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# TWINK 7

GORMENGHAST SPECIAL EDITION

### SIGN ON THE DOTTED LINE

In a previous issue we commented that readers would be "disappointed" when/if they discover our "real" identity. This remark has been widely misinterpreted. There seems to be a perception that "Frohvet" is the disguise of some Big Name Fan. Nothing could be further from the truth. We once said that if a certain other fanzine published the name on our driver's license, 90% of their readers would say, "Who?" We're not a BNF, never were, don't especially aspire to be. All we ever asked for is to receive fair recognition for our modest contributions to fandom.

### TAFF DANCING IN THE RAIN

Remember, those TAFF ballots are due in by December 13th. Voting fee is \$2 US (or as much more as you can spare) payable to Dan Steffan as North American Administrator. We encourage votes for TOM SADLER and VICKI ROSENZWEIG. If you don't have a ballot, contact us, or Mr. Steffan at: 3804 S 9th St., Arlington VA 22204.

### BACK TO THE DRAWING BOARD?

Actually, we think this is a pretty good issue. It isn't exactly the issue we planned... The feature on "How I Feel About Gormenghast" had to be cancelled when we only got one response. (Thanks anyway to Catherine Mintz.) Fortunately, many of you stepped in with interesting contributions. Margaret Simon turned a few tossed-off phrases into this terrific cover. Elizabeth Osborne volunteered a convention report. Lois Bujold agreed to answer a few questions about her hugely popular books. Rodney Leighton recounts more of his reading results. From far New Zealand, Lyn McConchie shows that computer glitches are international. Rachel Russell and Rodney Leighton add their perspectives to the review section. We welcome some new names to join familiar ones in the letter column. And as usual, gaps are filled by the indefatigable pens of William Rotsler, Margaret Simon, and Sheryl Birkhead. Plus, there are other interesting things either planned or already in hand for next issue! Thanks to everyone who wrote/traded: even the really strange fellow in Oregon...

### LITTLE COMFORT, LESS JOY

Strange how often Worldcon is marred by ugly news. The Soviet Air Force shooting down a jet full of harmless civilians; the passing of Fritz Leiber; now the senseless death of Princess Diana. We never shared the obscene interest in every detail of the Princess' life; but she seems to have been a genuinely sweet and compassionate person, sadly miscast in the stoic House of Windsor. One can only hope her sons carry on her legacy of empathy. And that Worldcon gets by next year without any needless tragedies.

### CONTRIBUTIONS POLICY

The lifeblood of any fanzine is reader participation. We actively encourage your contributions and feedback. WHAT WE WANT: Articles clearly about SF/fantasy/fandom/some clearly related topic. Brevity is a plus, but say what you need to say. Book/film reviews of SF/fantasy or related works. (We personally have no great interest in horror.) Again we encourage brevity. Art work to include cover art: we obviously have no talent in that area. One column-width or horizontal half-page size is most convenient. LOC's are actively solicited. WHAT WE DON'T WANT: If you wish to state your views on abortion, the Middle East, or the President, write your local newspaper. We do not want to get into the "what I did on my vacation" travelogue thing. Convention reports, if timely, are distinct from travelogues. No amateur fiction/no amateur poetry, please. All contributions are subject to editing for length and content. This does not mean we will censor controversy. We are all in favor of intelligent controversy; we're just not into ad hominem insults or gratuitous vulgarisms just to be offensive. Contributions represent the opinions of individuals and should not be construed as the opinion of Twink or its editorial staff. If you want your material returned, please send SASE. All letters will be presumed to be LOC's and considered for publication unless clearly marked "NFP". All fanzines received in trade will be subject to review herein. No floppy discs please. Thank you.

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## ART CREDITS

Cover: Margaret B. Simon

Title Page Logo: E.B. Frohvet

Only Our Opinion Logo: still waiting for artists' help on this, hint hint

The Half Naked One Logo: Sheryl Birkhead

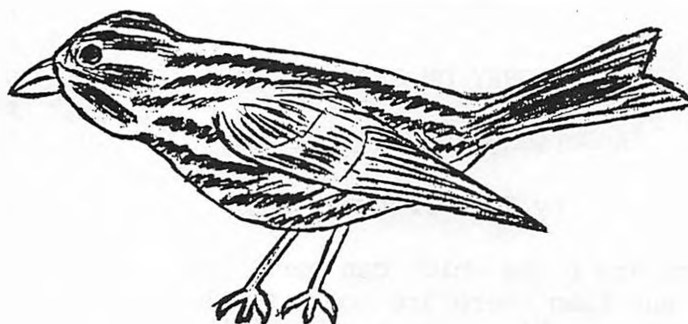
Rheaders' Rhevenge Logo: Sheryl Birkhead

pp. 2,4,6,7,20,24,26: Margaret B. Simon

pp. 3,5,8,9,10,11,19,21,23,25: William Rotsler

pp. 13,14,27: Sheryl Birkhead

TWINK #7  
OCTOBER 1997



Twink is a fanzine published quarterly. Our next issue is scheduled for: January 1998. Our main focus is on SF/fantasy/fandom. Twink is available for contributions, LOC's, in trade for your fanzine, or by editorial whim. All contributions are greatly appreciated. We can't publish all of every letter, but we were certainly glad to hear from you. Mailing list policy: Anyone who writes/contributes/trades more or less regularly (defined as: at least every other issue) will stay on the mailing list. Anyone who does not respond at all after two issues in a row may be dropped from the mailing list without further notice. If this title page is not highlighted in yellow, generally, don't worry.

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## GREY ON GREY

### A Gormenghast Meditation

by E.B. Frohvet

There are books which can merely be read; and then there are books which will settle for nothing less than your whole-hearted commitment. Not all of the first category are necessarily bad books; and not all of the second group are great books, or even good ones. A work which certainly falls in the commitment category is Mervyn Peake's Gormenghast trilogy, and there are many who class it as a major work of fantasy -- or at least, as one always says with a sigh when discussing Gormenghast, the first two volumes.

It has always seemed ironic to us that the Gormenghast trilogy, originally published in England as a mainstream work, is appreciated in the United States at least, chiefly as a genre or "fantasy" work. This is due partly, one supposes, to the association of Peake with his contemporaries,

Tolkien and Lewis, who clearly wrote fantasy; and partly to the books' more or less complete alienation from a "here and now" quality. A close examination of the text, however, reveals no elves or wizards, none of that wish-fulfillment ability to alter reality by individual fiat, which is the hallmark of modern fantasy.

Gormenghast has none of what most people would call "magic". It is a somewhere which is not, quite, immediately accessible to modern London or New York; but it is clearly a place of unremarkable natural laws. The only "fantasy" quality of the trilogy is a wholly single-minded sense of its own identity.

The first thing one requires to appreciate the Gormenghast books, is a fondness for works which have a strong sense of place. In our own fairly extensive reading in SF/fantasy, we can think of no other book in which the setting exerts a comparable influence. Gormenghast Castle with its endless corridors, innumerable rooms and mindless conglomeration of architecture, its Tower of Flints brooding above the rooftops "like a mutilated finger", is not merely a major character, but a dominant one; and Peake never tired of describing it in exquisite, sometimes excruciating detail. Of, for instance, the Christening Room, which appears briefly and almost incidentally in the first volume:

The room was perhaps the most homely and at the same time the most elegant in the castle. There were no shadows lurking in the corners. The whole feeling was of quiet and pleasing distinction, and when the afternoon sun lit up the lawns beyond the bay windows into a green-gold carpet, the room with its cooler tints became a place to linger in. It was seldom used.

The second quality necessary to an understanding of Gormenghast is a finely honed sense of the incongruous. Incongruity lies at the heart of humor, and likewise at the heart of horror (note how Stephen King has made a fortune turning the familiar into the grotesque); and both of those qualities are much in evidence here. The author is constantly

dropping in these little grace notes, which leap off the page with a splendid lack of logic, and yet cast sudden flash-bulb illuminations on the thing or person described:

As she had left her own room she had picked up a pair of black woolen gloves. It was a soft, warm, summer evening but Nannie Slagg felt stronger in her gloves.

Or consider this momentary glance at the whimsical doctor:

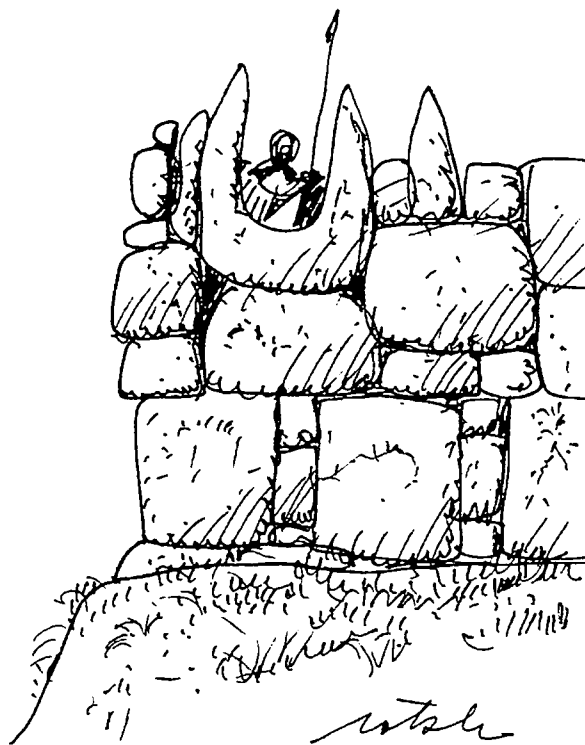
...Prunesquallor, on tiptoe, was peering at the stamen of a white flower in a vase through a magnifying lens which he had whipped from his pocket. There was no need for him to be on tiptoe, for it was neither a tall table nor a tall vase nor indeed a tall flower.

