunder and Roses," it's not nearly his best. It might, however, come closer to openly expressing his true feelings about life. As Godbooby says, shortly after being mortally wounded by humans yet another time, "...love each other...if you'd all only do that, you wouldn't need no other rules at all, not one."

The story, as simple as a collection of Sherwood Anderson short stories, tells how a naked young man who calls himself Godbooby comes to a small town, talks to a few people, "heals" some both physically and psychically by taking their pain into himself, and is killed within hours by the town's self-righteous puritans. "It's always like this," he says as he lies dying. "Usually not so soon, though."

In any event, don't be put off by the overly lavish praise for GODBOOBY's beauty and profundity, but don't let it get your expectations impossibly high either. Just read it for what it is, reasonably good Sturgeon -- and if you praise enough in itself -- and if you're a Sturgeon fan as I am, you'll enjoy it, no more and no less.

**THE BLOSSOM OF ERDA** By L.A. Taylor  
St. Martin's Press, \$16.95

For those who want a vastly better introduction to SF romances than the abominable MOONDUST AND MADNESS, disparaged in these pages a couple of pages back, try THE BLOSSOM OF ERDA. It isn't perfect, but it is good and it has, in addition to the SF and romance, elements of a detective story.

The heroine is Mae Sorenson, a Senior Officer in the space force of a complex system of planets that was apparently colonized by a now-forgotten Earth sometime in their distant past. The

story, however, centers entirely on the present, on a plot by one of Mae's superiors to cause the "accidental" death of herself and dozens of others, including her "handsome alien Under Officer," Sandrelec. The two are sent on a seemingly routine mission to monitor progress of a planet being terraformed, but once on the planet, they have to survive trap after trap set by the would-be killer, mostly in the form of deadly animal and plant life secretly transported to the planet before their arrival.

Most of the time, Sorenson appears to be a female combination of Sherlock Holmes and Captain Kirk, with Sandrelec vaguely reminiscent of Mr. Spock, and during that time, the story is fast-moving and exciting. Unfortunately, while the two are trapped on the planet and gradually realizing they are falling in love with each other, she has too many annoying lapses of judgment to fit her character. It's almost as if the plot required her to be careless in order for the two of them to really be in danger and to fall in love. It would, however, have been a lot more enjoyable if she could have maintained her supercompetence throughout.

Luckily, she recovers her cool once they get off the planet and start tracking down the would-be killer. As a result, the opening and closing sections are excellent, and the problems in the middle are only minor annoyances in a book that is, overall, a good blend of all three genres.

**THE BIGGEST TONGUE IN TUNISIA AND OTHER DRAWINGS** By B. Kliban, Penguin, \$5.95

Technically, this and other Kliban collections (CAT, NEVER EAT ANYTHING BIGGER THAN YOUR HEAD, WHACK YOUR KIDNEY, etc.) may not be science fiction, but they certainly classify as fantasy. And on the off chance you've never seen them, they're all worth checking out. Where else would you learn that a cat is not supposed to be confused with a meatloaf? Or see a rabbit with a flaming sword leaping on a passing Arab, shouting "Vengeance is mine, sayeth the Lord!" or a drawing captioned, "Clouds turning into iron and falling on everything."

Where else, indeed?

**FIRECHILD** By Jack Williamson  
Bluejay Books, \$16.95

In a genetic research lab, a new form of life is developed, and as the lab is being destroyed by an apparently artificial plague that wipes out all terrestrial life, it is released. Hunted by both the KGB and U.S. government agents as well as by an army headed by a religious evangelist who would make Jerry Falwell look like a flaming liberal, the creature grows from a tiny worm-like form to that of a young girl, known only as Meg, short for Alphabet. Meg has several powers, including a form of healing and the ability to inspire love and trust in those she comes in direct contact with, but in the end it isn't enough.

Written in multiple-viewpoint format, with several of the best-seller prototype characters, FIRECHILD is easily as exciting as Williamson's recent THE REBIRTH, but not nearly as "satisfying." One of the characters, particularly the utterly obnoxious religious zealot and his secret

organization, are overly broad with no redeeming features to make them seem human. Also, despite the high tech background of the research that supposedly developed Meg, there's a bit too much unexplained and conventional mysticism for my taste. Also, unless I missed it, one of the key elements -- how Meg, an artificial life form developed here on Earth, happens to be somehow related to distant beings living in a black hole's accretion disk -- is never explained.

Despite the drawbacks, however, FIRECHILD is exciting, and it does hold your interest until the end. And if it is a sequel, detailing what happens to Meg after she meets her outer space kin, is ever written, I'll start reading the minute I can get my hands on a copy.

**THE COMPLETE E.C. SEGAR POPEYE**, VOL. 1-4  
Compiled and edited by Bill Blackbeard and Rick Marshall. Fantagraphics Books, 707 Camino Manzanitas, Thousand Oaks, CA, 91360. Price varies, in the \$15-20 range

Back in the forties, I got a Big Little Book called POPEYE and THE DEEP SEA MYSTERY. Along with MAXIMO THE AMAZING SUPERMAN and PLANET STORIES, it was among the first SF or fantasy I ever read, and for decades after, I wondered why the Popeye comic strips and movie cartoons were such pale imitations.

A year or so ago, I came across Volume One of this series, and I found out.

The book was based on strips done in the thirties by the originator of Popeye and all the rest of his weird crew, Elzie Crisler Segar, and Segar died in 1938, leaving the strip to others to continue. Continue it they did, but obviously not nearly as well.

Now Fantagraphics Books is publishing in huge (approximately 16" x 11") paperbacks, all the strips, daily and Sunday, from 1930 to 1938. The first four contain all the Sunday strips, plus all the Sunday strips of another Segar creation called "Sappo."

For those who have seen only the post-Segar strips, it's hard to explain what's so appealing about Segar's work. For one thing, the strips, whether standalone sequences or sequences that run for several months, aren't funny the way, say, PEANUTS is funny, nor are they super-hero adventures like SUPERMAN, or even the Popeye movie cartoons. If anything, they're closer to the newer, Marvel superheroes, who have all sorts of flaws and foibles and problems.

But there's something else, something darker but somehow fascinating about this superpowerful sailor whose rigid and childlike ethical code has him beating people up if they're doing anything. Like the original "Mama's Family" sketches on the Carol Burnett show, it's funny, tragic and scary all at the same time, and somehow it makes me think that if Tennessee Williams had ever written a comic strip, it might've had the same feel to it. Popeye himself is often a sort of a neolithic Rambo who likes to stop and innocently smell the flowers in the midst of all the carnage.

And if all this confuses you, as it probably would me if I didn't already know what I was talking about, I'd like to Fantagraphics for a catalogue and order one of the books. Read about Popeye and the Sea Hag and Alice the Goom and the Jeep and all the rest, and let me know what you think.

TALKING MAN By Terry Bisson  
Arbor House, \$14.95

"Talking Man was a wizard who had a small junkyard on the side of a hill on the Kentucky-Tennessee line."

With that and other equally intriguing lines on the first page, you get the idea early on that TALKING MAN is not your average fantasy. It is, in a way, like the fascinating prologues to other end-of-the-world-and-beyond fantasies, like those of Mike Moorcock, for example. However, instead of degenerating into endless and all too realistic battles, TALKING MAN maintains the same dreamlike/nightmarish quality for all of its 190 pages.

And, even better, you never know quite where it is taking you. As Williams (the Kentucky-born hero) and Crystal (Talking Man's 16-year-old daughter) make their way across a magically changing North America, on their way to save the world at Edinwindine, the city at the end of time, there are new surprises and new images at every turn of the road.

Best of all, however, are the images themselves, starting with beautifully down-to-earth ones of Kentucky itself, as it exists in the here and now. Soon though, as the world changes around them, the images turn more and more surrealist, and yet retain a solid grounding in reality, like the laser guarded border between Oklahoma and Mexico or the smoking pyre that once was Denver. And overhead, the moon is continually changing.

Even the magic, like Talking Man himself, is a fascinating mixture of reality and fantasy. For instance, when their car, a '60 Chrysler New Yorker, starts leaking transmission fluid through a bullet hole, an old woman (who has probably already died a couple of times and claims to be Crystal's daughter-to-be) has Williams refill the transmission with a mixture of transmission fluid and antelope blood, until the bullet hole apparently gradually heals.

THE EMPIRE OF TIME By Crawford Kilian  
Ballantine/DelRey \$2.50

From Earth of 2015 A.D., operatives of the Intertemporal Agency range back through time as far as 70,000 B.C., searching for a way to avoid the destruction of Earth they know is due in 2089. Not only are they changing history, but many are attempting to escape the coming doom-day by colonizing the past. Meanwhile, the Agency is probing the future in an effort to learn the cause and nature of the disaster, of which they have so far seen only the desolate aftermath. One agent, his reflexes hyped to superhuman levels, his memory blocked, is sent into the past on an unspecified mission, only to find himself in the middle of intrigues and counter-intrigues that would do justice to any spy thriller, and it is there that the solution to the mystery is found.

And best of all, EMPIRE OF TIME has none of the paradoxes that plague so many time-travel adventures. Kilian avoids them neatly by postulating a whole series of universes, or "chronoplanes," created by irregularities in the Big Bang. Each is self-contained and moves independently down the time line hundreds or thousands of years from its nearest neighbor, thereby allowing meddling time travelers to have their cake and eat it, too.

This is one that, had I been bright enough to read it when it was first published in 1978, I would've recommended for a Nebula or a Hugo.





# SMALL PRESS NOTES



THE OZOIDS  
LIMERICKS IN OZ  
By Neal Wilgus  
Juxtapedia Press

Box 25771  
Albuquerque, NM 87125

The enthusiasms of people always amaze me. My own weird obsessions are normal, of course. So for those who may share Neal Wilgus's love for Oz and for limericks, here is a double treat.

One hundred rather clever and workmanlike limericks which deal with the major characters in the L. Frank Baum Oz books. And through the limericks you gain a knowledge of the action in the books.

For me, the limerick is a limited artform, and page after page of them is like a monotonous drumbeat. But this effort is in its way a marvel and an event.

Too, some of these limericks are funny character sketches which transfer in the mind to people we all know. For instance:

There once was a large Wogglebug  
who kept giving himself a big hug.

Highly magnified  
and puffed up with pride  
but he'll pass off good sense with  
a shrug.

Gems like these are frequent and make reading this booklet a rewarding experience.

I have an advance copy of the page proofs and have forgotten (if Neal told me) the price for the book. I advise writing Juxtapedia Press for that info.

DEMON WITH A GLASS HAND  
By Harlan Ellison  
DC Science Fiction Graphic Novel  
\$5.95.  
Graphic Adaptation by Marshall Rogers.

DC Comics, Inc.  
666 Fifth Av., NY, NY 10103.

It's been a long time since I read the original shooting script of Harlan's DEMON--- but this graphic story rendering seems to contain every word.

As a result the story is complete and powerful and enhanced by the imagery. Marshall Rogers solved dialog-presentation and scenic problems with some very ingenious techniques, and the rendering of the old Bradbury Building where most of the action takes place is marvelously done.

This script (edited, altered) was originally used in the legendary OUTER LIMITS TV show in October, 1964. Here is the original script, pure Ellison, very well illustrated by Marshall Rogers.

## ELLIOTT'S BOOKLINE #2

This issue is even juicier and wordier than the initial issue, since Elton has switched to a gothic micro-elite (15 characters per inch) which is not too small and which adds about 25% more in the way of reviews, commentary analysis and letters.

As with all new periodicals, this is in the shakedown period, and is improving dramatically with each new issue.

The prime aspect of interest in ELLIOTT'S BOOKLINE is Elton's inside information gleaned

from numerous long distance calls and personal friendships in fandom and prodrom. He knows all the dirt, and knows under which dirt the bodies are buried and the skeletons lurk. This is must-reading for those who want an inside look at sf and fantasy.

## STARDATE NEWS

10-13-86 STARDATE magazine is alive, again. So sayeth Leo A. Frankowski, new Editor. A new publisher, Reluctant Publishing, Ltd., 7732 Auburn Road, Utica, MI 48087 (313) 739-9552, has acquired rights from the previous publisher, accepted subscription responsibilities, and announces all previous subscribers to STARDATE may claim their subs by sending some proof of subscription, such as a cancelled check.

The magazine will shift back to be a gaming magazine. The previous publishers tried to make it into an SF magazine, says Frankowski.

The new STARDATE publishers are interested in trading advertising with other zines of significant circulation.

## THIEVES' WORLD #3

By Robert Asprin & Lynn Abbey  
Artwork by Tim Sale, Edited by Laurie Sutton.

Starblaze Graphics/The Donning Co.  
5659 Virginia Beach Blvd.,  
Norfolk, VA 23502.

This third graphics story of the Thieves' World series is well and dramatically done, and at \$3.95 a good buy.

Large-size 64-page format, color cover, b/w interiors. The stark black and white rendering actually enhances this storyline since so much of the story occurs at night, in dark rooms, dungeons, etc.