A third element necessary to reading these books is a sheer love of language. Peake, a poet, clearly loved the English language just for its own sake. You will enjoy the books only if you can get off on his long, self-indulgent passages. With a cheerful contempt for the modern sense of "narrative pace", Peake often got lost in these dithyrambs, plastering word on word for the sheer joy of erecting some bizarre statue of verbiage which peers off the page at the reader with an earthy contempt for his transience. Thus:

Whether the scouring, sexless eye of the bird or beast of prey disperses and sees all or concentrates and evades all saving that for which it searches, it is certain that the less powerful eye of the human cannot grasp, even after a life of training, a scene in its entirety. No eye may see dispassionately. There is no comprehension at a glance. Only the recognition of damsel, horse or fly of the assumption of damsel, horse or fly; and so with dreams and beyond, for what haunts the heart will, when it is found, leap foremost, blinding the eye and leaving

the main of life in the darkness.

Finally, this thought: Gormenghast has always seemed to us a peculiarly Novemberish book (as for instance the Stone Pomeys' Evergreen Volume II has always seemed to us a Novemberish album). The story, to be sure, spans a number of years, and much of it takes place in more agreeable times of the year. However, despite frequent flashes of humor (which like lightning-bolts, dramatize rather than reveal the landscape), the overall tone of the work is one of melancholy, of a desolate brooding intelligence like that of Lord Sepulchra. To begin one's reading of Gormenghast in the dying month of November strikes us as most apt, most suitable to an appreciation of its mood. We have undertaken the habit of reading it so, every four or five years, to the point where attempting to read Gormenghast in spring or summer now seems to us a bizarre and unacceptable thing to do: not quite blasphemous, perhaps, but disrespectful.





[[Editor's note: If the term "interview" can encompass interviews by telephone and video, we guess it can encompass sending questions to Ms. Bujold by snail-mail and getting her responses the same way. With no further ado, therefore, we present: Bujold: The Interview.]]

Twink: Given that you yourself don't have the military background of, say, Elizabeth Moon, you seem to have a pretty good feel for the military lifestyle. Where did that information come from?

Lois McMaster Bujold: A lot of people have wondered about this, including military people who ask what branch I served in! I have a certain amount of reading background, but nowhere near the academic depth of, say, my sometime co-editor Roland Green. The only thing I can think of is that it may have something to

do with the eight or so years I worked as a technician in a major university hospital. There is a certain unexpected resonance between medicine and the military, especially in the problems of ordinary people having to organize themselves to coherently deal right now with serious emergency situations; they've evolved some of the same solutions, such as easily-recognizable uniforms and clear chains of command and responsibility.

Twink: Your first book centered on a female character, and you've spoken of Barrayar as one of your favorite of your own books. To what extent, if any, do you identify with Cordelia?

Bujold: Ah, another common question. How come nobody ever asks me how much I identify with Bruce Van Atta, or General Metzov? They're both co-equally my creations with Cordelia. I can't say as I identify with Cordelia, exactly, but I have certainly drawn on some of my own experiences for her creation, particularly (for Barrayar) the experiences of being a mother. Her "sensible" Betan politics jibe with but are not identical to my own views. That said, I would note that she's much braver, more competent, and self-confident than I have ever been or will be. (And she has better hair.) One of the authorial pleasures of creating a hero/ine is surely wish-fulfillment.

Twink: You have used male and female characters, a viewpoint character who is gay, a recurring character who is a hermaphrodite. We get the sense you're not so much interested in breaking down, as in moving beyond, traditional gender roles. Comment?

Bujold: I'm not exactly sure what you mean by this question; your terms "breaking down" and "moving beyond" aren't

# Bujold



defined. But I suspect the answer may be "yes". I like to write about interesting people doing interesting (to me at least) things; this includes but is not limited to wrestling with the occasional gender issue. Let the gender chips fall where they may; I'm here to tell stories, not advance agendas (but see the comments on world-view, below).

Twink: It seems to us the most attractive single quality of your writing is how you make even the peripheral characters believable as real people. Is that a deliberate effect, or does it just happen naturally as you write?

Bujold: It's not a particularly deliberate effort, though writing as a whole is the most concentrated effort I ever make. So it must just happen. Things which "just happen" are usually a product of the author's fundamental world-view, a rather global literary concept of mine which I believe underlies even theme in the structure of a piece of fiction. "World-view" is what makes a writer decide one story is more interesting to tell than another, one character more worth examining, how people are seen "to really be" and therefore portrayed, how the world works ... It will include overt or assumed politics, theological views, levels of cynicism or idealism, and portrayal of gender and sexuality. "World-view" match, or lack of it, between a piece of fiction and a reader is what makes that piece comfortable or oddly uncomfortable to read. Much of the selection may be non-conscious for both reader and writer, but the mesh-or-clash effect will be there.

Twink: The traditional "hero" is tall, handsome, and confident -- much like Ivan, in fact. What made you decide to go in such a different direction with your best known character, Miles?

Bujold: To a degree I was being consciously contrary, but mostly Miles arose out of his parents' situation. I had created Aral and Cordelia first, and Miles was a logical possible challenging thing to happen to them: to have that all-important firstborn son and heir be born



handicapped in this intensely militaristic, patriarchal culture. And then what happens? Thirteen books later I'm still finding out. I've gotten a lot of really interesting fan mail from handicapped readers, thanking me for making Miles both convincingly handicapped, and not making those handicaps the be-all and end-all of his identity. Also, of course, for making him the center of the story, and not just a sidekick or redshirt, the more traditional role of the handicapped in fiction -- when their existence is acknowledged at all.

Twink: Conan Doyle felt trapped in having to write the entire life of a single character. Keeping in mind that you've already killed Miles off once, do you feel "trapped" writing about him? As a corollary, what role does marketing play in that? Are you under pressure from your publisher to do more books about Miles?

Bujold: I am by no means trapped in writing Miles. While my publisher will certainly be delighted to be presented with more Miles books, he will also take any other book I care to write (within, I suppose, the genre limits of his publishing line). And there are lots more publishers out there if I want to depart even further. I contract my books one at a time, and each year have before me the

choice and option of going in some other direction. I don't even write the series books in order, so I can always do the best Miles idea I can think of, not just the next Miles idea I can think of. This arrangement did not happen by accident. If I've felt pressure, it's almost the opposite -- series get slammed so much by certain critics, self-appointed or otherwise, that the Miles books have become almost a guilty pleasure for me, as if the Literary Authorities had the power to descend and rip my beloved series out of my hands and force me to write "something more worthwhile". Fortunately, though critics make many dire pronouncements about series books, I've yet to encounter the "genre police" whose job it is to enforce their supposed rules.

Twink: Speaking of other directions you might like to explore, what's the situation on that sequel to The Spirit Ring? Do you see yourself writing more fantasy (as distinct from SF) in future?

Bujold: I would like to write more fantasy, though not necessarily a sequel to The Spirit Ring. I have one concept that's been kicking around for a half-year, but it hasn't developed critical mass yet; another Miles book appears to be beating on the cellar doors of my brain and demanding to be let out this year, so it will go first in the queue. My most fertile time for generating new ideas is usually when I'm stuck in the middle of a project, and any idea at all looks better than the one I'm supposed to be working on. I make notes. Later, in the cold light of between-books, they usually do not seem nearly so exciting, though germs of some of them have often been re-cycled later.

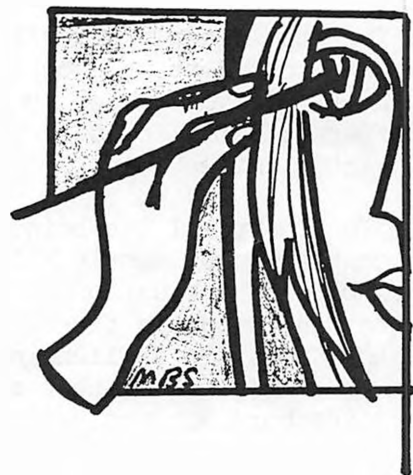
Twink: If you could never write another word, would you feel satisfied with what you've accomplished as a fiction writer, or would there be something left undone?

Bujold: In fact, I keep getting these retirement fantasies -- usually when I'm stuck in the middle, see above -- but that's a long way from being financially feasible. I've really only been self-supporting as a writer for about the last

six or seven years. (Fred Pohl was recently quoted as saying, "The good news about being a writer is that the income curve is exponential. The bad news is, it starts at zero.") To some extent I strip-mine my life to have something to say, to find that new thematic concern or insight or idea which will make each book matter, and be worth the writing. I have at times felt that I have over-run my accumulated experience upon which I must draw -- to continue the mining metaphor, I've called it "being at the working face of my life". Some writers call it "trying to pull from a dry well". But so far the vein has always been found again, the well has always re-filled. I trust that as I live and grow I will continually find new and surprising things still undone.

Twink: Thank you.

[[Editor's note: So there you have it. There are other questions we might have asked, as "Do you perceive the Miles books as getting steadily darker?" (There is a good deal of humor in Shards Of Honor and The Warrior's Apprentice, less in Barrayer, not much at all in, say, Mirror Dance.) But perhaps those questions are for another time and another "interview". We thank Ms. Bujold for taking time out of her busy schedule to share some insights with our readers. Those of you who have not read the books may now run, not walk, to the nearest bookstore and grab Shards Of Honor off the shelf so fast the friction burns your fingers.]]







SAGA OF A DISK  
by Lyn McConchie

The trouble began with a letter from a small press publisher in the U.K. I'd offered them U.K. rights of Farming Daze, my humorous non-fiction book of farm stories. They'd written back almost at once to say they loved it and would accept if I could condense it slightly, and provide it on disk. No problem. Although originally typed on a manual typewriter, when the edition here was closed out at the end of 1994, I purchased the work on disk from the publisher. Get disk... Find that I can't bring it up on the Word Processor and find it's on HD disks when my WP only takes DD. Pack it carefully, mail to computer-literate pal several hundred kilometers away, with imploring letter asking for disk to be translated down to DD. Phone call from pal to say SHE can't bring the darn thing up on any known programs either. She will approach the publisher. I have everything crossed things can be fixed as there's no sale unless the work is on disk.