# RICHARD E. GEIS

# INTERVIEW WITH

Alexis  
Gilliland

The enclosed interview with Alexis Gilliland was recorded at a dismal little convention held in the dormitory of a small Baptist girls' business college in Roanoke, Virginia in 1983 after the rest of the con had gone home for the evening. I think that Alexis, Scott Gard and I were the only ones to actually stay overnight at the con, and I had a tape recorder -- and I suppose that this is all you could need for an introduction to this interview with Alexis Gilliland.

PHILLIPS: How did you first become associated with Richard E. Geis and SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW?

GILLILAND: A long, long time ago back in the late sixties I was doing book reviews for the MSA (Washington Science Fiction Association) Journal and he wrote me and asked would I like to send him some book reviews. I was kind of committed for all the reviews I could write for the MSA Journal so I wrote back and said, "I'm sorry," and sent him some cartoons and he published a few of them; much later I got in touch with him again. I saw one of his SCIENCE FICTION REVIEWS or maybe it was his PERSONAL JOURNAL and I started sending him cartoons. This time I was doing captions; somewhere between 1967 and 1971-73 the cartoons started talking. Once he began using more and more I eventually became a regular contributor. But it didn't just happen, I didn't burst in on him and say, "Geis, here are fifty truly excellent cartoons." I sent him a cartoon, sent him more cartoons, he sent some of them back; lately he's been buying them all unless I send him one that he doesn't understand.

PHILLIPS: Oh, he'll love that. (Laughter) Does he ever send any back with the complaint that it's simply too far out, too bizarre for SFR?

GILLILAND: Oh, yeah, he's sent some back. I sent him a cartoon in which two guys were in a bar talking and one was saying, "And then there was the administrator who was so crooked and so stupid that Nixon made him a federal judge." And the other guy was saying, "That was Kungseig, wasn't it?" I told Geis that Kungseig was the administrator of the General Services Administration while I was there and that Nixon did make him a federal judge; Geis said, "Well, ah, we don't really want a lawsuit or anything, so he sent that one back and I don't really blame him (but, you know, nasty, nasty political dig, you know, looking up the ladder at all the administration and GSA, they should have been in jail, or actually indicted. They had some awful things going on there under Nixon).

PHILLIPS: Yes, so we've heard.

GILLILAND: Kungseig's successor, Sampson, gave Nixon all sorts of stuff after Nixon was out of office and the reason was that Sampson was a homosexual and Nixon knew it, and was blackmailing the head of the GSA to get special favors. After he was out of office, he was still wired into the apparatus.

PHILLIPS: Along about that time Geis was doing stuff like his CONSPIRACY NEWS-LETTER.

GILLILAND: Well, he's still doing that; it's kinda submerged in the rest of his stuff. You were asking about how I got involved with Geis. I think mainly Geis' format permitted him to use cartoons because at about the same time I was also sending cartoons to LOOKS, sending them all over; Andy Porter got some and used them, but both Porter and Charley Brown moved away from using cartoons that were more than just a decorative spot on the page, that is something to break up the monotony of the type or to fill up the bottom of a page.

PHILLIPS: The fanzines you've cited have all moved from very amateur productions to what one must at least call "semi-pro" productions now.

GILLILAND: Yes, well, that's inevitable when you have someone who's doing something for love and he stays with it a long time and it's bound to happen that yes, they develop a semi-professional. Most of the people starting out to produce a fanzine have a great deal of difficulty with very simple things. I still see the mistake where you put a picture in the middle of type and you have to read, "There was a beautiful...," and you skip across the page, "...young lady standing at the edge of a forest..." skip across the page, "...comma, looking at a bear..." That's very distracting and it's a mistake that's not that uncommon.

PHILLIPS: What other fanzines do you contribute cartoons to at the moment?

GILLILAND: Cartoons? Let's see -- WEBSTER WOMAN'S REVENGE in Australia, and there were a couple of other Australian fanzines I sent cartoons to during the time I was running for DUFF.

PHILLIPS: How about some of the smaller zines like a guy like me would do in his basement?

GILLILAND: They tend to be local people who come by and ask me; I don't get many letters saying, "Would you please send a cartoon." I get lots of stray fanzines but most often, you know, just a fanzine in the mail. They have my address and they send it to me and sometimes I send them two or three cartoons and sometimes I'll send them a letter of comment and sometimes I say, "Gee, this is strange," and I don't send 'em anything.

PHILLIPS: You're most closely associated with SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW, at least in my mind. Do you think SFR would be as successful as it is without cartoons, particularly without your cartoons?

GILLILAND: Well, you look at the written part of SFR and it tends to be rather stiff. It doesn't have much humor in it. You'll occasionally get a good interview: Dave Langford was interviewing someone it might have been Chris Priest, I don't know; Dave Langford is an excellent interviewer. That was entertaining reading, but so much of your review tend to be rather heavy and Geis, when he's talking about paranoia and the way the world is heading, tends to be predictable

PHILLIPS: Ah, yes. Is he serious about that sort of thing?

GILLILAND: I would say, yes, he is. This is what he believes, this is what he's always believed.

PHILLIPS: And he's never just having the fans on?

GILLILAND: No, he's not having the fans on. He has a strange world view.

PHILLIPS: You don't mind if I quote you on that?

GILLILAND: No, not at all. Geis knows he has a strange world view. If you told him that he has a strange world view he'd say, "Yes, yes, it's true." When you read what he's said about himself, you'll see that I'm being very restrained and polite. I don't agree with his paranoia and I don't agree with his conspiracy theories -- the problem with the conspiracy theory is that you're looking at something you have, God, thousands of people involved in and ... (At this point a photographer came by to take a couple of shots.)

Anyway, the thing is when you're talking about a conspiracy that's big enough to do what Geis is talking about, you have got to have an incredible communications network, you've got to have an enormously large number of people involved in the conspiracy, it becomes very difficult to inform them all with everything they need to be informed of, you have to coordinate all this tremendous amount of stuff and ...

PHILLIPS: You could be describing fandom or a worldcon.

GILLILAND: No! I'm not describing fandom or a worldcon committee, I'm describing international banking which is dominated by the late Nelson Rockefeller, who has got this ring, and you pull it out and he speaks oracularly from his sarcophagus and the people there listen to what he says and write it all down and run out to do his bidding. I mean you simply can't keep a conspiracy that big together. The conspiracy is successful because nobody has ever come out and de-

TERRORIST FOR  
CROWS



nounced it, and lots of people have denounced the conspiracy and everybody is looking and they're saying, "It's doing this, it's doing that, it's gotta be a conspiracy." The people on top are too STUPID to conspire. They're up there on top and they're all by themselves doing the best they can, which is pretty awful. You don't need a conspiracy, you can explain everything by stupidity and incompetence, and God knows you can find enough stupidity and incompetence to run three conspiracies if you want. I mean Geis hasn't even discovered the Capitalist conspiracy inside the Communist world yet. There's a GREAT conspiracy inside the Communist world to subvert everything back to Capitalism and there are Communists who believe it. Like Dick Geis. Except that they don't publish fazines.

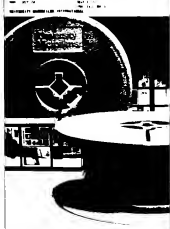
PHILLIPS: ??? You're describing Dick Geis as a Communist???

GILLILAND: Well, if he were a Communist and he were publishing a fazine inside the Soviet Union, that's about what he'd be saying because that's what he'd be familiar with. He's familiar with this country and he's watching this country and he's publishing here so it's gotta be a conspiracy in this country. You're looking at chaos and the human mind forms a pattern when you look at chaos. It's very hard to look at chaos and say, "Gosh, that's chaotic. There's nothing orderly there. It's just a bunch of random noise." You keep looking at it and after a while you begin seeing red lines and yellow lines and patterns weaving back and forth and your mind tries to make sense out of what your eye is seeing. Geis looks at the economic system and tries to make sense out of it. It is not Geis's fault.

"There are only two good uses for mornings. One is to finish the party and the other is sleeping."  
-- Dolly Gilliland

NOTE: Alexis Gilliland is the creator of THE IRON LAW OF BUREAUCRACY, Loompanics, \$4.95

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## FOR SALE

The books have dwindled down, to a precious few... Interesting that Richard E. Geis sex novels would sell so well. There are a few left.

As before, the number of copies of a given title is in brackets.

\* Denotes a Geis pseudonym. These books are \$5.00 each, autographed if you wish.

- SLUM VIRGIN, 1963 (1)
- ODD COUPLE, 1968 (2)  
Peggy Swenson \*
- OFF BROADWAY CASANOVA, 1966 (1)  
Robert N. Owen \*
- DRIFTER IN TOWN, 1966 (2)  
Robert N. Owen \*
- RUNNING WILD, 1969 (3)  
Peggy Swenson \*
- TIME FOR ONE MORE, 1969 (1)  
Peggy Swenson \*
- YOUNG TIGER, 1965 (3)
- EASY, 1962 (1)  
Peggy Swenson \*
- THE PUNISHMENT, 1967 (2)
- SEX TURNED ON, 1967 (5)
- DISCOTHEQUE DOLL, 1966 (1)  
Ann Radway \*
- THE THREE-WAY APARTMENT, 1964 (2)  
Peggy Swenson \*
- AMATEUR NIGHT, 1965 (1)  
Peggy Swenson \*
- SUZY AND VERA, 1964 (1)  
Peggy Swenson \*
- THE THREE WAY SET, 1965 (2)  
Frederic Colson \*
- THE GAY PARTNERS, 1964 (3)  
Peggy Swenson \*
- LESBIAN GYM, 1964 (4)  
Peggy Swenson \*
- IN BED WE LIE, 1967 (1)
- ROLLER DERBY GIRL, 1967 (1)  
Frederic Colson \*
- BEDROOM BLACKLIST, 1966 (1)
- THE PASSION THING, 1966 (2)  
Frederic Colson \*
- THE LOVE TRIBE, 1968 (1)  
Peggy Swenson \*
- DEVIL ON HER TAIL, 1969 (3)  
Peggy Swenson \*
- ORALITY '69, 1969 (3)
- ORALITY '70, 1970 (6)
- THREE WAY SWAP, 1970 (2)
- DADDY'S HARLOT, 1969 (1)  
Sheela Kunzer \*
- THE TWINS HAVE MOTHER, 1972 (1)  
Peggy Swenson \*



# THE VIVISECTOR

## BY DARRELL SCHWEITZER



### THE LAST DANGEROUS VIVISECTOR

I still can't quite believe that this is my very last column for the very last SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW. We all knew the End was coming, and there are times in this life when we must bow to the inevitable. From the sound of things, as our Noble Editor described his increasing arthritis problems last issue, the matter is a case of *Fa-la (Forced Away From It All)* rather than mere *Gafia*, and so, this time, I really believe him when he says he's quitting. But an epoch has passed. It is, in its own small way, a turning point in my own life.

I reviewed my first Geis-zine in the first column I ever wrote for anyone, anywhere. I will not say where, because I am not proud of that first column. I started it when I was about sixteen. It was a fanzine review column for a fairly reputable Texas fanzine which must have been suffering a lapse, because the editor let me get away with all sorts of juvenile gimmickry, the likes of which must have made the older fans sadly shake their heads and yearn for the Second Coming of Sergeant Saturn. But, to start me off, the editor sent me a bundle of fanzines. Included was a copy of Tom Reamy's famous *TRUMPET*, a dittoed issue of Andy Porter's *ALGOL*, a copy of *PSYCHOTIC*, edited by one Richard E. Geis.

I did not doubt, from the start, that Geis was the secret master of the fanzine universe, an awesome personage to be placated with pistachio ice cream or subscription money with which to purchase the same. It was *Geis* (as it soon became) was the place to get one's reviews published. My first review for Geis appeared in the 38th issue of the old series *SFR* (June 1970). "The Vivisection" begins with issue 19 of the new series (August 1976). So it's been a long haul. I have been reading this magazine for my entire science-fictional life and writing for it for most of that time. When I began, I was a little-known teenaged writer for mimeographed fanzines. *SFR* was the first magazine ever to put my name on the cover. (Well, the June 1970 issue had a split-cover format, with the entire table of contents running down the right half.) Now, I may not be as famous as Isaac Asimov or Stephen King, but my name is on the cover of *AMAZING* and *NIGHT CRY* with some regularity. Books by me have been reviewed in the pages of *SFR*.

So, dear readers, it's been grand this past sixteen and more years, especially the last ten or so. Should anyone be interested, you can go back through all those issues and trace my development as writer and critic, from a raw beginning to, well ...

The only thing I regret after all these years is the Malberg Affair, which, you may recall, happened about eight years ago, in the earlier phase of Barry Malberg's very public Retirement from Science Fiction.<sup>\*</sup> Here was the equivalent of a woman in a bar, making a real nuisance of herself, in-

sulting everyone, just begging to be abused and reviled ... and like a sap, I went for him. The results caused much bad feelings, rapidly got personal, and didn't even have the desired effect. (Naive thought that I was, I thought I could speed him on his way.) Worse yet, it wasn't even entertaining ... the unforgivable sin for any commentator. All told, a very bad move on my part. I had clearly forgotten the wisdom of the old joke about the sadist and the masochist:

Masochist: Beat me! Beat me!