A couple of weeks later, everything was still crossed. I looked like agitated convolvolous. The publishers said they believed the disk had been provided in Pagemaker Four. But my friend's computer wouldn't translate that so she was returning the disk. In the meantime a writer friend had heard and rang to say she had a friend who teaches computer stuff at the university there. He has offered to look at the disk and see if he can (a) translate Pagemaker Four to ASCII, (b) transfer High Density down to Double Density, then (c) download to the spare DD disk I've sent in 30kb files as my WP won't accept files which are much over that size. It just has a hernia and keeps flashing error messages.

So the disk went off to him. What I'd like to know is why the darn publisher bothered to ask what I wanted if they were going to give it to me quite differently. Oh, well. Life, Jim. But not as we'd like it. Meanwhile life as I do like it is the same publisher writing separately to accept a small collection of SF stories. They referred to them as "fresh and original" and we're in the middle of sorting out details. I'll get peanuts but -- peanuts keep this monkey fed and it's so great to be able to add another two books to my credit list.

Then a phone call. My friend up country talked to the friend who is doing the sorting out of the errant disk. He THINKS he can sort it and it won't cost more than \$60. I am relieved, delighted, and hopeful. It takes another five weeks but at last the disk returns in ASCII, chapters as files, and in DD. All I have to do now is go through every single chapter os the 21, editing, deleting additional material somehow transposed in from other chapters in the sorting process, and then copy the whole disk. By the time I've done all that I have gone through every chapter approximately five times. I am left wondering why I wrote the damn book in the first place, ever re-offered rights on it, and ever wanted to be a writer. I could also just about recite the entire thing from memory. A pity no one wants me to.

I am also left suffering from a distinct desire to take a train to Wellington and shoot up the original publishers. Unfortunately they've all gone somewhere else. Just as well, maybe. The one question I am left with is -- why, oh, WHY couldn't all these word processor/computer/publisher people get together at the start of things and do all their operation in one program? Or would that have been too sensible!

[[Editor's note: We just read where Microsoft is spending \$150 million to prop up archrival Apple, because they don't want to lose the business they have writing translation programs to shift between one system and the other. / We thank Ms. McConchie for taking time out from her livestock (alas, no ferrets) to share her advetures with our readers.]]

# MARCON

A THIRTY-TWO YEAR TRADITION!

a convention report by

Elizabeth A. Osborne



On May 9-11, 1997 in Columbus, Ohio, the biggest annual SF convention in the state took place. For the last 32 years, Marcon has been the most popular and important SF convention in Ohio. I attended each year from 1983-1987. The Marcon was housed in the Radisson hotel on Morse Road and had 700-1000 people. After I moved back from Florida, the first thing I asked was: When was Marcon? I found out that Marcon had moved to downtown Columbus to the Ohio Convention Center around 1990. I attended briefly last year but this year spent the whole weekend, despite Mother's Day on Sunday. I went with shipmates from the U.S.S. Columbia, a Star Trek fan club based in Wooster. We called our room with eight people in it the Bachelor Officer Quarters.

The Ohio Convention Center is the usual such building with a Hyatt Hotel as part of the Center and another hotel via a walkway. Both hotels were full for the whole weekend. Marcon had to share the Ohio Convention Center with the Southern Ohio Volleyball Championship. High school girls' volleyball is very big in Ohio and they and their families were out in force. The two groups got along without trouble but we stared at each other quite a bit.

[[Editor's note: Reminds us of a time

a con shared the hotel with a gathering of psychiatrists. There was no friction, but the shrinks went around taking notes all weekend... Sorry for interrupting, Elizabeth.]]

Traffic on Friday afternoon was terrible and parking a nightmare. I had planned to travel uptown to a special Japanese restaurant on Saturday but didn't because I didn't want to lose my parking space.

I met my friends and we walked around and went through registration. This was very odd because the pre-registered people had to wait longer than the people who were registering at the con. I don't know what went wrong there. The major guests at the convention were Harry Turtledove and J. Michael Straczynski. Juanita Coulson was the main filking GOH in a convention that has a long history as a midwestern filking center. There were individual filk concerts during the day and open filk each night. There were a slew of other guests from the scientists from JPL to the special effects crew of the Vermilion, Ohio Haunted House. Children and teenagers had their special tracks of programming. A psychic fair and computer and table gaming shared space with free Internet access on loaned

computers. People could go to the con or take part in a weekend long writers' workshop. One thing that I am seeing much less of at conventions: video rooms. There were three of them, one with movies, one with anime and the last with TV (mostly B5). Also, the first showing of Rock And Roll Spaceship, a film done in Indiana, took place to a happy audience.

Many of the panel discussions dealt with hands-on work. Workshops in special effects, makeup, film making, writing, and costuming were common. This was the first time I had seen how fiberglass was made and molded into costume forms. The different tracks of programming varied in number during the day. In the early morning there would be only one program going on at a time, but by afternoon there could be five or seven tracks. There was also the usual media stuff, the Klingons club had a Jail And Bail fundraiser and did a few panels. The Romanians [[sic]] also did a few but I didn't pay that much attention. One negative spot was that writing programming seemed to get lost among all the other topics available. There was also some fannish programming: the finances of a Worldcon, pick your city for a con, that sort of thing. In fact, there was too much to take in. Going to one panel meant that you missed two others that you would have liked to see.

The Dealers' Room was great as usual and I spent way too much money. The art show was huge and also well priced but I forced myself not to buy anything this time.

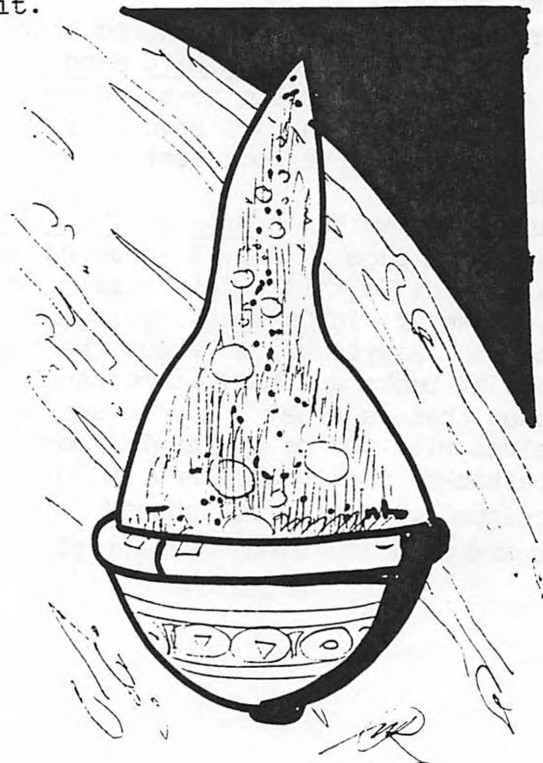
The programming started on Friday evening and ended with a retro 70's dance which was well attended but had less-than-great music. Saturday's dance took a long time starting and I am not sure if the party was very popular at all. The con suite, however, was rocking til 5:00 in the morning. Room parties, some quite loud, took place, including a few Worldcon bids.

The Marcon Masquerade is usually very good but I didn't really attend this year and I missed most of the open filking as well. One of the great party spots was the second floor lounge in the Hyatt. It was right next to the door of the Convention Center and by 7:00 at night the place looked like a scene from B5 or Callahan's Bar. (All it needed was a fireplace.)

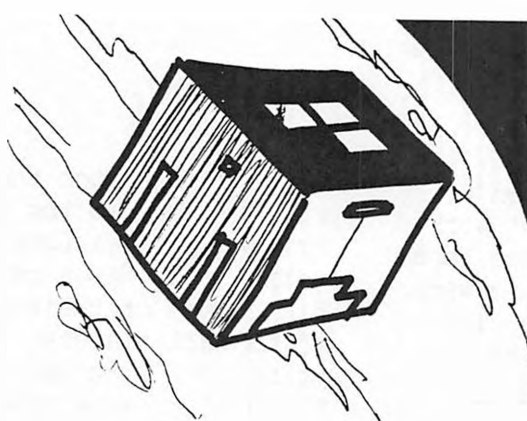
Sunday was much the same. It was Mother's Day so the two main hotels were holding Special Buffets that did not open until 10:30. As a result, the food court did a rush of business from fans and volleyball players. Slowly the convention wound down with people saying goodbye. The dealers were upset that they had to be out of the room by 3:00 PM so another convention could move in. Everyone got into their cars and drove home from another wonderful Marcon.

The end result of all this was a great weekend, but different from what I expected. The Marcons of the 80's were writers' conventions with a strong filking presence. While the name was the same, the present con is very different. In the old con it was possible to see everything; here you could have buried yourself in costume programming or science programming and never see the rest of the convention. Indeed, the hallways reminded me of a Worldcon rather than your usual con. The convention still has some area to grow but the city's downtown is reaching its limit. It didn't help that it was also prom weekend. Both hotels were filled and there was a definite shortage of restaurants within walking distance.

Marcon has grown a great deal in the last ten years. It is now one of the largest conventions in the Midwest. The con committee will have to work hard to keep it under control and provide support for it.



There Has  
Never Been  
A Readable  
SF Book  
Written II



The Further  
SF Reading  
Adventures Of  
Rodney M. Leighton

Well, this experiment has hit a major snag. Although I promised myself to give these books a serious trial, and read at least 30 pages, I started to wonder why. If it is patently obvious I am not going to enjoy reading the book, why force myself to read more of it than is necessary to discover that fact? With my decreased reading capacity, and with sufficient funds to obtain only a few things to read and an extensive supply of "probably will read" books, what is the sense in forcing myself to read something?