Sadist (fiendishly): No!

My book reviews will continue in Charles Ryan's new professional magazine, *ABORIGINAL SF*, the first issue of which has already appeared. *ABO SF*, as everyone already calls it, is a tabloid on good-quality paper, rather like the old *MEDIAEUSCENE*. It has color artwork and an initial circulation of 40,000. I urge you all to subscribe. (6 issues for \$12, from *ABORIGINAL SF*, POB 2449, Woburn, MA 01888-9989.) The other contributors, present and future, include Orson Scott Card, Hal Clement, Harlan Ellison, Frederik Pohl and Connie Willis. My column there will be fairly similar to "The Vivisection," with an essayistic opening and then reviews of several books in depth, with short reviews at the end. The column will be, of necessity, more science fiction oriented than "The Vivisection" has been at times. I can, and will, review fantasy and horror books, but I won't be able to suddenly devote a whole column to H.P. Lovecraft or new heroic fantasy novels, or such off-trail subjects.

I am reviewing fantasy on occasion for *FANTASY BOOK*. As for whole columns about H.P. Lovecraft, I direct your attention to the March 1987 issue of *AMAZING*, which contains a book review column I wrote, summing up the Old Gent's status in world literature fifty years after his death. I also review for such madame publications as *THE CLEVELAND PLAIN DEALER* and *THE PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER*, and I am an occasional columnist for *FANTASY REVIEW*. So, the world will be hearing more from me, maybe even a lot more, but without a Geis magazine as center and navel of the universe, it doesn't seem the same.

But, bowing to the inevitable, I note that this column may be the last extensive piece of gratis writing I do for some time. All those other places pay, some of them quite well. Had Geis continued, I am afraid my contribution to *SFR* might have become thin and erratic. For example, for this final column I haven't had the time to actually re-

<sup>\*</sup>This issue's quiz: During the age of Retirements from *SF*, who was the only writer to announce a retirement from the field, then actually leave? Answer at the end of this column.

view anything. Reading time has always been the limiting factor for me. As I write this, I am absolutely nailed down, with tight deadlines for other magazines. There's no way I could read even an issue of a small press magazine unscheduled right now.

But let me at least recommend a wonderful book, which I'm reviewing more extensively elsewhere:

#### THE COMPLETE PURSEY

By Mervyn Wall

Wolfhound Press (68 Mountjoy Sq.

Dublin 1, Ireland)

Paper: £7.50 Hardcover: £15.00.

241 + 254 pp.

As long as I've devoted so much of this column promoting the cause of good fantasy, let me say that if you read no other fantasy book this year, or this decade, you should read this one. Simply, Mervyn Wall is the best English-language fantasy writer alive. I qualify that statement carefully, noting that Peake, Dunsany, Tolkien, and T.H. White are dead, but on the basis of *THE UNFORTUNATE PURSEY* and *THE RETURN OF PURSEY*, which are reprinted here in facsimile (hence the double pagination), he is worthy to stand in that august company. He most resembles White, and the reason that I have been championing Wall's cause to such an extent of late (see "Mervyn Wall and the Comedy of Despair" in *THE FANTASY REVIEW*) is that he is indeed fully as good as any of the great masters, but hardly known at all in this country, even by specialists. It's as if I knew about *THE SWORD IN THE STONE* and nobody else did. Well, what would you do?

The two *PURSEY* books are about a bumbling, good-hearted lay brother in early medieval Ireland who accidentally becomes a sorcerer. He spends the first book trying to be reconciled with the ecclesiastical authorities. In the second, he despairs of that and tries to become wicked. But, alas, he hasn't the stuff of true wickedness in him, and in the end there is no place for him, either in respectable society or outside of it.

Such a summary tells you very little, really. The books are wise and witty satires, black comedies at the core, containing a very bleak message about the human condition. The very essence of black comedy is that it uses laughter to present a message which would otherwise be too terrible to bear, and that's what Wall does. The writing is impeccably excellent, and hasn't dated even slightly, for all that the books were first published in 1946 and 1948. (Since then Wall has written other novels, and a book full of short stories, but little fantasy, and nothing like this. So he was never typed as a fantasy writer. He is an Irish literary writer, which is



why the fantasy field, now, is only beginning to discover him.) The best way to describe them is to take an analogy from film: Imagine if Charlie Chaplain, at the height of his powers, had made a medieval fantasy. *THE TRAMP AND THE HOLY GRAIL*. It's that good.

My attitude toward fantasy hasn't changed much over the years, since I've been writing for SFR, but my perception of the current state of the fantasy publishing industry certainly has. I remain an enthusiast, and a classicist. My esteem for the great fantasy writers of the past hasn't diminished. But I find that the current product (and I use the word deliberately) is beginning to pall on me. Like most of fandom now, I too, am prone to dismiss another familiarly-packaged book by an unknown writer as "Oh, just a fantasy," or even "Just another fantasy trilogy." Yawn, just another, as we say technically in the book business, *elfy-welfy*.

Fantasy, as I've said before in these pages, is more fragile than science fiction. It is more like lyric poetry. Its idea content is very slight, so where a mediocre science fiction novel might make itself memorable on superior ideation (that is, the author has thought out what it would actually be like in such awesomely convincing detail, that for all the characters may be flat and the prose wooden, the book has the appeal of a good NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC article.) A mediocre fantasy novel has nothing going for it at all. Lyric poetry, when it's bad, is just dead space on the page. But fantasy has become the object of production-line publishing. It, of all forms of fiction, is least suited to such tactics. Since all those dull grey books aren't exquisitely beautiful, they have to be something: what they are is a kind of formula romance, closely resembling the standard sort of women's fiction, but with new costumes. *ELVES' HEAVING PASSION*. This sort of fiction is per-

fectly legitimate. It has built up an audience and it seems to serve the needs of that audience well enough. But I am not a part of that audience, and have little sympathy for such fiction. To me, for the sort of books I'm interested in, the great Fantasy Boom has been an illusion. There are probably less fantasy books of my sort being published now than in the 1950s, which after all, gave us *GOETTERDAEMERUNG*, *THE LORD OF THE RINGS*, *THE BROKEN SWORD*, *THE ONCE AND FUTURE KING* and *THE DYING EARTH*. Equivalent books have appeared in our time -- Gene Wolfe's *THE BOOK OF THE NEW SUN*, Manuel Mujica-Laine's *THE WANDERING UNICORN*, John Gardner's *FREDDY'S BOOK* and *GRENDEN* -- but there haven't been a lot of them. I suspect there never can be.

An editor I know, who admits he "cannot read any of that stuff," asked me recently, "Is any of it any good?"

I admit that gave me pause. In science fiction, there are lots of bright new writers. Who's really good in SF right now? Well, people like Frederik Pohl always are. Among the newer writers: William Gibson, Karen Joy Fowler, Lucius Shepard, John Varley, Sontom Sucharitkul, Lewis Shiner -- the list is quite long. But where are the equivalent writers in fantasy? I can point to the continually impressive Jane Yolen. I haven't read Judith Tarr yet, but I want to. Her work looks, and is reputed to be, quite worthwhile. Gene Wolfe has just released a new fantasy novel, *SOLDIER IN THE MIST*, which I will surely read and review. Esther Friesland is delightful, and Joel Rosenberg writes intelligently-conceived, light-weight adventures. Sucharitkul's *THE SHATTERED HORSE* is worth your time, too. But beyond that, what? Maybe I forgot a name or two. But I am not seeing consistently interesting careers in fantasy, the way I am in science fiction and horror. (If you haven't read Clive Barker yet, by all means do.)

It's mostly just product. Let's face it, if an unknown writer tells you that he (more likely, she) has just sold a fantasy novel, you can pretty well predict the plot, cast of characters, emotional tone, level of writing, thematic content, and even what the cover will look like, before being told anything more.

You can't do that in science fiction. Fantasy, as a genre, is decades behind science fiction, about where SF was in the middle-1930s, with Del Rey books (or maybe Ace) playing the role of T. O'Connor Sloane. What we need is a John W. Campbell, who is not only sick of the old, tired stuff, but able to throw it all out.

And on that controversial note, Readers, I leave you. I am sure I will have more to say on these subjects in *FANTASY REVIEW* and elsewhere. It's been, as we used to say in Sixties-speak, a trip. Hail and farewell.

The answer to this issue's quiz: Alan Brennert was the star pupil of the 1975 *CLARION*. He sold numerous stories to the major magazines and anthologies in the early '70s. Then he announced his retirement from the field. He has since gone into television, and been involved with *BUCK ROGERS* and is now the story editor of *TWILIGHT ZONE*. But he has not published anything more under the SF label.



# OTHER VOICES OTHER VOICES

BURNING CHROME By William Gibson  
Arbor House, 1986, \$15.95

REVIEWED BY HOWARD COLEMAN

Overheard in the Worldcon huxter room:

"While we're here, I want to look for a hardcover copy of NEUROMANCER."

"NEUROMANCER? You mean NECROMANCER. N-E-C-..."

"No, NEUROMANCER, by William Gibson. You know, the book that won the Hugo last year."

Silence.

So much for fame undying.

I think I'm safe in assuming that readers of this august publication know who William Gibson is and that his novel NEUROMANCER won the 1985 Hugo. That much said, I'll also hazard a guess that most of you realize that his most recent book, BURNING CHROME, is neither a work of exotic metallurgy nor a manual for the disposition of antique cars parts. What it is, is a collection of all of Gibson's short fiction published to date. More than that, BURNING CHROME is also a Notable Event in SF.

It's notable because it contains the stories by which Gibson became the exemplar of "cyberpunk" SF, whether he wanted to be or not. (No, I won't talk about "cyberpunk" and what it is or isn't or ought to be. If you're interested, read Michael Swanwick's "A User's Guide to the Postmodern" in the August, '86, ASIMOV'S. Whether the article is "right" or not, it's entertaining. It will also serve as a general introduction for those who have been offplanet or comatose for the past few years.) It's also notable because, on the basis of a few of these pieces, Gibson became an extremely "hot" writer. (To borrow from the spirit of the National Pastime, just before NEUROMANCER appeared, Gibson's Accolade-to-Words-Published Ratio led the league.) Other writers notice all this, of course, and even now the wave of William Gibson-inspired SF breaks around us. Having Gibson's stories all here in one place will provide some interesting perspectives into this crushing tide.

It will also provide some interesting perspectives into the stories themselves. For those of you who aren't fans, but just read the stuff, there is some pretty good SF in this book. Some of these stories have been widely anthologized since their original appearances in places like OMNI and Terry Carr's UNIVERSE, but some of them haven't.

Of the ten stories in BURNING CHROME, seven are by Gibson alone and three are collaborations, with John Shirley, Bruce Sterling and Michael Swanwick. (There's also a preface by Sterling.) Six of the Gibson solos and "Dogfight," written with Swanwick, are set in or around the near future world of NEUROMANCER and of Gibson's second novel, COUNT ZERO.

An interesting way to get there is through the other solo story, "The Gernsback Continuum." The Gernsback of the title, is, of course, our very own Hugo, patron saint of scientification and of that almost baroque faith in the infinite perfectability of human society through technology. The story's protagonist is afflicted with a condition which parodies our famous optimistic futurism: he actually sees the world of sleek space opera shapes and noble human specimens who lived in the pages of pulp magazines, and it terrifies him. To rid himself of this unwanted sense of wonder, he overdoses on reality, on the everyday catastrophe and havoc of life. Whatever it takes to meet the future, unreasoning belief that aircars and telescreens will cushion the shock is worse than no belief at all.

Stepping from the Gernsback to the Gibson continuum, to the world of Chiba City and the Sprawl, we enter the unforgiving, glitzy, high-tech world of NEUROMANCER and COUNT ZERO. There has been no nuclear Armageddon (though hostile one-man parafolks have ghosted through the night skies above Kiev, and chemically enhanced pilots have engaged in hurtling combat above Central American Jungles). Technology's progress has accelerated it into a present time which has shattered the global village of our dreams into a million razor-edged shards. Society is a planet-wide cybernetic jungle ruled by corporations which seem to coexist with, or perhaps only to tolerate governments.

Some of Gibson's most memorable characters (see "Johnny Mnemonic" and "Burning Chrome") are creatures of this jungle, roaming the neon-lit streets of the endless cities and the glowing electronic paths of cyberspace. Their lives are spent on the edge between lying low to avoid the attention of larger, meaner predators (there is always someone stronger) and getting enough of the action to survive, for now.