None, of course. If I am turned off a book by page 18, as I was by The Pride Of Chanur by C.J. Cherryh, what possible use is there in ploughing through another dozen pages? None. So, I tossed it. And if I accidentally and stupidly got another book in the same series as part of my experiment, as The Kif Strike Back, why bother to even start it? No reason to do so. And if I find that the foreword turns me off, as happened with Dragonsong by Anne McCaffrey, is there any sense trying the novel? Nope. I did anyway. Not readable, by my definition.

On the other hand, the introduction by Ursula K. LeGuin to The Left Hand Of Darkness is easily the best and most enlightening such thing I have ever seen. Unfortunately, the book lost me about page 35.

And Andre Norton's Moon Of Three Rings lost me on page 2. Now, I wondered, as you may be: Is this a fair trial? Perhaps not. However, in On Spec, spring 1995, Robert J. Sawyer writes about the beginnings of books and their importance. And, I know that is true. I have a set of cheap shelves with 400 or so novels, mostly paperbacks, mostly obtained in box lots at auctions, virtually all unread. Literally plucked from the middle of the pile on

one shelf was Material Witness by Robert K. Tanenbaum. Listed as simply "fiction", it's one of those mystery novels which wander all over the page and sometimes into an alternate genre. It grabbed me on page 9 (which was the first page), and by page 18 I knew I wanted to read it all. And Neveryona by Samuel R. Delany hooked me with the first sentence. After one chapter, I feel sure I will read it.

What is the problem with the other books? It is basically that I have a sufficient antipathy to outer space, far in the future, people travelling about somewhere beyond the sun in ships the size of New York City kind of stuff, that, once it becomes obvious that this is what a certain story is about, my mind registers total non interest. Tanenbaum almost lost me a couple of times when he wandered into detailed descriptions of basketball, the second most idiotic sport ever invented (behind only football). But I was sufficiently interested in the characters, the plot, all the various sub-plots and the outcome of the book, that I was able to skip over those passages and pages. I have, once or twice, encountered an SF short story in which I did this. In all cases, the off-turning sections appear after interest is firmly established.

Neveryona turned into more of a college thesis on society and the dawn of civilization than a novel. I did read it through, but not with any great consistency. (Read a western and a Nero Wolfe novel plus parts of other books in between.) I found it interesting except in some places where the Roman-senator-like speeches became almost stifling.

At the end, there was an excerpt from Stars In My Pocket Like Grains Of Sand, published in 1984. I read most of the excerpt. I suspect I might read the book

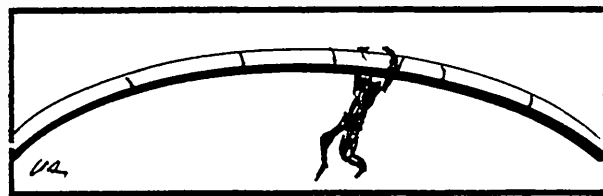
if I chanced upon it, but there were also a number of suggestions that I might toss it at some point.

So ends this experiment. Is this a good and proper, a sufficient, attempt at reading SF to enable me to proclaim that there has never been a readable SF book written? Obviously not, since I did enjoy one of this batch, and read a couple of other SF books previously. It is also not a very extensive sampling. My experience in the mystery genre tells me that. I have found mysteries which were unreadable; certain authors who are consistently unreadable in my view but who obviously get published. And some authors even differ in their output. I am a huge fan of Hercule Poirot and enjoy Miss Marple stories; yet I have encountered some Agatha Christie books which got tossed within ten pages as being unreadable. No doubt there are SF novels out there which I would enjoy reading. I recently read, in a FOSFAX LOC or somewhere, that reading SF requires a "suspension of disbelief". Having followed professional wrestling for 38 or so years, that is something I am well versed in. However, the major difference is that pro wrestling is firmly rooted on Earth and in society. The current rage is all for street gangs, which is sort of a sad commentary on American civilization; but that's another topic.

In thinking about all this, it has occurred to me that I apparently have a strong antipathy to outer space. The one SF novel I enjoyed and the two I read all had strong attachments to Earth. I can remember watching My Friendly Martian or whatever it was called [[Editor's note: My Favorite Martian]] with enjoyment, because it was funny. And so was Mork & Mindy, not to mention that Pam Dawber was a supreme babe. But Star Trek turns me off faster than a Ted White review, in spite of the somewhat scantily clad chicks. I have no idea where this antipathy comes from nor why, but this does appear to be the root of my dislike of SF.

When I began this experiment, I fully intended to ask for further suggestions and pursue them. However, various factors have occurred. For one, in spite of the admitted possibility that some SF books exist that I might enjoy, is finding them

worthwhile? I doubt it. Especially when we consider that I already had a substantial amount of unread books; to which I recently added, at about the same cost as the nine I got for this experiment, just over 400 books which will likely be read by me someday. Add to that a few other sources of new reading material; a decision to try soon to re-launch a zine-like thing which might generate some reading and take up time; and, well, I guess I will consider this experiment closed.



[[Editor's note: Even negative experiments can be useful. Obviously, we don't agree with Rodney about the readability of SF. And it seems to us the borders by which he defines "readable" are pretty narrow. Still, anyone not interested in space travel is unlikely to enjoy SF. (Although many fine SF novels take place here on Earth and don't involve space travel or aliens -- The Day Of The Triffids comes quickly to mind.)

However, if Rodney doesn't like SF, then probably he is correct, he shouldn't bother to read it. After all, his view is essentially the mainstream "mundane" one. For that perspective, we feel it's useful to consider this commentary, even if we don't agree with it. Maybe because we don't agree with it.]]



Y L N



P I N I O N

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#### REVIEW BY RACHEL RUSSELL

I shall now take a few moments to rant about The Fifth Element. This is a terrible movie, in spite of the great effects and the handsome Bruce Willis. The movie is terrible not because it has plot holes so big you can see daylight through them. It is terrible for its terrible portrayal of women. The majority of women are mere sex objects, wearing peekaboo outfits and so on. The opera singer sings beautifully, but she's hidden the mcguffin in such a way that if she hadn't been killed, I suspect the heroes would have had to kill her to retrieve it. How smart is that? We know nothing else about her. The "fifth element" itself is just an utter male fantasy. A beautiful woman-child who can't talk (most of the movie), who is strong but doesn't look it or use it, who needs help and rescue, who is waif-like but full of "innocent" passion just waiting to be released. Give me a break! But the final death blow was the running joke about the Bruce Willis character's mother being controlling, selfish, demanding, clingy -- the eternal joke of a mother. It not only wasn't funny, but without any fully developed, fully characterized female in the cast, it was really a sign that this view of women is the producers' true view of women. And for a movie with this message to be hyped so much -- to be portrayed as cutting edge SF -- argh!!! I'm grinding my teeth again...

#### REVIEWS BY RODNEY LEIGHTON

On Spec Robert J. Sawyer, editor Box 4727, Edmonton, Alberta T6E 5G6.A, Canada sample copy/\$6

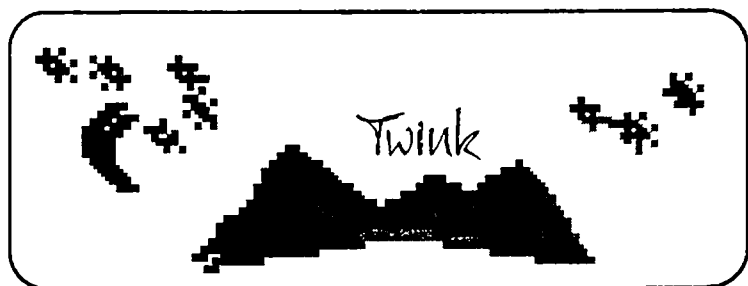
On Spec is a digest sized publication which publishes speculative fiction. I believe that one has to be Canadian, or living in Canada, for them to accept your work. Part of any subscription deal was a bonus of one special theme issue per year's sub. I obtained the Horror special, which was very good, and a f/x special dealing with mixed genres, which sucked. The spring '97 issue was a special theme issue being completely composed of stories set in Canada. It was quite good, although I was disappointed to find that most of the material came from/was set in central Canada. Of the regular issues, although the cover art usually is very SF and thus stinks, and features such as "Mr. Science" and a poem or so could be dispensed with to the magazine's advantage, the writing usually is quite to very good. The interior art is very good and theme appropriate. All 9 stories in the summer edition were definitely SF: two unreadable, one excellent, two very good, and the rest not bad. About normal for this magazine.

Bardic Runes Michael McKenny, publisher 424 Cambridge St. S. Ottawa, Ontario K1S 4H5, Canada sample issue/ \$4

Another Canadian publication which Twink readers might like; published three or possibly four times/year, this digest sized zine publishes traditional fantasy short stories and some poetry. McKenny uses material from anywhere and pays a small amount for accepted material. Art is usually very good; poems are usually skipped by me and the stories range from boring to exceptional. I sometimes devour this magazine within a day or so of



receipt, and other times have a difficult time reading it. Checks \$4/Canadian, to McKenny, if you live in Canada; \$4/U.S. payable to Cathy Woodgold, if you live anywhere else.



#### REVIEWS BY E.B. FROHNET

The Lord Of The Dance directed by: David Mallet 1996 Not rated (c. PG?)

Filmed during a live performance in Dublin, this show takes the Irish mythos familiar to any fantasy reader and re-interprets it in a spectacular combination of Irish step-dancing, Vegas-style production numbers, sizzling electric-fiddle breaks, and a killer laser-light show. Created and choreographed by American born star dancer Michael Flatley, this is set to an original score by Ronan Hardiman inspired by traditional Irish music. The performance is a series of vaguely related set pieces without the continuous narrative thread of, say, ballet. It's still amazing. Jurassic Park / The Lost World are just special effects: this is fantasy. If you can't get to see the live show, the film version is highly recommended.