Even the technology which permits seeing through another's eyes, living inside another's skin, does not ease but intensifies isolation ("Fragments of a Hologram Rose"). We take a brief look at the rest of the Universe, in "Hinterlands," only to find that it is so strange, so hostile, that human sanity is the price to pay for a ride on the cosmic tollway. Whatever cruelties human society holds, the answer to the question, "What's it like, Out There?" seems to be "You don't want to know."

But some still do want to know, to try, even in the face of certain failure. These stories are saved from being unrelenting recitations of hopelessness by characters who still take chances on the unforgivable luxuries of hope and dreams and love. Sometimes, as in "The Winter Market," the hope takes the form



of an absolute ambition to escape the realities of life for a cybernetic existence which may or may not be better, but is at least different. In "Johnny Mnemonic," the ambition is simply to survive a business transaction which has gone very bad.

Love is a dangerous matter, for Gibson's characters. Shaped by the hostile isolation of their world, they commit the crime of trust only at great risk. In "Burning Chrome," "The Winter Market," and "Fragments of a Hologram Rose," the result is loneliness. In "The New Rose Hotel," it is death. In any case, it seems that the tenuous link between Gibson's characters and their constantly endangered humanity is just this romantic notion, that love still counts, whatever the odds against it.

It's this quality that fails in "Dogfight," a story with all the props but none of the substance. The protagonist (I don't like that word, but Gibson does not write about heroes) earns no sympathy and very little identification on the reader's part. Perhaps because of what has been done to him before the story opens, he has ceased to have any recognizably important human qualities. The story (on this year's Hugo ballot) has been described, oddly, as a tragedy. It is not. There is nothing noble about the character or about his empty victory. We can't believe he has sacrificed to attain his goals, when he actually had nothing to give up to begin with. But the story "sounds" right: the relentless pace and the can't-put-it-down style triangulated somewhere between Harlan Ellison and Raymond Chandler are instantly recognizable. It will serve to set off the remaining works in this book and to supply us with a "Gibson-clone" story which is not quite right against which to compare the deluge of such we can expect.

The remaining pieces, "Red Star, Winter Orbit," written with Bruce Sterling, and "The Belonging Kind," with John Shirley, are good stories which are very different from the rest of the book. They lack the raw energy of Gibson's solo style but not the realism it relates. From a grim view of where space travel in particular and society in general might be in just a few years, "Red Star" develops a resolution that depends not on technology but on the people who use it.

(Bear in mind that this gloomy view of the near future of space travel was written and published before Challenger blew up.) "The Belonging Kind" is about successfully achieving humanity by abandoning it. The story is marked by a kind of uneasiness born of not knowing exactly where the "speculative" part of this speculative fiction begins. In both cases, the essential optimism of the stories points up the hard-edged, household quality of Gibson's other work.

Presumably, Gibson will one day strike out from the world of the Sprawl to try other things. I have no idea where he might go, but it should be an interesting trip to watch.

THE WARRIOR'S APPRENTICE  
By Lois McMaster Bujold  
Baen Books, 1986, 315 pp., \$2.95

REVIEWED BY DEAN R. LAMBE

Now here's a fun romp through the spaceways -- not so much space opera as space ballet. In this second volume of a three-part far-future series, Bujold presents a young man's battle for his birthright against the complex political intrigue of a rigid militaristic society, a struggle not so much of brawn as of brain.

The story opens when the young cripple Miles Naismith Vorkosigan, son of the principals of SHARDS OF HONOR, washes out of physical trials for Barravarran Imperial Military Service. Miles is at loss as to what to do with his life, for he fears bringing shame upon his proud family heritage. He embarks on a visit to his mother's home, Beta Colony, with his bodyguard, Sergeant Bothari, and his sister, Elena, whom he secretly loves. Within days, Miles finds himself deeply in debt through ownership of a decrepit freighter, and leigoled to a washed-up space pilot and a military deserter. His only hope is running guns for a little planetary war on Tau Verde IV. Unfortunately, the Oseran Free Mercenary Fleet, hired by the other side, has blockaded the Tau Verde wormhole. Through accident, fluke, and a lot of neural sweat, Miles takes on the Oserans, and almost before he knows it, he's in command of his own Dendarii Mercenary Fleet. Meanwhile, back at the palace, things haven't been going well for his father, Count Vorkosigan, as old enemies conspire to use Miles in a plot against Emperor Gregor.

While this series gallops along at a furious pace (fortunate, at times, given a few plot cracks), it has all the "right stuff." A lot of thought and thoughtfulness stand behind the all-too-human characters. Enjoy this one, and look forward to the next.

THE DOOMSDAY EFFECT By Thomas Wein  
Baen Books, 1986, 290 pp., \$2.95

REVIEWED BY DEAN R. LAMBE

Eureka! A fresh new hard SF writer emerges with this fine first novel. The "doubting Thomas" may choose to hide his light behind a "Wren" pseudonym, but his science and fiction abilities shine through.

When two executives of the industrial robot company, Pinocchio, Inc., take off from San Francisco, their plane encounters the first pass of Earth's doom, a quantum black hole. With rapid first

aid, Grace Porter saves engineer Alex Kornilov's life, and begins their dramatic quest to save humanity from itself and the cold laws of physics.

Under the leadership of Pinocchio's founder Steve Cocci, Porter and Kornilov, in cooperation with geologist Ariel Ceran and cybernetic Jason Batshepeke, organize a government-industry Consortium to trap Hawking-1, the growing micro black hole now in close orbit through the Earth. Batshepeke, with his direct neural-computer interface, knows that only the asteroid Ceres -- once moved to Earth orbit -- has the necessary mass to trap the black hole. For complex political reasons, however, Cocci opts for the more risky choice of Phobos. When Cocci is assassinated by Russian agents, and Kornilov's efforts to borrow the moon of Mars fail disastrously, Porter takes over the project with less than five years remaining before Hawking-1 consumes the Earth. To her horror, with her lover, Kornilov, trapped on Mars, she discovers that Batshepeke's Ceres solution may be almost as deadly as the black hole.

#### NEWS BULLETIN

Portland, OR (UPI) -- GEIS ID ALTERED

Richard E. Geis, editor and publisher of SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW said today that his venerable magazine will cease publication with the next (November 1986) issue. In announcing his forced retirement after more than 30 years in the fanzine field, Mr. Geis blamed increasingly severe pains in neck and hip. "I simply can't sit still for it any more," Geis said.

Someone scientist, Dr. Dean R. Lambe, when asked for comment, said: "Well, I'm double checking for synchronicity and Heisenberg uncertainties, but it looks like his pains really got bad about the time he did that savage, killer review of my novel, THE ODYSSEUS SOLUTION. While I hesitate to jump to premature conclusions... eh, it appears that voodoo works."

Michael A. Banks, co-author of THE ODYSSEUS SOLUTION, added, "Yeah, I guess we won't have to re-order the bat's wing and newt's eye after all."

Geis was unavailable for comment about the rumors that he plans to enter politics, with a back brace and a clone of Marilyn Monroe.

My nomination for the best first novelist of 1986, WREN puts hardly a foot wrong in this high-tech adventure.

DOUBLE NOCTURNE By Cynthia Felice  
Bluejay, 1986, 330 pp., \$16.95

REVIEWED BY DEAN R. LAMBE

Sure to be misunderstood as feminist cat, Felice offers yet another story of sexual role reversal in the extreme, a "let's put the women on top and see how those pigs like it" novel.

When pilot Tom Hark is sent by his Quil to restore the Artificial Intelligence on the planet Islands in the Sky, his ship's captain, Dece, and her navigator, Rene, are shot down by the ruling patriarchy, and severely injured. Once Hark takes down another shuttle to res-

cue his crewmates, he too, is captured after a forced landing in a storm. Cut off from his shuttle and the orbiting ship's AI, Hark finds himself a pawn in complex inter-city politics. Orrin and Jeremy, two charred men in the neo-feudal society of religious fanatics and former transported criminals, help Hark escape Dame Adione, but he soon finds himself imprisoned by the ruling twins, Sellina and Maia, of New Renaissance. After a little homosexual rape to build his character, he's rescued by the lovely Laurel from the heretic city of Selene. While he keeps -- barely -- his own family jewels, he still needs the "jelly beans" to lift his stolen shuttle.

Were it not for an excess of cliffhanger, exploits and grating anachronisms (the opposite of anachronism), Felice would have a fine novel here. Would a galactic culture so far in the future that Earth isn't mentioned really use a term like "jelly beans"? Why, after a prolonged war against the Homeworlds, would any sensible Guild send an unarmed ship to a planet of former convicts? Is rape really so easily forgotten? Why does a society with artificial lighting worry about a moonless night? And why does a starship, especially one run by a joking AI, lack a name? These are but a few of the nagging questions that beg you to say pass on this one.

AMERICA 2040 II: THE GOLDEN WORLD  
By Evan Innes  
Bantam, Sept '86, 373 pp., \$4.50

REVIEWED BY MARK W. ANTONOFF

In THE GOLDEN WORLD, the sequel and Volume II of the AMERICA 2040 series, the world finds itself in a bit of a bind. What the populace has become accustomed to, the threat of nuclear war, seems to be imminent. Under this threat, a group of American "colonists," aboard a starship, voyage to the stars in search of a new beginning for themselves, mankind and the "American Way." Not too far behind, a doomed star ship manned by a group of Russians endures a mutiny only to find the destruction of their ship and hopes. Its only survivor, a powerful Russian leader named Theresta Pulsaki, is able to navigate her escape pod to the surface of the same planet that the American "colonists" have already claimed as their home.

The basic premise, as well as the human drama, is not something new to this genre. However, the author has managed to pattern his adventure on the early American settlers and is successful in doing so. Their new home, Omega (which translates to: last chance), is a wilderness in the tradition of what the new world might have seemed like hundreds of years ago. There is a congenial blend of beauty and hostile dangers present on Omega which allow for some absorbing conflicts and dissension.

But at the core of this engaging novel we find the characters and their interpersonal relationships. From Captain Duncan Rodrick, down to a robot named simply the "Admiral," we find characters which enhance the story line at every turn. Interpersonal relationships are mirror images of what we face every day in real life (perhaps not to the same degree, but to some of it nonetheless).

I enjoyed the new adventure for the colonists in search of a new world, and found it refreshing in the face of all the post nuclear war novels that have flooded the book shelves in the recent

past. I feel sure that Evan Innes will come through with a fitting end to the perils, delight and challenges of those who have voyaged to Omega. The next volume is scheduled for a February 1987 release.

**THE FACE THAT MUST DIE**  
By Ramsey Campbell  
TOR, 1985, 351 pp., \$3.95

REVIEWED BY STUART NAPIER

Clinical psychology students could easily substitute this book for any case study in paranoia their professor might suggest.

Campbell, an acknowledged master of the subtlety of horror, has delved painfully into his own personal past and presented his readers with yet another chilling look at the human condition. In his lengthy and amazingly honest Foreword, "At the Back of my Mind: A Guided Tour" (23 pp.), the author goes into excruciating detail regarding his early years and it's safe to say this novel helps him exorcise any demons left over from the experience.

What I like best about Campbell is his ability to skate along the jagged outer edges of reality where real horror lies in wait for us all without ever tumbling over the precipice.

In *FACE* he gives us one John Horridge (a play on words?), an aging, unemployed resident of Liverpool, England who is sinking by degrees into total paranoia. He has nothing but time on his hands and uses it poorly, worrying about layabouts, criminals and homosexuals and ultimately coming to believe they are all plotting against him.

Frustrated by the local police's lack of clear insight into the solution of two recent murders of homosexuals, Horridge decides it's time to take matters into his own hands, thus starting a chain of events that only increases his descent into the quicksand of mental illness.

As a primary character, Horridge is fully developed and believable. Equally convincing are Cathy and Peter, the young couple who are unwittingly pulled into his nightmare. They are not without their own problems; it's the author's use of contrast regarding their difficulties struggling with marital problems, especially Peter's penicillin abuse, drug use and Horridge's growing illness that provides the tension.



This is a different kind of horror novel, one where the scariest parts are distinctly real and the possibilities that it could happen to you are all too apparent. The only thing missing for my taste is the occasional light touch of humor that can break the tension just long enough to allow the impact of the horror to be that much greater when it hits again.

Ramsey Campbell used to be considered by many a sort of second class Stephen King. Forget that his books haven't yet sold for the mega-buck advances and been churned out endlessly into screenplays, Campbell is second to none when it comes to intricate and genuinely literate writing in the horror tradition.

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

REVIEWED BY STUART NAPIER

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

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

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

**NAZI GOLD** By Sayers and Botting with the LONDON TIMES, Grove, 544 pp., \$3.95

REVIEWED BY ALMA JO WILLIAMS

The ancient legends of gold treasure are enriched by a very young addition, only 40 years old. Occasional oblique references to it appear in popular print, and it has been recorded in the Guinness Book of Records (which was the take-off for the investigation) but the topic is a cliff-hanger, i.e., what actually DID happen to the billions of the Third Reich? Ian Sayer and Douglas Botting have spent almost 15 years in search of its elusive existence. It's a good thriller and as usual truth and speculative fiction can be equal to each other in outdoing fiction in weirdness. One can speculate endlessly on who has it, where it is hidden and on what nefarious plan for world domination it is being used for this very second. Verrry Interesting!