Watercolours H.R.H. Charles, Prince of Wales Little, Brown & Co. 1991 \$40.00

These drawings and sketches reveal Prince Charles to be a fair amateur artist, with a genuine feel for both the artistic process, and his subjects (mainly landscapes, mainly British; some buildings -- the royal estates of Sandringham and Balmoral figure prominently). On the down side, the works and his attached comments reveal the Prince as something of an artist manque whose ambitions run ahead of his modest skills; and that he is aware of that. He also comes off as something

of a frustrated loner, who would be happy sitting on a hillside drawing -- if people would just let him be. We wonder how much this apparent consciousness of his own inadequacies has played in his life; such as screwing up an apparently perfect marriage to a woman whose worst fault was that she was more popular than he was.

Four Ways To Forgiveness Ursula K. LeGuin Harper/Prism 1995 \$5.99

This book comprises four novellas set in the same two-world system, distantly tied in to the author's early works about the Ekumen. In "Betrayals", a disgraced old politician and a lonely old woman living in a rural area achieve friendship of a sort. "Forgiveness Day" is about an Ekumen Envoy and the bodyguard she despises, who only begin to appreciate each other when they are kidnapped. In "A Man Of The People" a Hainish diplomat, recognizing the childhood truth that all truth is partial, devotes himself to freeing a free people. "A Woman's Liberation" is the longest and, as the title suggests, the preachiest of these stories.

As always, when reading LeGuin, the choice is simple. There are other people, and then there's solitude: it's up to you. (Curious that for all her feminist agenda, LeGuin believes fiercely in marriage, or at least in pair-bonding.) The whole time we were reading this book, the Beatles' "Eight Days A Week" kept playing in the back of our head: make of that what you will.

Cetaganda Lois McMaster Bujold Baen 1996 \$5.99

In the chronology of Vorkosigan stories, this falls after The Vor Game and before Brothers In Arms. Miles and Ivan are sent as diplomatic representatives to arch-enemy Cetaganda to attend a royal funeral. They are hardly arrived when a servant of the enemy Imperium tangles the cousins in a conspiracy involving the genetic history of the highest Cetagandan aristocracy -- and the most beautiful woman Miles has ever seen. (Most amusing moment: Ivan is attacked by a clinging rose, botanical variety. "I think it likes you," Miles

comments helpfully.)

So Miles really is a deep-cover special agent for Barrayaran Imperial Security. Or Miles really is, well, crazy. Or both. He seems genuinely convinced that his impulsive, spur-of-the-moment problem solving system is preferable to the logic of experienced diplomats. If you ask us, Barrayaran ImpSec is better off when Miles is safely distant commanding the Dendarii Mercenaries. We wonder what Security Chief Illyan thinks about it.

Speaking Dreams "Severna Park" (an admitted pen name) Firebrand Books 1992 price?

Costa had two options in life: to be a slave for the Sector, or spend her life breeding children to be sold as slaves. When Emirate diplomat Mira LoDire went to Sector territory, she was ordered to "blend in" with local custom by purchasing a slave. To Mira's surprise, the slave she bought cheap knew far more about Sector ploitics than anyone ought to: enough inside knowledge that Mira might actually complete an impossible assignment -- if she lived through it.

"Firebrand" is a feminist and apparently a lesbian small press; the L-word crops up regularly in their backlist of other titles. We have no problem with that. Maybe the L-subtext was what kept this from being published by a usual SF house. Once you get past the first three grim chapters this is not terrible. It's not any good, mind you, but we've seen far worse books published by DAW and Bantam.

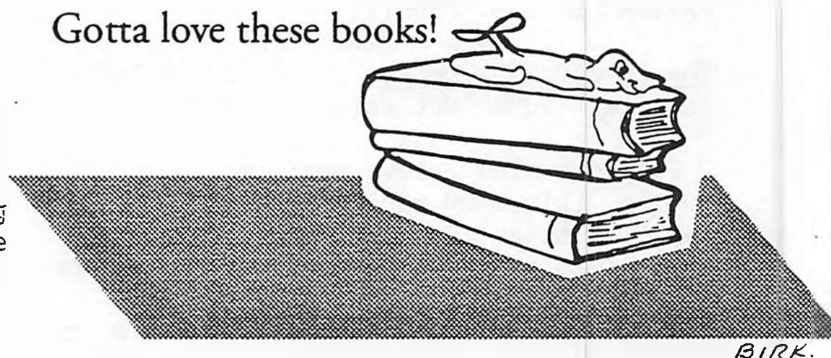
Summerland L. Dean James Avonova 1994 \$4.99

America is dieing of drought after fifteen barren years. Jamie Weston, last survivor of her family, has only her brother's knife, her storytelling, and the strange crystal given her by her vanished father. Harry is only a dentist by training, but determined to bring what medical care he can to the people of the wilderlands. There's also Lila Anne, who aspires to be a sorceress, and Trey, the Indian, and his dun mare. Among them, they must somehow bring back the rain -- before

their world dies altogether.

Bought second-hand and almost untouched in a used bookstore, this was a pleasant surprise: it's actually pretty good. Call it fantasy-punk, with a little Roger Zelazny, a dollop of MZB, and a dash of Bladerunner. There's something sad in the fact that bookstores are cluttered with Piers Anthony and David Drake and media tie-ins, and a competent, enjoyable little fantasy like this has come and gone without notice. It does however encourage us in the belief that we're more willing to take a chance on an unknown writer from Avonova than from some other publishers.

Gotta love these books!



The Element Of Fire Martha Wells Tor 1993 \$4.99

Life was tough for Thomas Boniface, captain of the Dowager Queen's Guard in the kingdom of Ile-Rein. The young king was a nitwit; the king's bastard half-"fayre" [sic!] sister had returned to the palace to cause trouble, and a vile sorcerer from the next kingdom was loose in Ile-Rein with an armory of dark spells. (And, apparently, all the motive of a 3-year-old throwing a tantrum.)

We kept waiting for the author to do something with this jumble of cliches, to rise above Generic Fantasy Product. It never happened. Anne McCaffrey says she stayed up until 2:30 to finish this. We can only conclude it must have been a really dull evening at McCaffrey's place.

## *The Half Naked One on the Left*

### PhiloSfY #6

Alexander Slate  
8603 Shallow Ridge Drive  
San Antonio TX 78239

Small quarterly genzine; a punny centaur cover this time. The editor continues to discuss ethics, citing authorities from Confucius to Clausewitz. Short book and fanzine review sections and a lively letter column. The content may be serious, but the tone of this zine is open and friendly. We always look forward to it.

### MSFire Volume 3, #3

Lloyd G. Daub  
P.O. Box 1637  
Milwaukee WI 53201

Roughly bi-monthly, this club-sponsored genzine is a little more general than PhiloSfY, but we also like it a lot and contribute to it. Wendy Zupan cover; news about SF websites; long article by David Edward Martin on slavery in gaming; letter column, with reflective comments on the stamps and envelopes used. Also poetry and some reviews. This is a very agreeable little fanzine which deserves more attention.

### Quipu #7

Vicki Rosenzweig  
33 Indian Road #6-R  
New York NY 10034

A very irregular personalzine: this one is slightly longer at 12 pages. The editor discusses getting an ornithologically correct tattoo; several pages of a trip report on Hong Kong; brief comments on someone who anonymously left chocolates on her desk. Also a few letters. See, this

is why we don't do a personalzine: our life isn't nearly this interesting. But, hey, New York City, right?

### FOSFAX #186

Timothy Lane & Elizabeth Garrett  
P.O. Box 37281  
Louisville KY 40233

Large, dense, text-heavy genzine that covers a lot of ground. Convention reports, book reviews, articles -- some of all of these are SF/fandom related. A lot of the rest, and much of the huge letter column, are mundane sociopolitics. FOSFAX's scattergun approach is such that most fans will find something of interest, though few will find everything of interest.

### Apparatchik #80

Andy Hooper & Victor Gonzalez  
4228 Francis Avenue N, #103  
Seattle WA 98103

This fanzine has folded. The above will, presumably, continue to be Hooper's snail-mail address. Notice how we carefully avoid making any value judgement about this event.

### Gasworks #1

Steve Swartz & John D. Berry  
4114 Interlake Avenue N, #4  
Seattle WA 98103

A new zine; Berry calls it an "ensmalled genzine" -- the first is 10 pages. Berry on trips to Australian fandom in 1975 and 1989 (a very late DUFF report); Swartz on his trip to Intervention in Liverpool, at which he talked to Britfans, drank way too much beer, and compared fanzines to

dogs; Howard Waldrop reflects on the evolution of UFO-wackiness. It will be interesting to see how this develops. (If we're going to be a dog, we think maybe we'd like to be a border collie.)

Derogatory Reference #85

Arthur D. Hlavaty  
206 Valentine Street  
Yonkers NY 10704

A personalzine which appears regularly every four months. Hlavaty squeezes a lot into 6 pages: a discussion of his mundane job and freelancing; book reviews; a report on the International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts; a tribute for late fan Seth Goldberg. We'd like to see the editor do more with this zine, but he apparently just doesn't have the time.

Nova Express Volume 4, #3

Dwight Brown (publisher) & Lawrence  
Person (editor)  
P.O. Box 27231  
Austin TX 78755

The shameless self-promotion for which NE has been criticized elsewhere seems to us mainly a gag. That said, this is an impressive fanzine: top-of-the-line production values, long interviews with Bradley Denton and William Browning Spencer, large book review section. The slant is heavily "slipstream"/surreal/horror, which does not overlap heavily with our taste; but we can't help admiring their cheerful contempt for fannish tradition. As Donald Kingsbury wrote in Courtship Rite, "Tradition is a set of solutions for which we have forgotten the problems."