SURELY YOU'RE JOKING, MR FEYNNMAN!

By Richard P. Feynman  
Bantam, 322 pp., \$4.50

REVIEWED BY ALMA JO WILLIAMS

This book is in the same jagular vein as Watson's *THE DOUBLE HEAL*, in that it is written by a Nobel Prize-winning scientist, notably a physicist, and shows the all-too-human side of the high-powered scientific community (which I can vouch for, being a research worker myself). The subtitle is aptly called *ADVENTURES OF A CURIOUS CHARACTER*, and it is! I had bought the book and was part way through it before Dr. Feynman was named to the Rogers Committee on the Challenger investigation so therefore anything that he (sic) did or said came as no surprise. The writing style is wholly unpretentious and is written as one would speak -- very simply so that almost anyone above the sixth grade would have no problem with multisyllable words or convoluted syntax which so dear to the practicing scientist's heart. Feynman worked at Cornell for awhile (until he was offered more elsewhere) and his observations of camp life there at that time are hilarious. "Surely you must read Mr. Feynman!" it's well worth it!

**THE HIGH KINGS** By Joy Chant  
Bantam Spectra, Fantasy, 245 pp., \$3.50

REVIEWED BY ALMA JO WILLIAMS

This book chronicles the fragmentary stories, songs and mythology of the Celts, the races indigenous to what is now Great Britain. They are the forerunners of what would become the Arthurian Legends. Joy Chant has done a magnificent job of taking the fragmentary remnants and skillfully weaving them into stories which the bards -- singers and poetry-makers of the Celtic tribe -- might and probably recounted. Chant places the bards -- storytellers and tribal historians -- in their most important perspective and tells how the Chief Bard was equal to a King. She gives a concise view of Celtic Society which is quite different from the "barbarians" which is how the Romans and therefore the rest of the Western world regarded them. Good book!

**GILGAMESH THE KING** (\$3.95, 306 pp.) and **THE CUNGLOMEROID COCKTAIL PARTY** (\$3.50) Both by Robert Silverberg  
Bantam Spectra

REVIEWED BY ALMA JO WILLIAMS

*GILGAMESH*: Here is another Silverberg book to be read leisurely in order to savor the written pictures which his imagination paints. This is a simple retelling of the epic tale of one of the best-known of the legendary ancient kings who people the Mid-Eastern Mythos and is older than the pharaohs of Egypt. No need to recount the tale. Just get it and read it.

*CUNGLOMEROID COCKTAIL PARTY* (317 pp.): A collection of recent 1980's short stories by Silverberg which will please and astound anyone who hasn't read them already. All are good. There is even a story about a dangerous form of VD -- a taboo topic in literature, and TV, as far as bed-hopping is concerned, but which is alive and well in the real world. Read it.



SCIENCE FICTION: THE 100 BEST NOVELS  
By David Pringle, Carroll & Graf, \$15.95

This book, clearly inspired by Anthony Burgess' recent NINETY-NINE NOVELS, consists of short essays about one hundred SF novels published between 1949 and 1984. As such, it presents itself as an overview of the field during that period. It will probably also be the center of much discussion, since many of the choices it makes cannot fail to be controversial.

One initial problem concerns Pringle's decision to restrict himself to novels. Considering the importance that the short forms have had in the history of SF, this is probably a bad decision in any case, but it is compounded by Pringle's wish to include in his overview authors whose best work has been done in short form. The result is that several mediocre novels are included on the grounds that their authors' short stories are very good.

Another problem is that Pringle decided to include novels by writers whom he does not like, but who are either popular or historically important. I am not sure what good it is to include an essay, for example, on Asimov's THE END OF ETERNITY only to say that it isn't really very good but that the other novels are even worse. The same remarks would apply to the essay on Niven's and Pournelle's OATH OF FEALTY.

So what are the main choices like? The slant is certainly towards "literary" SF, and one must also say that a disproportionate amount of British SF is included, at least to my taste. Most of the recognized classics are there, especially those from the first half. Heinlein is represented by THE PUPPET MASTERS, THE DOOR INTO SUMMER and HAVE SPACE SUIT -- WILL TRAVEL, but nothing from the sixties (I would have expected at least THE MOON IS A HARSH MISTRESS). Arthur Clarke's CHILDHOOD'S END and THE CITY AND THE STARS are (rightly) there, and so are THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES (masquerading as a novel), MORE THAN HUMAN, THE SPACE MERCHANTS and even MISSION OF GRAVITY (with a rather condescending essay).

Once we come to the sixties, the slant becomes clear: three books by Aldiss (probably not the ones most SF readers would guess), four by Ballard, six by Philip K. Dick, three by Tom Disch, two by Ian Watson, two by Bob Shaw, etc. Some strange choices are included, such as LOOKING BACKWARD, FROM THE YEAR 2000 by Mack Reynolds, or WOMAN AT THE EDGE OF TIME by Marge Piercy.

This is an interesting book, especially because it is always pleasant to read how other people react to one's favorite books. I can't but feel, however, that most SF readers would come up with a very different list should they try to list the novels that have shaped and directed modern SF.

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH THE DEITY  
By Michael Bishop  
Peachtree, Trade paperback \$8.95  
(Hardcover edition available)

Michael Bishop is an exceptional writer, especially in shorter lengths, and this collection of short stories with metaphysical themes is quite impressive. As the title suggests, most of

these stories are, at least in some sense, about religion or metaphysics. Some are descriptions of new religions, such as "And the Marlin Spoke," where the ocean is the new God. Others are about the encounter between Christianity and typical SF situations: "Close Encounter with the Deity" about theoretical physics and a religious man, "The Gospel According to Gossamer Crucifix" about an alien savior who claims to be another incarnation of the second Person of the Trinity. Others reflect modern uncertainty and ambiguity about religion: "Alien Graffiti" is about incomprehensible manifestations that intrude on our scientific world, "The Bob Dylan Tambourine Software & Satori Support Services Consortium, Ltd." is about just that, and about our search for absolutes and religious experiences, "A Short History of the Bicycle: 401 BC to 2677 AD" is at the same time exactly what its title says and also a vision of a universe whose metaphysics is closer to Plato than to modern science.

Bishop is a talented writer, and these are exceptional SF stories in the literary mold. This is a book to read slowly, so as to not blunt the impact of each story, since they have, for the most part, common themes and a common voice. For those willing to do the work required, Bishop's work is a treat. Recommended.

THE 1986 ANNUAL WORLD'S BEST SF  
Ed. by Donald A. Wollheim  
DAW, \$ 7.95

TERRY CARR'S BEST SCIENCE FICTION OF THE YEAR #15, Edited by Terry Carr  
TOR, \$3.50

THE YEAR'S BEST SCIENCE FICTION, THIRD ANNUAL COLLECTION Ed. by Gardner Dozois  
Bluejay, \$10.95 trade paperback

Among the many anthologies of short SF that are published every year, the best-of-the-year anthologies are in many ways the most interesting. They offer a means of keeping up with the trends and new ideas in the field (which usually appear in short form first), and usually make good reading besides. Of the several offerings of this kind, the Dozois anthology from Bluejay deserves pride of place for size and promptness, but the other two are also important and this year, sufficiently different from the Dozois and from each other to justify (to my mind) buying all three.

So what is the "best" of 1985? Silverberg's novella "Sailing to Byzantium" is the one story in all major anthologies. It is a moody story about a twentieth-century man who finds himself a visitor in a strange fifteenth-century world. Silverberg is here reenacting his theme of alienation, with some effectiveness. Dozois and Carr both include Tiptree's "The Only Nest Thing to Do," a deliberate tear-jerker if there ever was one, a bit too manipulative, perhaps. Only Dozois includes what I consider the best novella of the year, Kim Stanley Robinson's "Green Mars," a very well-realized story of mankind climbing on Mars.

In shorter lengths several stories stand out: Nancy Kress's "Out All Them Bright Stars" (in the Dozois) is a reflection on how science-fictional evi-

ents might affect "ordinary people"; it deserved its Nebula. Howard Waldrop's "Flying Saucer Rock & Roll" (Dozois and Carr) is hard to describe but great fun. The two stories by Ian Watson, "The People on the Precipice" (Carr) and "On the Dream Channel Panel" (Wollheim), are based on fascinating and original ideas (as usual for Watson); "Precipice," for me, is marred by its rather artificial ending. Several stories treat themes related to nuclear weapons and the nuclear winter: Michael Bishop's "A Gift from the Graylanders" (Carr) (the best of this group), Frederik Pohl's "Fermi and Frost" (Dozois, Wollheim), C.J. Cherryh's "Pots" (Wollheim).

Terry Carr has been the only one to reprint Connie Willis's powerful "All My Darling Daughters," arguably the "best" story of the year in terms of its execution, but so virulently anti-male that it must have offended many readers. Both Carr and Dozois have included Benford's "Of Space-Time and the River," which also seems to me to be among the best produced this year. All three anthologists omitted George R.R. Martin's Nebula-winning "Portraits of His Children," maybe because its ending is not up to the quality of the story as a whole.

These volumes make very good reading and confirm the feeling that SF in short form is alive and well. All three are recommended to readers who want to keep up with what is going on.

THE PLANET ON THE TABLE  
By Kim Stanley Robinson  
TOR, 241 pp., \$14.95

In David Wingrove's SCIENCE FICTION SOURCEBOOK, published in 1984, there is no entry for Kim Stanley Robinson, even though he was already publishing some of the best short stories in the field at that time. He has risen to prominence since then, and has published three novels, at least one of which, THE WILD SHORE, has some claim to greatness. The book under review is his first collection of short stories.

For any reader who likes short stories, this book is a treat. The stories range from the light-hearted "Mercurial," a detective story set in a city in Mercury, to the somber "Venice Drowned," a truly evocative story of Venice after the seas have risen (for some unexplained reason), and of the people who still live in the drowned city and cling to its past. The award-winning "Black Air" is included, as is "The Lucky Strike," about an alternate universe in which the bombardier on the mission to bomb Hiroshima has a conscience -- whatever your politics, a gripping story. And others, such as "Ridge Running," a story about language and its relation to reality which deserved more attention when it first appeared in F&SF.

Kim Stanley Robinson's literary skill is enormous, and he has the imagination to match it. To my mind, he is the best of the newest crop of writers (and -- heresy! -- better than Gibson and the cyberpunks). Read this.

# NEAL WILGUS

## MID-TIME COLLISION IS WORST IN HISTORY

Tempis, FG (LEAK) -- Two time machines collided in the 13th century today, killing 845 people and scattering their bodies over several centuries. The chrono-crash, the worst in chronology, occurred near AD 1293 when a PAN-TIM 997 carrying 640 passengers en route to the Roman Empire crossed into the time space of a Tempofours Special returning from the Trojan War. There were 203 people aboard the TT Special, including a pilot, crew and 190 members of the Trojan Liberation Front.

The PAN-TIM timeliner went down in the Mediterranean in early spring 1293, the TT Special crashed on Mt. Arrat on December 31 of that year. Both timecraft had recently been inspected and given clearance, but according to a recent report in THE CHRONOLOGICAL TIMES the PAN-TIM 997 has had a history of near-misses and close calls. There were no survivors.

Tim Traver, chronologist with the Temporal Recovery Service (TRS), said that six teams of paramedics had been dispatched to recover the bodies which were scattered in both directions from the crash. Bodies have been recovered from various years between AD 1899 and 1100 BC -- "or vice versa, if you look at it that way," Traver said.

Traver estimated that only about eighty percent of the bodies would be recovered, which is about average for the TRS partisans overall. "Most of the dislocation will result, in fact, from those unrecovered bodies," Traver went on, "due to the fact that some will inevitably remain in the Host Year long enough to become imbedded in the structure and become part of history." The fact that nearly two hundred bodies would have to be accommodated in the time lines might have a major impact -- "in a minor way," Traver said.

In explanation, Traver pointed out that some of the chrono-cadavers would have a positive effect on history "perhaps offsetting the negative effects in the religio-hysteria area." Certain of the bodies, Traver said, would be used by Galen and other early anatomists, by Paracelsus, William Harvey and various painters, sculptors and athletes and even by Picasso in some of his wilder moods. "There is even speculation," Traver said, "and it is only speculation," he went on, "that parts of the original Frankenstein creature, considerably improving the being's efficiency."

The worst temporal tragedy before this was the headon/profile disast of 10,000 BC when two timecraft collided near the South Pole killing 799, and the Micronesian Massacre of AD 3087 in which 755 died. This spokesman Traver discounted rumors that Trojan Liberationists or the militant Iris Communes might have been responsible for the crash, saying, "There's absolutely no evidence to indicate such a possibility, and much more evidence to show that the PAN-TIM 997 might have lost its bearings and swerved into the path of the oncoming TT Special."

Fortunately, the latest temporal tragedy exceeds the Chrono-limit AD 4127 which provides that when the death toll exceeds 800 the TRS Intervention Squad automatically runs an Abort Mission to the points of origin. "This collision avulsion provision," Traver pointed out,

"will save the day this time -- it's too bad that the high cost of time travel rules out the use of the Squad in cases under the limit."

Unfortunately, Traver said, those bodies already imbedded into the previous timelines would remain imbedded and those lives would be lost -- even though the Abort Squad will have seen to it that the accident itself will never happen. "It's just one of those peculiarities of time travel," Traver concluded, "that is really a matter for the insurance companies and the courts to settle. TRS is merely a regulatory agency, and we're regulated."

"And I'm out of time."

ALL THINGS ARE LIGHTS By Robert Shea  
Ballantine, 1986, 502 pp., \$3.95

REVIEWED BY NEAL WILGUS

Only by the farthest stretch of the imagination could this book be considered science fiction/fantasy, but it still deserves to be noted here for at least three reasons. The first is that looming interview with Robert Shea in SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #56 in which he describes LIGHTS and how it was written. Secondly, Shea will be remembered by many as the co-author (with Robert Anton Wilson) of that spaced out, surrealist fantasy ILLUMINATI (1975) -- a mammoth discord-antic which still has a cult of devoted fans.

The third reason for bringing this book to your attention is that it's an excellent read. LIGHTS is an historical novel which recounts the deeds of Roland De Vency during the Cathar Inquisition and the Seventh Crusade, the action taking place between the years 1244 and 1250. Roland is a Troubadour whose two great loves -- a Cathar heretic and a noble lady -- keep him constantly in hot water and keeps the action and the story moving right along. Roland manages to be present at most of the historical events of the times (in France and Egypt, at least) and much of the time he is also a key figure in what's happening.

Since LIGHTS is not SF/fantasy I won't go into further detail here. Suffice it to say that Robert Shea is a first rate writer who knows well how to keep his story moving and his characters interesting. If you want to take a break from all those tales of the future, why not try this one of the past? You won't be disappointed.

JACK BROWN ENDORSES NORMALCY

BY NEAL WILGUS

Normalcy, Ohio (LEAK) -- In a speech before the National Normality Alliance Convention today, Jack Brown gave his quasi-endorsement to the Normalcy Wave. Proclaiming his allegiance to the Right-to-Normalcy principle, Brown stopped short of voicing his approval of the controversial Normalcy Amendment, advocated by the Uncles' March For Normalcy (UMN) which hosts the yearly convention.

Brown, author of THE NOSE IN THE PYRAMID and other books, rejected the calls for Gay Normalcy, Feminine Normalcy and Militant Normalcy which had been voiced in earlier speeches and called instead for the more moderate position he labeled "normal normalcy." "Followers of Neo-Normalcy and the Normalitarian Movement are just as extreme in their own way," Brown said, "and we should be prepared to round them up and send them off."

Normal normalcy, Brown went on, is a more scientifically precise approach, calling as it does for the establishment of a national normalcy test to establish norms and deviations in the Normalcy Quotient (NQ) of the population as a whole. "Only then," Brown said, "will we establish normal relations on quantified terms and controlling for normal fluctuations in normalcy currents."

Brown then introduced his special assistant, Ambrose Fort, who spoke for some time on the history and philosophy of the Normalcy Wave. "The first Normalcy Wave began under the Great Ashram himself, Warren C. Harding," Fort told the convention, "when Harding's disciple, Neil Sineffrin, proclaimed that 'A great wave of normalcy is sweeping the planet.'" The second wave, Fort went on, occurred in the 1950s under President Eisenhower, and the present third wave had its beginnings during the Ford administration.

Neil Sineffrin, Fort said, had established the Normalcy Ashram near Blooming Grove, Ohio, soon after Harding died in 1923, and it was at the Ashram that Sineffrin came to realize that normal people can be separated into three types -- normal A (aggressive, prone to stress), normal B (bewildered, easily led), and normal C (normal). Sineffrin's classic study NORMALCY ON PARADE (1937), and his editorship of THE JOURNAL OF AMERICAN NORMALCY from 1929 to 1941, established him as the Grand Old Man of Normalcy until his death in 1942.

Eventually the Ashram became the town of Normalcy, and the rest, as Jack Brown pointed out after Fort's presentation, is normalcy. Brown then gave an hour of extemporaneous footnotes and addenda to Fort's groundbreaking work, telling for the audience his own role in organizing the UMN, the mass demonstrations that followed, the cries of "We Demand Normalcy!" and "Normalcy Now!" that were heard throughout the world. "Next to the Biblical Mormonism and the Ashrams here is so closely identified with," Brown noted, "the Normalcy Wave is the most profound development in, certainly, this century."

"The fact that the same man fathered both Normalcy and the Blovitarians is indeed inspirational," he concluded.

There followed the presentation of the classic movie I REMEMBER NORMALCY (1950) and the recent TV docudrama NORMALCY REVISITED, narrated by Leo Sineffrin, the grandson of the Ashram's founder. Jack Brown then closed the convention with a stirring pep talk which concluded with his exhortation: "President Harding inspired us all with his cry 'Back to Normalcy!' But I say unto you there is more to come. I say -- 'Forward to Normalcy!'"

Then the band ripped into a stirring rendition of "The Normalcy Rag" and everyone took the rest of the day off.

-- Reprinted from THE ECHORIZER  
#56, April, 1986.

## PROJECT STOPPOFF OFF AND RUNNING

BY NEAL WILGUS

Tear Jerk, Cal. (LEAK)

The sun was shining brightly in this suburb of the Inland when a new concept in population control was introduced here early this week. As we received word from project control to don our gas masks and gloves I realized how lucky I was to be one of the few reporters present at this moment to become a vast new federal program. A lump formed in my throat at the realization of just how historic a moment this might be, as we ducked behind the protective shield and watched the planes drone overhead.

Project Stoppoff is a top secret program initiated by the Department of Social Stability under a recent executive order calling for "new ways to approach the old problems of exploiting the social environment." The basic philosophy on which the project is operating, we were told by press secretary Irving Scervig, is the idea that in order to accomplish a given end, such as population control, it is necessary to persuade people that there is no problem in the first place.

"The reason for this," Serving told us, "is that the majority of people are incapable of understanding the solutions which our experts have developed. In order to avoid interference from non-technical people we first eliminate public awareness of an issue and then proceed with our own solutions."

The first half of this technique seems to have been an overwhelming success, for as one of the project news releases states, "Public concern over population control has reached a new low as the result of the six month campaign to defeat all pending legislation on the problem. People rightly begin to feel reports that since nothing has been done, nothing can be done. Such socially destructive measures as legalization of abortion or tax penalties for large families can only endanger the entrenched interests of the leaders of our society, and the sooner the problems are left to the manipulations of social and technological entrepreneurs the better."

The technological aspect of Project Stoppoff became clear to the observers behind the protective shield when a fleet of cropdusting planes flying low over the suburban roofs began spreading a fine spray of white powder in long even rows. Residents of the area had been told that the chemical being used was an experimental anti-cancer agent which would help raise their resistance to the carcinogenic elements present in the smog they breathed. "A harmless bit of misinformation," Serving explained, "designed to set their minds at ease."

Actually the white powder is Estro- and, a new conception-inhibiting agent manufactured by the Cheman Corporation, the prime contractor for Project Stoppoff. Estro- and, which can be absorbed directly through the skin as well as through the air and water supply, has been shown to reduce conception rates by over sixty percent as well as depressing the sexual desire on the part of rat populations by almost half.

"This is the first real test on a human population," Serving told us, "and of course we'll be watching things pretty closely for the next few months. We want to know of any social side ef-

fects such as increased crime in the streets and petty theft as well as the effects of Estro- and on the sexual desires and fertility of the residents."

In a final briefing after the spraying had been completed, Serving gave us a hint of some of the broader aspects of Project Stoppoff. "As with any SS program," Serving said, "this one is planned to produce the greatest social stability with the least social change necessary."

"In this case we have not only avoided alarming the people within the experimental neighborhood while researching methods of population control, but we have taken an enlightened step forward creating new jobs for those who were recently displaced when the pesticide and cropdusting industries were forced to curtail their efforts. If, after a six-month observational period, there are no excessive side effects from this initial project, we expect to launch a campaign of spraying suburban areas nationwide."

"So you see," Serving concluded with a wink, "this is really only the beginning. Population control, after all, is an international opportunity; the exploitation potential is almost endless."

-- Reprinted from INTERGAL, The Journal of Intertel, Vol. 1, #10, July 1986 (C) 1986 by Intertel, Inc.

-- LEAK News Service -- "The best in fictionalized news and newsalized fiction!"

## KILLER BEE KILLED

BY NEAL WILGUS

Flytrap, VN (LEAK) -- A dramatic confrontation today between the militant Insect Liberation Front (ILF) and a local police SWAT team left three terrorists dead and several more injured and taken into custody. Police confirmed late today that one of the dead was the infamous Killer Bee who has eluded authorities for years and has often been called the mastermind behind the ILF. Two police officers were hospitalized, suffering from numerous stings and bite wounds and "extreme mental anguish," according to official sources.

The Monkey Roach Gang, as the ILF is often called, was holed up in an abandoned warehouse on Milo Avenue, when an anonymous bugstopper tip alerted police late last night. Officials sealed off the area and fumigated the warehouse, forcing the ILF extremists to flee the building and confront the crack SWAT team waiting outside. In a furious gun battle carried live on network TV, the ILF was finally overcome and taken into custody.

Killer Bee first came to public notice fifteen years ago when he carried out the daring Sporebreath hijack in Venusberg -- an escapade that left fifteen people dead and forced government authorities to release 23 terrorists from prison. In a police sting operation two years later, Killer Bee overcame tremendous odds when he slipped out of custody and escaped with fifty million dollars and a cache of arms. For the past ten years Killer Bee has been at the top of the Most Wanted Insects list and has been blamed for numerous acts of terrorism and violence.

In response to the accusation that the SWAT team acted beyond its authority

and with undue violence, Police Chief Bull Gripp said, "Some of our boys were getting a little antsy, but considering the seriousness of the situation, I think they handled themselves pretty well. I'm damn proud of them."

In a related development, the second Most Wanted Insect, Hornet Greene, issued a statement in which he condemned the killing of Killer Bee and warned that "the government policy of insecticide against our people will in the long run lead to their own destruction. Death to the WASP intruders!"

## STRIKE STOPS STYX STIFFS

BY NEAL WILGUS

Styx, HL (LEAK) -- Traffic across the River Styx came to a complete halt at midnight here when members of the union local went on strike. Skipper Heck, president of the Vigilant Union in League with Godless Rebels (VULGR), called the work stoppage at 12:01 helltime when it became apparent that no agreement would be reached with Hell's management.

"There's gonna be hell to pay now," Heck said, "or we'll know the reason why. We slave our asses off to get these damned souls across on time and we do it for a pittance. But no more. We demand shorter hours, higher wages and a real change in attitude by Hell's management -- devil take the hindmost."

A spokesperson for Satan made a brief statement at a news conference on Hell's Pavement a few hours later in which he pointed out that time is relative, the wages of sin is death and the devil can't take the hindmost if the VULGR boatmen won't budge the damn tollbooth. "We'll break this strike and we'll break their bones," Satan's assistant Bel Z. Bubb said. "Styx stones and special names will hurt them, for sure."

Meanwhile, a huge crowd of the dead is forming on the banks of the Styx and Acheron and heavenly authorities are beginning to worry about health and pollution problems if the backup continues. "At the risk of being called scabs and strike breakers," said Mike Angel, "we are considering sending in a crew of Seraphim and Cherubim to man the boats until a settlement is reached. We believe we have the authority to do so."

Retired VULGR president Joe Charon, during an interview on "Meet the Past," lamented that things have reached the present impasse. "In my day," Charon said, "it was a much smaller operation with everything run on a personal level. We really got to know our customers. Today, what with these wars and all, everybody's going to hell and the whole thing has become bureaucratic and impersonal. I'm just glad I'm retired and watching from the sidelines."

Members of the Damned Souls Association (DSA) also issued a statement, pointing out the need to modernize Hell and build a modern transportation system. "It's time, indeed," their statement stated, "for the long awaited highway to hell, to relieve congestion and speed up processing. These striking boatmen are no better than highway robbers and ought to be replaced by Troll booths."

The DSA statement concluded pointedly with their slogan: "Where the hell's the bridge?"

TOM O'BEDLAM'S NIGHT OUT AND OTHER STRANGE  
EXCURSIONS By Darrell Schweitzer  
W. Paul Ganley, Trade paperback, 1985,  
191 pp., \$7.50 + \$1.25 postage

REVIEWED BY NEAL WILGUS

Darrell Schweitzer is probably better known for his nonfiction and his editorial work than for his fiction -- which is too bad because he's no mean fantasizer. His earlier volumes of fantasy fiction were WE ARE ALL LEGEND (1981) and THE SHATTERED GODDESS (1982) -- both from Dunning/Starblaze and both novels, although LEGEND is also a collection of short stories. TOM O'BEDLAM is a collection of stories that isn't a novel, but it is a sampler of Schweitzer's very best work.