Visions Of Paradise #72, #73

Robert Sabella  
24 Cedar Manor Court  
Budd Lake NJ 07828

The editor's personalzine (he also does Gradient). Basically autobiographical, almost a diary about his busy life and many activities. Seems like he never has five minutes to sit down and rest! We find it intriguing, not so much for the material itself, but because our own

natural impulse is so totally opposite. Also a few brief comments on books and, at the back of #73, some letters.

South Florida SFS Shuttle #130  
P.O. Box 70143  
Fort Lauderdale FL 33307

In reviewing #129 we called this bi-monthly zine (now received after 4½ months, after every single meeting announced therein) a "floundering clubzine". Partly this is because it changes editors every issue: no continuity. Short articles (Lovecraft, B5, Hale-Bopp), club news, a few letters. Marginally improved but still a long way to go -- even for a clubzine.

The Jezail #1

Andy Hooper  
4228 Francis Avenue N, #103  
Seattle WA 98103

Less than two months after the demise of Apparatchik, Hooper returns with this small "frequent" personalzine, which much resembles its deceased elder brother. TAFF news, fanzine reviews, a Westercon report, the always-somewhere-new Christina Lake on her visit to U.K. Hooper promises a periodic lettercol in future issues. We hope this new forum continues the virtues of Apak while dispensing with some of its down side.

Attitude #11

Martin Abbott, John Dallman, & Pam Wells  
102 William Smith Close, Cambridge  
CB1 3QF, United Kingdom

Mailed to us bulk rate from Buffalo NY -- by whom, we have no idea. Long editorial by Wells about her college career; numerous reports on Attitude-the-convention; fanzine reviews by Steven Cain includes Twink #5! (Where he got it we don't know, unless from Bridget Hardcastle or Joseph Nicholas; but being the nice non-dangerous person we are, we'll just say "Thank you.") Several other articles and a nice letter column. Sadly, this is the next-to-last issue; after #12 the editors plan to move on to other fanac. If at times we felt a little lost among cryptic Britishisms, we still enjoyed this; too bad we came in late.

The Reluctant Famulus #49

Thomas Sadler  
422 W. Maple Avenue  
Adrian MI 49221

Rapidly climbing the chart of our favorite fanzines is this handsome genzine. Sadler editorializes about Heaven's Gate culties and the Fanzine Hugo controversy; assorted short articles, mainly out of the lives of the writers; fanzine reviews, and a long lettercolumn with Sadler's lengthy responses. The production is improved over the last issue, with multi-color printing in places and a readable typeface. TRF has the complete package.

Squiggledy Hoy #1

Bridget Hardcastle  
13 Lindfield Gardens, Hampstead,  
London, NW3 6PX, United Kingdom

Small (8x12 folded to make 12, 6x8 pages) personalzine. Self-introduction by the editor, who also discusses libraries, eggs, and parks; Pat McMurray with a report on the '96 Eastercon and its shortcomings. Hardcastle promises fanzine reviews, etc in future. Address shown is her father's, so material sent there will reach her until she relocates in the fall. Our view of this is identical with the punch line of "What do you call ten lawyers at the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean?"

Squib #1

Victor Gonzalez  
905 NE 45th Street #106  
Seattle WA 98105

[[Note change of address.]]

Several just-starting fanzines this time; we admit to being surprised on receiving this one. The editor on his fannish credentials (Gonzalez is a TAFF candidate, votes due by 12/13/97); Lesley Reece on music, Hooper on baseball, Sheila Lightsey on looking for antihistamines in Amsterdam -- the highlight of this issue. Much like Hooper's new zine, this closely resembles Apparatchik.

Southern Fandom Confederation Bulletin

Volume 6, #9  
Tom Feller  
P.O. Box 68203

Nashville TN 37206

[[Note change of address.]]

Regular clubzine of the SFC. Con reports by Feller, Dean Sweatman, and Stella Atrium; fanzine reviews by Tim Gatewood; the usual listings of Southern -- only -- clubs and conventions; SFC news, a short lettercolumn. Useful for those who are active in fandom in the region, even if not SFC members. We send our best wishes and congratulations to Tom and Anita (nee Williams) on their recent wedding.

Scavenger's Newsletter #162

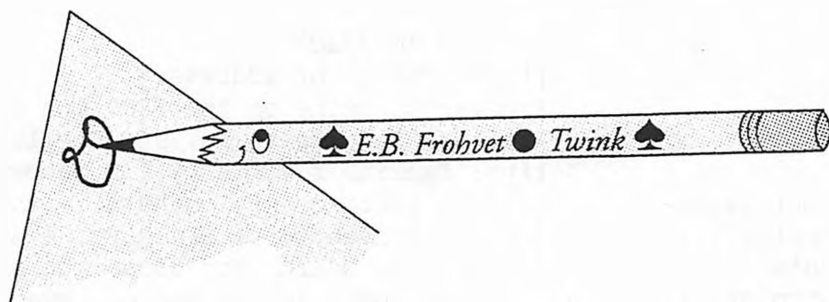
Janet Fox  
519 Ellinwood  
Osage City KS 66523

Unsolicited. We're not dead sure this should be classed as a fanzine. No advertisements are printed therein, but nine pages of ads were folded and stapled within. If advertisements pay for its publication, even indirectly, then it's a "Semi-Prozine" in our book. A guide to obscure SF/horror "small press" zines, all of which -- as far as we can tell -- "pay" in contributor copies, if that much. Useful as a supplement to Writer's Market and such, if your ambition runs no higher.

Challenger #6

Guy H. Lillian III  
P.O. Box 53092  
New Orleans LA 70153

Another large (90 pp) and impressive issue! Numerous long articles (a Jim Baen GOH speech on NASA; Harry Warner Jr. on one of his early fanzines; a trip report to Russia by Dick Lynch, etc). Lillian's occasionally topless photo-essay on Mardi Gras, substantial letter column and fanzine-review section. Alas, we seem to have alienated the editor somewhat: a little inflammatory language on both sides. We apologize for any offense given (though not conceding the point). Our views are really not that far apart, sir, and we hope to continue receiving this excellent fanzine.



## Rheaders Rhevenge

[[Editorial comments appear in the customary double brackets.]]

SHERYL BIRKHEAD  
23629 Woodfield Road  
Gaithersburg MD 20882

Using the ubiquitous plastic, I have my printer back and I must get used to that. I have a lot of computer work to do for the business and I forget that I can. Sigh, how soon a frill becomes a necessity and then back again when I lost its use for a bit.

Your question about Steve (Stiles) ...I try to keep some information on the Fan Artist Hugo -- I missed out on information last year, didn't get a copy of SFC -- reminds me that I ought to ask the Lynches if they keep it around and I might be able to find the numbers there. Anyhow, I believe Steve was also a TAFF winner -- way back in the Dark Ages -- a true fan extraordinaire. The answer to your question: yes, he has been nominated.

I will try to write later, wanted to get this off to you while I was thinking of it -- off on a call now and a dinner by one of my (ah, this sounds so nefarious) drug suppliers!

[[Editor's note: Sheryl sent a list of all the nominees. Steve was nominated in 1967 and '68. Sheryl herself has not been nominated: something else for us to work on. / The reference to "drug suppliers" is quite innocent -- in case any of you have forgotten, Sheryl is a veterinarian and licensed to handle "controlled substances".]]

STEVE STILES  
8631 Lucerne Road  
Randallstown MD 21133

Thanks for the Hugo plug. This year marks my 30th anniversary of the last time I was nominated, and that year Jack Gaughan deservedly won both the pro and fan art awards. "Oh well, there's always next year," I remember thinking. I don't do fan art in order to win a Hugo, but I have to admit that after thirty years the whole nomination thing has begun to gnaw at me. I begin to liken myself to chopped liver. Of course, this puts me in an awkward position contributing art to Twink; it might look like a payoff.

[[Payoff, schmayoff. It's now official policy: Twink endorses both Steve and Sheryl for Hugo nominations in the "Fan Artist" category -- not just for their contributions to us, but for all they've done in many other zines as well.]]

I have to apologize for not taking you up on the lunch. It may be that I simply forgot about the invitation. On the other hand, some months ago I was feeling rather depressed about the evaporation of my freelance career, and the way the comic book industry radically downsized, and just was not feeling that sociable.

I'm sorry the Visionary Arts Museum was not your cup of tea. I should know better and not proselytize. I hope you didn't try the museum's restaurant, where another \$6 would have gotten you coffee and an artfully placed quarter-sized wafer.

[[We're open to being educated. What's up with the guy who does mosaics out of broken beer bottles? How about the one whose "art" consists of glueing several hundred plastic horses on a Buick Skylark? We just don't speak those languages.]]

Arthur Hlavaty must have some precog ability; the T-shirt company where I work has been printing up shirts of Dennis



. Rodman as an alien in drag. The drawing's entitled "Role Model".

. I used to have a pb of Stewart's Earth Abides. Had it since my high school days. About six months ago I decided to re-read it for perhaps the third time, only to have it crack open as I settled down, pages spilling out and into my lap. I'm not about to get up and check through my Bradbury collection, but it seems to me that he's dealt with the problems of black Americans in more than one story.

ARTHUR D. HLAVATY  
206 Valentine Street  
Yonkers NY 10704

Thanks for Twink's #6 & 7. I continue to enjoy your zine.

One thing from #6 that didn't make the lettercolumn. Noticing things like the carryall that magically moved under the seat from the overhead rack is the copy-editor's job, not the proofreader's. This means it's my job, but fortunately that sort of thing doesn't come up much in banking law.