Most of the stories collected here are independent and not related to other work, but there are a couple of exceptions. The title story, "Tom O'Bedlam's Night Out," is followed by two more O'Bedlam stories, "Raving Lunacy" and "Continued Lunacy" -- and two stories, "The Story of a Dadar" and "A Lantern Maker of Al Hano" take place in the same strange universe as THE SHATTERED GODDESS but are not dependent on the novel in any way. The Tom O'Bedlam stories are amusing but didn't strike me as anything outstanding, but "Dadar" and especially "Lantern Maker" are excellent and among the best in the book.

My own favorites are "The Story of the Brown Man" in which the old gods are tragically being replaced by the new ones; "The Bermuda Triangle Explained" which shows Lilith Circe McSiren up to her old tricks; and "The Game of Sand and Fire" in which a grizzly desert monster swallows up some unsuspecting travelers. Also very good are the humorous "The Pretenses of Hinyar," the scary "Jungle Eyes," and the Lovecraftian "The Last of the Shadow Titans." Stories I liked least included "The Stranger From Baal-d-Theon," "The Last Child of Bastergion" (co-authored with John Gregory Betancourt) and the final story, "The Kings of the White Bird" -- which may well appeal to you, of course.

Schweitzer will probably be irritated at my calling his work Lovecraftian, but he is a Lovecraft scholar and most of these stories are in the Machen/Jansary/Lovecraft tradition of fantasy and horror. It's to Schweitzer's credit that he can still come up with some interesting and new variations on these old themes -- but potential readers should know just what tradition Schweitzer is working in. There's little in the way of "realism" here, much that is of myth and history and dreams.

It should be noted that there is one poem among the eighteen stories, and that the majority of the stories are reprinted from magazines such as AMAZING, FANTASY, TWILIGHT ZONE, WHISPERS, ANRA, FANTASY CROSSROADS, MYRDIN and PULPSMITH. It should also be noted that Tom O'Bedlam is illustrated lushly by Stephen E. Fabian, who also did the fantastic cover. All in all, this is an excellent book of fantasy fiction which Schweitzer can be rightly proud of and which should be more widely read than I fear it will be.

Most highly recommended.



QJO IN OZ (1933) 248 pp.  
SPEEDY IN OZ (1934) 259 pp.  
THE WISHING HORSE OF OZ (1935) 244 pp.  
By Ruth Plumly Thompson, Del Rey TP, 1986  
\$6.95 each.

REVIEWED BY NEAL WILGUS

Last issue, in my reviews of the three previous Thompson OZ titles from Del Rey, I wondered aloud if the series of reissues would continue after the death of Judy-Lynn del Rey, who was the driving force behind these reprints. As I suggested, these three were already in the pipeline, but despite the fact that the next four Thompson titles are listed here as "forthcoming," word from Del Rey is that the series will now end. That leaves CAPTAIN SALT IN OZ, HANDY MANDY IN OZ, THE SILVER PRINCESS IN OZ and OZOPOLANING WITH THE WIZARD OF OZ, plus a couple of Oz Club editions of later Thompson work, in limbo -- or at least out of print.

In QJO, our old friend from THE PATCHWORK GIRL OF OZ (by L. Frank Baum) goes adventuring this time, in the company of the singing/dancing bear, Snufferbear and the bandit chieftain, Reabald. Dorothy, Scraps and the Cowardly Lion also get into the act, and QJO and Reabald discover their real identity, which is not such a surprise after all.

In SPEEDY we have the return of the New York lad who rocketed to Oz in Thompson's THE YELLOW KNIGHT OF OZ, as he and a dinosaur skeleton named Terrybubble blast off on a magic geyser. Speedy and Terrybubble are just in time to become involved in the troubles of the Princess of Umbrella Island and Loxo the Giant, as well as the warring nations of Roaraway and Norrway. Don't worry, everything will be all right.

And in THE WISHING HORSE, Oz is invaded once again, this time by King Skamparoo and Chalk, the Wishing Horse, with

magic which causes everyone but Dorothy and Pigasus, the flying pig to forget there ever was an Ozma, Glinda and numerous other Ozzy folk. After the standard-issue adventures, the king and his horse are returned to Skampavia and the Oz elite are returned to power.

As noted in earlier reviews, Thompson could never quite equal Baum for sheer magic, but she did her best, which is all anyone can ask. Once again, these volumes include the John R. Neill illustrations, which never quite match his work for the Baum titles but are still mighty fine. All in all, these reissues were a nice treat for Oz fans. Too bad it's over.

London, OC (LEAK) -- The Ministry of Love announced today that Big Brother has issued a pardon to thoughtcriminal Winston Smith, who loves Big Brother. In an unusual and precedent-setting move, Big Brother has decreed that Smith, who loves Big Brother, is not really a thoughtcriminal after all and in fact never was one. Winston Smith, Big Brother said, has always loved Big Brother.

Smith, who loves Big Brother, once worked for the Ministry of Truth, but was found guilty in 1984 of thoughtcrimes which have since been consigned to the memory hole. "Winston Smith, who loves the dearly," Big Brother said today, "is not now and never has been a thoughtcriminal. Those who say he is and has been, are themselves thoughtcriminals and will be brought to justice. As sure as two plus two equals five," Big Brother said, "war is peace, freedom is slavery, and ignorance is our strength."

Smith, who loves Big Brother, was contacted at the Chestnut Tree Bar and Grill, but he had no comment except that he loves Big Brother. His old friend, Julia, who also loves Big Brother, was with Smith, but she too, seemed indifferent about the news. When asked if she thought she should also be pardoned, Julia only shrugged and muttered something about crimesthink.

In a late breaking development, Minutree announced that there never had been a pardon for Smith, who loves Big Brother, because he has always been loyal to the state and loved Big Brother. "Only those who deserve a long sentence in Room 101 could believe that Winston Smith, who loves Big Brother, ever had reason to be pardoned for a thoughtcrime that never occurred," said Minutree spokesman, O'Brien. "As Big Brother, whom Smith loves, has always said -- 'All men are equal, but INSCOC is better than ever!'"

Mpor.



# REVIEWS BY ANDREW ANDREWS

**FUTURE DAYS** By Isaac Asimov  
Henry Holt & Co., 1986, 96 pp., \$12.95

Devotees of Asimov, along with practicing futurists will, despite this book's steep price tag, uncover a mountain of curiosities in this "Nineteenth Century Vision of the Year 2000."

**FUTURE DAYS** is a collection of "illustrations" (created in 1899 by Jean Marc Cote, a French commercial artist) for a series of cigarette cards to coincide with celebrations being held throughout France to mark the turn of the century. We learn that, unfortunately, the company (a toy manufacturer) commissioned them, and then went out of business. One set, intact, was found years later, and they depict life in the year 2000.

There are perpetual laughs throughout the collection, whimsical forays (probably for the first time) into speculations on the future of humanity. Nothing is really serious, or profound -- the cleverness lies with Asimov's cold criticism, the stolid logic he uses to rebuke Cote the futurist, and examine the logic (or lack of it), imagination (or lack of it) the creator of the cards had.

You can grant the author credit for the attempt.

The cards depict the time in the future when gadgets and patents, doodads and deedids, car-planes and underwater cruises, dreams of better living and a better life lie with the newest invention, machines that could protect us, help us, and warm our hearts -- and the tomorrow full of wonder. Any obvious dangers (not depicted in the plate captioned "Heating with Radium" that shows a party celebrating in front of a fireplace warmed by a single dot of radium, or the "Chemical Dinner Party," where the main course has been replaced by -- wonders of wonder! -- vitamin pills) were rid of.

In most of the plates, everybody is dressed in the clothing of the late Nineteenth Century. The manners, morals and ethics -- of course -- have not changed.

(The artist was keen on the development of what we today call "telecommunications" i.e., receiving the evening news by wire. But nothing about microchips, computers, et al.)

At worst, an Asimov historical curiosity. At best, a lot of fun, watching the attempt and admiring it.

**STEPHEN KING: THE ART OF DARKNESS**  
By Douglas E. Winter  
NAL/Plume, 1986, 397 pp., \$7.95

Time will no doubt reveal something of the importance of the King of horror fiction. Is King's writing just crass commercialism on the part of a dexterous story teller, or something profound, significant and inevitably ageless?

What are we to make of America's best-selling novelist of all time? To be sure, just the act of writing is part obsession, part insanity, part emotional therapy for King, as he aptly tells us, in **ART OF DARKNESS**. Through many interviews with Winter, King talks lucidly and candidly about the genesis of his

novels and short stories, as he becomes driven to placate the terrors in his own mind:

"I've always had tremendous feelings of aggression that it seemed necessary to cover up, to hide. And my writing was a clear channel for that -- I think that that is why there is so much destruction in my early books, because it was a way of ridding myself of a lot of that energy that couldn't be drained in day-to-day life...I'm interested in the notion of finishing off one's childhood as one completes making a wheel. The idea is to go back and confront your childhood, in a sense relive it if you can, so that you can be whole."

What has drawn King to produce such mosaic works? What has been on the author's mind and heart in writing them? In his lightning-bolt career, what is this drive, this obsession, King has to act as the dentist with the drill, in his words, in putting the terrors before our eyes? And what troubles King so greatly that he has to pronounce acts of horror as that experienced by ordinary people, innocent souls driven to death or insanity by forces beyond their control -- what are we to make of an innocent dog turned rabid and deadly (in **CUJO**) or a writer, far from the path of normalcy, consumed by the persona dementia of a hotel (in **THE SHINING**) or a car whose innards compose the soul of its creator (in **CHRISTINE**) or a tribute to the catonics of death, meaningless, senseless derelict (in **REVENGE**)? This is the reason for creating all this?

Look through the **ART OF DARKNESS** to find the details, provided by endless and rewarding King interviews and commentary, his pipings about work done in the past, and future projects such as King's current IT, the upcoming **TOMMY-KNOCKERS**, **MISERY**, and other stories and movie adaptations to come.

There is a wealth of information, for those who ask the questions regarding the King reign, his open opinions on his own work and those of his contemporaries and opinions on the movie adaptations of his work. Not to mention the semi-autobiography of King's life (which Winters entwines with the bibliographical detail).

Here there be answers -- and countless more stories that King never told. It resounds with the quest to find out. We are so much glad we did.

**TERROR** By Frederik Pohl  
Berkeley, 1986, 220 pp., \$2.95

**TERROR** is a refreshing relief from the spate of disaster novels -- end-of-the-world spatterings that so many publishers force-feed to the "summer readers," whoever they are. Hard to believe it, but this novel exceeds any relation to a take-off on the current "terrorist" fever. There is vast, well-grounded speculation on several fronts: the nature of Earth's greatest disasters, the misery of the arms race, terrorist psychology --

loads of fresh speculation thrown it at every angle, for good measure -- and a pleasurable read.

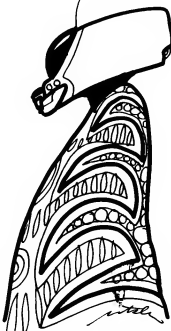
What, altogether, is **TERROR** about?

For one, it's a melodrama about the weapon "to end all weapons" and the bomb "to end all wars." History rings with the myth. Is Reagan's "Star Wars" another A-bomb, in which it becomes a "force for peace?" Deep in Hawaiian waters rests a volcano, long dormant, now armed with a hydrogen bomb. The project behind it is a U.S. military secret, code named Vulcan. "Vulcan" becomes the prison in which the U.S. will, in Pohl's words, "hold the entire world hostage." It is an attempt to coerce the Soviet Union to stop the manufacture of World War III -- and, of course, the object of Hawaiian terrorists who will go to any length to force American colonialists off Hawaii.

(Pohl's theory: Once Vulcan is exploded, billions of dust particles will be thrown high into the atmosphere where, shielding earth from the life-giving rays of the sun, more than 75 percent of the earth's biological population will die.)

How an ordinary person comes into contact with the terrorists, and how her life gets caught up in the political push and shove of the post-space-age Cold War, is the lifeblood of the story (beyond the rewarding Pohlmic speculations, fascinating as they are.)

There are sweeping, profound implications Pohl has outlined here. Some readers would argue that Pohl could have made the novel more complex. Perhaps Pohl was grasping for the medium of adventure and intrigue to convey them; perhaps he just got too far ahead of the narrative, anxiously wanting to "get on with the story" if only to let out the speculations. Whatever, **TERROR** is a lithe, fulfilling novel, worth reading.



# REVIEWS BY CHARLES DE LINT

LIFTER By Crawford Kilian  
Ace, 201 pp., \$2.95

Crawford Kilian's second novel starts off with a wonderful premise -- one morning, Rick Stevenson learns a fly has been there on the book deals with how Rick handles his new ability. Since he's a high school-age teenager who's considered a bit of a nerd, he uses his "lifting" ability to deal with the school bullies, make himself a football star, and just generally improve his life. Unfortunately, complications set in very quickly.

Lifting is simple to learn and his girlfriend wants him to teach everybody how to do it. But Rick is afraid of what would happen if this ability fell into the hands of terrorists or a psychopath. Meanwhile, the Air Force has been tracking his flights and are beginning to investigate. Because Rick has a genius level IQ and a previous conviction -- he was caught entering and leaving graffiti in the computers of Canadian banks -- they suspect him of pulling a new hoax.

In less capable hands, LIFTER could easily have become a moronic teenage party/adventure story -- the sort that Hollywood deluges us with every summer. But Kilian has a deft hand and instead gives us a fun book with some good characterization and a lot of snappy writing. Grab a copy and head for the beach -- it's good summer reading. Good anytime reading, really. Meanwhile, I'm heading back to the bookstore to track down his first novel, BROTHER JONATHAN.

THE ARCHITECT OF SLEEP By Steven R. Boyett  
Ace, 290 pp., \$2.95

A real problem has been making itself more noticeable in the mass market F/SF field recently. It's not quite false advertising; instead the complete information on a book is simply never given.

Steven R. Boyett's most recent novel is a prime example. The opening chapter introduces us to Jim Bentley, a young man living in Florida who, while out caving one day, finds himself emerging into a world much like our own, but disturbingly different. Here ages never came down from the trees in Africa. Instead, North American raccoons developed an opposable thumb and became the dominant intelligent bipeds on the planet.

Boyett's writing is crisp and his extrapolations are well thought out. He builds his world solidly, from its culture through to the "fingerspeaking" of the raccoons' sign language. A few chapters into the book, the first-person narrative begins to shift back and forth between Bentley's point of view and that of Truck -- the first raccoon Bentley meets in this new world. Truck's speech patterns are different enough to give an "alien" feel to the text, but without cuteness or confusion.

There's no lack in the plot either -- it's solid all the way through, if a little slow moving. Truck is an "Architect of Sleep" -- one of the rulers in this world who dreams. Together Bentley and Bentley make the way across the world, looking for those who can help them restore Truck to her previous position.

So what's the problem I was referring to earlier? It's that the book doesn't end. It's not a novel. There's no climax. Nothing is resolved.

Now with all the series and trilogies and such floating about, this wouldn't normally be something to complain about, except that nowhere is the reader told what they've got is 290 pages that'll just stop in the middle of the story. I'd be thoroughly enjoying the book up to that point, though getting a little nervous at Boyett's ability to pull it all together before the end of the book. But when I got to that last page, I felt like flinging it into the garbage.

It seems to me to be highly unethical to present an unfinished book such as this as a completed work. BAD did it recently with the first book of Cherry's Chanur series and other publishers do it as well, but that doesn't make it right. The reader is simply left hanging, without any idea as to when the conclusion will be published -- or if there will even be one.

Nothing I'm going to say here will change this. But just to be aware when you pick up Boyett's ARCHITECT OF SLEEP that it's the first in a -- what? "Biology" Trilogy? Series? Whatever, there's no payoff when you get to the last page. It's too bad, because what there is of the book is very good.

THE WANDERING FIRE By Guy Gavriel Kay  
Arbor House, 298 pp., \$15.95

It's a sad fact that the second book of too many fantasy trilogies simply marks time between the first and final volumes. THE WANDERING FIRE, part two of Guy Gavriel Kay's The Fionavar Tapestry trilogy, doesn't fall into that trap, however. In fact, if it can be accused of anything, it might be that so much happens in this second volume that one has to wonder just what Kay can possibly come up with to end the trilogy in a satisfying manner.

Like the first volume, THE SUMMER TREE, this new book starts off in Toronto with the five students who first crossed to Fionavar from our own world. The only real flaw of that first book was the clumsy manner in which the five were shifted between the worlds. Kay has learned from that blunder. This time the cross-over is smooth and handled with as much dramatic tension as some writers finish their books.

Once in Fionavar, the five students join an ever-growing cast of native characters as they try to rescue their world from the menace of the trilogy's principal antagonist, Rakoth Maugrim the Unraveler. Maugrim has prolonged winter right through into summer so that crops can't be grown, nor can armies easily be mustered against him.

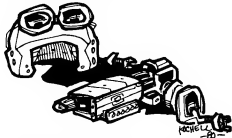
Kay borrows strongly from Celtic, Teutonic, and Nordic mythic sources. The book touches everything from the death of the Irish summer king and the Welsh cauldron of rebirth (a pre-Christian version of the Holy Grail) to appearances from various legendary Arthurian figures.

There are hints of many contemporary writers as well. Tolkien is an obvious influence and Kay did work as an editorial consultant on THE SILMARILLION. There are also echoes of Paul Hazel's Finn-branch trilogy in the reshaping of legends; Michael Moorcock's Eternal Champion in Kay's handling of King Arthur; and Roger Zelazny's "The Last Defender of Camelot" in the method that Kay is modernizing Arthurian matter.

A great deal goes on in this second volume. There is a huge cast, resulting in many shifting viewpoints that become a little confusing at times. Dramatic, moving events arise every few pages until the reader begins to suffer somewhat from overload. Kay might have done better to work with a smaller cast, or simply not to have put all his eggs in this one basket.

But with that said, THE WANDERING FIRE still works. This is primarily due to Kay's skill with language. His writing has a real power to it and manages to combine a lyric beauty with a lean edge. And while this second volume ends with less resolved than did the first volume, at least this time there won't be a two-year wait between books as the concluding volume, THE DARKEST ROAD, is slated for a fall, 1986, release.

If Kay manages to maintain the energy level of these first two volumes in the last book; if he can bring the trilogy to a satisfying climax that justifies the sheer volume of events and characters, he might well have created the major fantasy work of the eighties.



BAGDAD By Ian Dennis  
Macmillan of Canada, 210 pp., \$19.95

Ian Dennis' first novel BAGDAD carries the unweildy subtitle of "Book One of the Prince of Stars in the Cavern of Time, A Romance in Two Books" which pretty well sums up the book's problem.

Set in ancient Bagdad, it tells the twin stories of an unlikely revolution led by the Hippie Fruit Party and the subsequent exile of the ruling Court as they flee down the Tigris River. There are moments of whimsical humor and Dennis does manage to capture some sense of the Far East, reminiscent of the ARABIAN NIGHTS or Ernest Bramah's fantasies, but the problem remains that the prose, like the book's title, is overwritten.

The worst fault, however, is Dennis' attempt to translate oral storytelling to the written page by the use of italics to indicate a storyteller's emphasis. It simply doesn't work and becomes increasingly irritating the further one reads.

BAGDAD is an odd book; a fantasy that doesn't appear to take into account the rich body of fantasies that have preceded it. Because of that it rings hollow. While it might appeal to some for what it attempts in terms of literary merits, it's not a book for those who would simply like a good story.

**TWISTING THE ROPE** By R.A. MacAvoy  
Bantam/Spectra, 242 pp., \$5.95

Remember Martha Macanara, the middle-aged fiddler from TEA WITH THE BLACK DRAGON, and of course, her friend the dragon himself, Mayland Long, who had taken on the guise of a very dark-skinned Oriental? You don't? Then you missed one of the best fantasy books to be published in 1983. Go out and pick one up right now and read it.

Now that you're back with that charming novel read and savored, we'll go on.

**TWISTING THE ROPE** takes its inspiration from Celtic sources -- particularly traditional Celtic music -- and Chinese mysteries. While this might seem an odd combination at the outset, in reality, they're not that dissimilar. The mysteries of all cultures are entwined by the simple fact that they've all grown out of the human condition and our need to explain the unknown. Those of the Celts and some Oriental cultures are particularly close -- perhaps by reason of one theory that holds that the Celts originated in the Far East and traveled west along a route through the Middle East into Europe (the same route later followed by the Gypsies).

But I'm digressing here and perhaps making MacAvoy's new book out to be more serious than it is. It does have its serious aspects -- as all good fiction should -- but they come in more as background resonances. First and foremost are a number of very well-delineated characters that are as quirky as any presented to us by James Blaylock, though MacAvoy's are more well-rounded.

Martha Macanara has formed a band that is touring California, with Martha's granddaughter Marty in tow, and Mayland Long as tour manager. The fantastical element of the plot centers around some surreal happenings that touch Marty the most, while the real world intrudes on the tour in the form of a murder with all the hand members suspect for various reasons.

The novel is chatty and warm. The characters are portrayed like real people, with faults as well as virtues. And the two plots intertwine with all the complexity of a Chinese dragon path, the twists of which only Mayland can unravel.

This is a fine example of how a sequel should be undertaken. The reader can rejoin favorite characters from the previous book, but the author, rather than repeating an earlier success, has chosen to take those characters into entirely new terrain, both physical and metaphysical. Recommended.

**THE ONLY SIDE EFFECT OF THESE BIRTH-CONTROL PILLS IS THAT SOME WOMEN GET HEADACHES.**



**THE COPPER CROWN** By Patricia Kennealy  
Bluejay, 350 pp., \$15.95

**THE THRONE OF SCONE** By Patricia Kennealy  
Bluejay, 354 pp., \$16.95

Patricia Kennealy's series, *The Keltiad*, operates under a delightful conceit that can be summed up in three words: Celts in space.

The series postulates that around the year 450 AD, Celts from all of the Celtic nations, along with some non-human merrows and silkies, emigrated into space by way of Atlantean spaceships. (As a quick aside here, Kennealy uses a "K" when referring to things Celtic to make sure that her readers use the hard "C" which is the correct pronunciation of the word -- unless you play basketball or soccer.)

**THE COPPER CROWN** opens up with the first Terran spaceship entering Celtic space. The young queen Aeron welcomes the Terrans, hoping to form an alliance with them, but before she can do so, the Celts are attacked by their enemies the Imperium and the Phalanx. The resulting battle, with high court intrigues and rousing skirmishes take up most of this first volume. By the second book, **THE THRONE OF SCONE**, Aeron is on a quest for the treasures of King Arthur to save her domain, using the poetry of the Welsh bard Taliesin to chart her way through space. This second volume also ends the main thrust of the story set up in **THE COPPER CROWN**, so apparently the third volume, called **THE SILVER BRANCH**, will backtrack to Aeron's youth and the whole series will take on new numbering (**THE SILVER BRANCH** becomes the first book, **THE COPPER CROWN** the second, etc.) as Kennealy leads us on into the rest of the books in the series.

Are they any good? Yes and no. Kennealy knows her source material and there's a certain amount of enjoyment to see it all transposed into space, but other than the conceit of "Celts in space," there really isn't much new here. What it is, is space opera -- the worlds and cultures are more detailed, the characterizations are better, but it's still space opera all the same. Done well, mind you, and it's lots of fun, but I don't know if Kennealy will be able to maintain the obvious enthusiasm that comes through in these first two books. And it's important that she does, for it's how her enthusiasm is carried over to her readers that makes these first two volumes better than average.

## Ten Years Ago In Science Fiction - 1976 By Robert Sabella

The times are a-changin': Frank Herbert's *CHILDREN OF DUNE* became the first novel packaged as science fiction to reach the New York Times bestseller list. Meanwhile, Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle received a \$240,000 paperback advance for *LUCIFER'S HAMMER*, more than doubling the previous high of \$100,000 for a genre novel.

Three new science fiction magazines appeared: *ISAAC ASIMOV'S SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE*, *GALILEO* and *COXCOM*. One of the three survives ten years later, a good batting average for a science fiction magazine. Also appearing was *HEAVY METAL*, an adult graphic magazine.

Isaac Asimov suffered a mild heart attack and planned to lighten his work load.

Harlan Ellison resigned from the Science Fiction Writers of America at the Nebula Awards banquet. This was the latest in his series of resignations from science fiction and fandom.

The Nebula Awards for 1976 were Frederick Pohl's *MAN PLUS* as Best Novel, James Tiptree Jr.'s "Houston, Houston, Do You Read?" as Best Novella, Isaac Asimov's "The Bicentennial Man" as Best Novelette and Charles L. Grant's "A Crowd of Shadows" as Best Short Story. Clifford D. Simak received the Nebula Grandmaster Award.

A plethora of major stories and books saw print this quarter. *FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION* had Fritz Leiber's "The Pale Brown Thing" (OUR LADY OF DARKNESS in book form) and John Varley's "In the Hall of the Martian Kings." *ANALOG* had Ed Bryant's "Particle Theory" and Spider and Jeanne Robinson's "Stardance." The first issue of *ASIMOV'S* was John Varley's "Air Raid" under the pseudonym Herb Boehm. Terry Carr's original anthology *UNIVERSE 7*, contained such heralded stories as Carter Scholz's "The Ninth Symphony of Ludwig von Beethoven and Other Lost Songs," Fritz Leiber's "Rite of Spring" and Gene Wolfe's "The Marvelous Brass Chessplaying Automaton."

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