[[We continue to be amazed that a manuscript goes through the hands of writers, editors, etc., and no one notices such errors. / But typos in law texts are likely to have further-reaching consequences, which is why copy editing and proofreading are so important.]]

I recommend The Passing Of The Light, NESFA Press's Malzberg collection. It has all his recursive SF -- Dwellers Of The Deep, Gather In The Hall Of The Planets, Herovit's World, and a bunch of the short stories. My one complaint is that they reprint "A Galaxy Called Rome" instead of the novel version, Galaxies (though I suppose the latter is a little padded). Add Beyond Apollo, and you would have a thorough representation of Malzberg at his best, which is pretty good.

I'm not even going to try to guess your sex. (Am I remembering or imagining a 60's cartoon of a carnival booth: \*GUESS YOUR SEX50¢\* ?) After Robert Silverberg wrote about James Tiptree's "ineluctable masculinity", I am not prepared to assume I can do better than that.

[[But Steve Stiles says you're precog; that must count for something. / Alas,

poor Mr. Silverberg: we suspect he's never going to live that one down.]]



NED BROOKS  
713 Paul Street  
Newport News VA 23605

Much thanks for Twink #6 -- elegant cover!

[[Well, it didn't compare to Mimosa's several-page tribute to Mr. Rotsler, but it was the best homage we could manage with our lesser resources.]]

I am not a big con fan myself. I have never been to a Corflu, and only the Ditto that was held in this area.

I agree with you about Steve Stiles, but I have not kept up with the Hugo Awards well enough to know if he was ever nominated. I wonder if this is recorded anywhere?

[[See above. We're not at all surprised that someone in fandom keeps track of such things.]]

I always found Malzberg more annoying than he was worth, and I doubt if I would want to read a book about him. Ellison is a much better writer, but I always get the feeling he is trying too hard. I prefer writers like Arthur Machen, who went to a great deal of trouble to erase all the effort and just leave the story.

I certainly agree with Leighton that one should only read something that is enjoyable -- but some books are worth the effort it takes to enjoy them. Of course there are a few (damn few!) that are no effort at all. I would put The Martian

Chronicles in the category of requiring no effort to enjoy (for me); of the rest he mentions, only The Left Hand Of Darkness really repays the effort of understanding it. But I liked Zenna Henderson's No Different Flesh when I read it in F & SF, though I would not care to re-read it.

I have read all the books in your article on blacks as characters in SF, and except for "Way In The Middle Of The Air" in The Martian Chronicles, where the whole point of the story is dependent on the sociological condition of Southern blacks at that time, I could not have said whether they contained any reference to race at all. And why should I? I do not read SF for social commentary on that level -- when you are dealing with non-human races, what do the trivial differences between the human races matter?

Gee, were Victor's remarks about Twink as nasty as yours about It Goes On The Shelf? "...Mildly interesting", indeed -- you cut me to the quick!

[[IGOTS is a zine with a very, um, unique perspective; and it wanders into a lot of realms that the average SF reader/fan may not know or care about. That's cool, but we can't pretend that everything in it overlapped our areas of interest.]]

As I mentioned, Taral is trying to make a living at his art, so I suppose there is a strong economic incentive for even non-humans to tend toward sexploitation. But even his favorite character in the old days, Saara Mar, though much more alien than the cat-lady on IGOTS #17, seemed to have a strong erotic element.

I love the Coolidge anecdote, hadn't heard that before. I'm not sure I believe it actually happened...

[[Se non e vero, e ben trovato, as we say in the Italian-Alsatian side of the family: "Even if it is not true, it is well conceived." According to an article we read, the other famous anecdote about Coolidge really happened. A woman met the President and gushed that she had wagered she could get him to say three words; and Coolidge replied, "You lose."]]



JOSEPH T. MAJOR  
1409 Christy Avenue  
Louisville KY 40204

The field is so fragmented that it is entirely possible you will get no responses to "How I feel about Gormenghast".

Malzberg is writing in the tradition of Stanislaw Lem, who was angry that SF writers in the Anglophone world were not impoverished denizens of coffee houses, penning radical screeds intended to remold society while starving in garrets.

"Science fantasy" as a category stems from the methods of Anne McCaffrey, Marion Zimmer Bradley, etc., who write a standard fantasy and tack on a reference to space ships so as to span the genres. Like with Tanith Lee's The Birthgrave.

Or more generally, Andre Norton. I realize that Rodney and I will be in trouble for defaming the Good Witch of the South (the section title from that issue of Niekas devoted to praise of Norton) but I had serious trouble reading her. I once took seven Witch World novels to my brother's to read over a Thanksgiving weekend, and after bogging down in the third started reading golf magazines, which is interesting since I dislike golf. I found her prose plodding, her detail faulty (a reference to a "mail scarf" for some reason lingers), and her concepts haphazard. Like bringing in the inter-dimensional science station.

[[Some books work for the reader, and some don't. We read a lot of Norton from an early age and liked most of it. At the moment we're drawing a blank on a "science station" in the Witch World. / A "mail scarf" is a piece of very fine chainmail hung from a helmet to protect the throat; there's probably a technical name...]]

Logging on to the Gridley Foundation site (<http://www.gridley.org>) I found the following e-mail:

From: xodar@valley\_dor.gov.br  
To: jtmajor@iglou.com  
Re: E.B. Frohvet

Kaor! Of your good will, kindly inform this Frohvet person that a squadron of our fliers will be descending upon Ellicot [sic] City, where Frohvet will have the honor of being personally duelled by the Jeddak, before an

appreciative audience of the Black Men of Barsoom.

Seriously, in The Gods Of Mars Burroughs did introduce black men, and even had John Carter noting: "The physical structure of their bodies seemed identical with those of the therns, the red men, and my own. Only in the colour of their skin did they differ materially from us; that is of the appearance of polished ebony, and odd as it may seem for a Southerner to say it, adds to rather than detracts from their marvellous beauty."

[[As the challenged party, we have the choice of weapons. And it's "Ellicott City". / A very long time since we read Burroughs; but in one of the Tarzan books he called a woman of a not-quite-human race "undeniably beautiful, though she was entirely black and covered with fur." A man ahead of his time.]]

"...the nations and peoples of Earth had by common consent, contracted to abandon their imperfect forms of government and unite under the rule of the aristocracy of merit." Baptism Of Fire, p.4. Or, A Modern Utopia by H.G. Wells, or any number of books by Mack Reynolds. You may have to subcontract out your suspension of disbelief unsuspended to Scott Patri and Zero-G Lavatory.

Besides, DePauw is running into entrenched opposition, David Weber apparently wanted to write about "a woman naval officer in the Napoleonic Wars" and so did the Honor Harrington series. The political infighting and crises in Weber's books are interesting, but the space tactics are very thinly revised Age of Sail ones.

[[In Bujold's The Warrior's Apprentice, the hero finds himself in a jam during a space battle and suggests ramming -- which is Bronze Age tactics. The U.S. Naval Academy still teaches sailing, and the U.S. Military Academy still uses Clausewitz as required reading.]]

The club does not pay for FOSFAX. Tim, Elizabeth, Grant McCormick, and I pay for it. (My payment has been in kind of late, as I provided Tim with a Pentium-100 computer from Gateway 2000 in lieu of cash.)

[[Ah, well, we didn't know that. The magazine is presented as an official publication of FOSFA, so we naturally assumed...]]

Toronto is in the Central Region. There

was a bid for Ottawa/Hull which presented itself as a year-long Worldcon since Ottawa is in Ontario (Central Region) while Hull is just across the border in Quebec (East Region) so the same committee would be insane enough to do two consecutive Worldcons.

[[Toronto at about 79°30' W, is east of Pittsburgh, east of Orlando, and way east of Atlanta (almost 85° W). And the "Niagara Falls" bid of a few years back, less than 50 road miles from Toronto, was bid in the East Region.]]

Very eloquent and well-stated Open Letter. The Triangle has a very exclusive definition of fandom, one which they desire to be as small as possible. Last year's Corflu illustrated that point. Its chair, Lucy Huntzinger, opined that Nashville did not have a very good fannish community. Since Nashville has three large clubs and a continuing annual convention ... this statement came across as preposterous. But it turns out Huntzinger did not think it worth trying to take part in existing fan community... And so it is the policy of White, Hooper, and Gonzalez to decry everything not of their circle... But for all your effort it is in vain. Arrayaatsnyk [sic] has ceased publication with issue #80.

[[Yes, we noticed. We stand on the text of the Open Letter, verbatim.]]



STEVE SWARTZ  
4114 Interlake Ave N, #4  
Seattle WA 98103

I presume you know the story of the last DC-area Corflu. I went to that one, and the complaint lodged at the time wasn't so much that the Corflu was different from previous Corflus as that there simply wasn't much there (other than the attendees). If you wanted to bid on a third DC-area Corflu, I think you'd have to re-solve two problems: find a way to involve or make peace with the other fanzine fans in the area, and become known enough to fanzine faandom at large that you'd get the bid. The former problem was what stalled out Corflu 11, I believe. Without understanding the details, it seemed that the Ted & Dan crowd became so tightly wedged against Dick & Nicki & Alexis that nobody ended up doing anything. The latter would mostly involve you getting better known within the faanish community, which is gonna be a slower thing for you so long as you remain anonymous. I think the next few years are spoken for (Leeds, then Florida, then Seattle? that's what I hear ...)

[[We've pretty much given up on the idea of bidding for Corflu, though, who knows, it might be revived later as we become better known. We're proud of our adopted community and still think it would be a great place to hold a relaxacon.]]

Someone said that it used to take a year or two for a fan to become a faan (I use "faan" somewhat joshingly to refer to the difference between someone in the fanzine community and someone approaching, receding from, or comfortably outside it). They argued that this time period was expanding and that it often took five years for someone to find their way into "faandom". ... It took me nearly ten years to "make it" (not that I tried that hard)... I expect your feelings that you keep coming up with good ideas in which no one is interested have more to do with your spot along that path from fandom to faandom, than with the quality of the ideas per se.

[[We can live with "approaching". But if fandom (or "faandom") is a game of choosing up In-groups and Out-groups and denouncing everyone in the self-defined

Out-groups, we had enough of that crap in junior high school.]]

I think Kevin Welch's review of The Engines Of The Night misses the mark pretty broadly. Malzberg's writing is often quite brilliant, if dark and cynical. It shouldn't surprise us that a man who threw himself into stories about alienation and existential angst would eventually succumb to the despair of viewing his own situation in the light of his fictional themes. Engines may try to make a broad case about SF at large, but I think it's best read as Malzberg struggling with his own situation, trying to make sense of it by projecting it onto the field at large. I think Welch's review would have been more interesting for me if he was reacting to it in the larger context of Malzberg's fiction. Outside that context, while I can understand why Welch reads Engines the way he does, I'm not so sure I care.

[[We're not sufficiently well read in Malzberg to referee between you and Kevin, but the article generated dialogue, and that's the point of any fanzine.]]

While I run into the same kinds of issues reading Rodney Leighton's piece, I find his attitude so delightfully scurrilous that I found great pleasure in his essay. I think of genre as fictive language. I don't find it surprising that a person who hasn't learned the language of SF/fantasy would find individual works within the language unreadable. I find Rodney's confusion of "These works are currently unreadable by me" with "These works are unreadable" to be akin to him complaining that Chinese literature is unreadable, when he doesn't know Chinese. He embraces this confusion so thoroughly that his piece is fun to read. I agree with most of his assessments (Dick and Zelazny are readable, Anderson and Norton are not...) I await more from Rodney, I like his written persona, and I look forward to his encounter with Heinlein (and hope, for his sake, that he didn't run into I Will Fear No Evil or one of the later books).

[[We have the continuation of Rodney's article in hand but it may not make it into this issue. / From his description of a "hot babe" on the cover, we're guessing Michael Whelan's cover for Friday?]]

JOSEPH NICHOLAS  
15 Jansons Road, South Tottenham  
London N15 4JU, United Kingdom

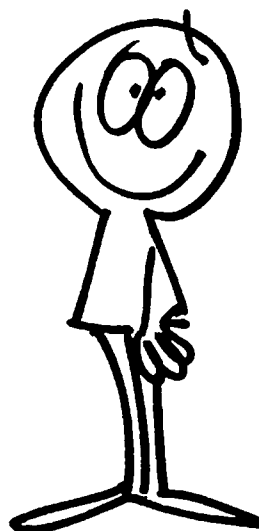
Many thanks for Twink #6 and the associated papers -- although I do wonder at your open letter to Victor Gonzalez. Certainly, it's your mailing list, and you have every right to drop from it people whom you consider vexatious, tedious, or otherwise insufferable, but doing it in so public a fashion seems a bit strong -- and even risks provoking a backlash of sympathy for the excluded one. Having said that, though, you might be interested to learn that when Apparatchik was discussed in depth on the fanzine review panel at Attitude-the-Convention in February, there seemed to be general agreement with -- or at least no one publicly dissented from -- the proposition that since Victor became a co-editor, the fanzine has become sourer and more judgemental in tone...

[[Since Apparatchik has folded -- of which you were probably not aware as you wrote -- further discussion of this seems superfluous. We stand on what we said in the Open Letter, we had our say, end of discussion as far as we're concerned.]]

"The New Forest was established in the 11th Century," says Joseph Major. This is slightly misleading -- the New Forest was designated as a royal hunting preserve following the Norman Conquest, but the area of mixed deciduous woodland and open heath so demarcated had been in existence for many centuries before that. I believe it even had some sort of Celto-Saxonic name which began with a Y, but I can't remember offhand what it was.

We won't be attending the 1998 Worldcon, because we simply can't afford it... We shall be spending a large chunk of cash on a visit to relatives in Australia next February, chiefly to inspect some in-laws' new offspring. (Well, they will be new by then; at present they are no more than unsightly bulges in the abdominal region.) It's not that we're indigent -- just that we have other priorities.

[[Too bad. If your priorities ever allow a visit to the "colonies", hopefully you might pass through this area long enough to say hello. / But you could inspect the "bulges" even now, couldn't you? Hmm, no, that might be embarrassing...]]



ARNIE  
KATZ SAID  
I WAS OK  
FOR A  
NEO!

BUCK COULSON  
2677 W 500 N  
Hartford City IN 47348

Twink isn't the best fanzine I get, or the worst, and an editor always has complete control over his own publication.

Since I quit reading Gormenghast before I finished -- or got very far in -- the first book, I won't write a paragraph about it. In a word, I considered it turgid.

Never liked Malzberg's fiction, and never read Engines. Welch is wrong in one respect; the general reading public scorned SF -- especially the stories labelled as such -- until Star Trek appeared. Other movies and TV series were scorned as "kid stuff", and for the most part, were. ST, and the early U.S. experiments in space launches, gave the genre a veneer of respectability, as did the early Russian launches which scared the wits out of a lot of people.

Juanita's and my fanzine YANDRO started getting free review copies after I'd been reviewing for several months, and they built up to where I was getting more free books than I could read. I mentioned all of them, but there wasn't time for me to keep a job and still read 70 or 80 books in a three-month period. Then I was asked to review for Amazing Stories, and by the time it had one of its many collapses, I had another job with Comic Buyer's Guide (reviewing SF books, not comics). When I quit CBG, I wrote every publisher to let them know I was no longer reviewing -- and the books continued to arrive. When we picked up our mail after Inconjunction this week, there were ten review books in it. I don't mind...

[[We used to get a few review copies

from Baen, then they dumped us. Most of the books we're reviewing now were bought (not always new) or found at the library. We saw your reviews in Reluctant Famulus, Buck. If you ever have a review or two left over, we'll take them off your hands ...]]

There weren't many blacks in fandom when I got in, in the 1950's. Elliott Shorter was a BNF in New York, and there were a few others. They were generally accepted, at least outside the South, but while fans didn't object, hotels sometimes did. I was refused admittance to a convention hotel in Ohio because I had a black woman with me, in 1953. Later that year, a mixed group of six of us drove to the Philadelphia Worldcon with no problems; this time we checked with the hotel first. Most but not all of the blacks I see at cons today are Star Trek fans.

[[A valuable lesson there: that's what it was like in 1953 -- even in Ohio. The new Spike Lee film Four Little Girls is about the infamous Birmingham church bombing.]]

Well, Earth has a still-molten core; why not Ganymede? I know, it's smaller and farther away, so it should have cooled quicker. But we're still learning...

Juanita says I'm wrong about Worldcons; bids are for North America, not the U.S., and Toronto is in the central zone. Last I heard, however, Chicago has already won. I've been to all the Chicago Worldcons except the first one in 1940, and we'll go to this one if we're still around.

[[We were confused over that one too, but Joseph Major says Ontario is defined as Central. The current Toronto bid is for 2003, the next rotation after the Chicago Worldcon.]]



RODNEY LEIGHTON

RR #4, Box 477A

Amherst, Nova Scotia B4H 3Y2, Canada

Thanks for Twink #6 and the letters, received today; read today; answered today; hopefully LOCced today; mailed someday. How's that for a quick turn around?

You sound more and more like an editor, or maybe an editress. Editrix? Didn't just retire from F&SF by any chance? Never mind, identity is not that important. Except, I recently picked up about four old copies of that magazine and had a notion about writing something about them and including some comment about the editor. I have this terrible propensity for doing things which might be fun and amusing but might also be somewhat harmful. Such as making reference to Kristy Kathy Rusch. Which, I understand, would aggravate the lady. If she happens to be you.

[[Good grief, Charlie Brown! No, we are not Kristine Kathryn Rusch or anyone remotely of that stature. See the inside front cover. / The feminine of editor is: "editor".]]

Ah well, fun is fun. The Heinlein book is I Will Fear No Evil. I will start it someday; probably you will learn how I react to it.

[[We actually rather liked I Will Fear No Evil, though Steve Swartz does not share that opinion.]]

Lots of things happening in real life which are going to impact on what I do re: writing and reading. I seem to have a bunch of SF books lying about. I have sold this house and purchased another which is, to use a description used by my prospective employer, way back in the boonies. No realistic access to a library. The move and lack of work for three months is going to leave me in a financial hole. This has provided me with a nice launching pad from which to abandon self publishing. I have been thinking strongly about trying to foist whatever writing I do off onto any one rich and silly and desperate enough to publish it (grin)... I have considered, if you wish, trying to do something with that column. Not sure what yet, nor how I would obtain the books.

[[This might be an opportune moment for us to point out that while we're open to someone writing a column, it need not be



entirely about books. We're looking to expand the content of Twink into related areas. Tell us about what happened when the snake got loose in the art show, or when the elastic in your underwear broke during the masquerade.]]

I wasn't sure what you meant by, "And you people are confused about us?" Canadians confused about Americans? Mundanes confused about fans? Considering that WENDY'S is owned by a "he", why should you be so confused by a "he" owning AMY'S USED BOOKS?

[[WENDY'S is owned by a large corporation, but founder Dave Thomas, who still does TV commercials for the company, explicitly named it for his daughter. Sometimes we're just goofing on you, Rodney.]]

Murray Moore has had a different experience from me. Only Ask And Ye Shall Be Ignored fits better. But I think Murray is a recognizable name from the past... I was rather amazed at your comment that you get only 25% response to unsolicited copies sent out... I do wonder if you are a BNF from the past, and if you were using your real name, or the name you used then, the response would be greater? And maybe that is a reason for the anonymity? I have noticed that only certain people appear in a number of fanzines. I recall doing a survey once which covered about 50 fanzines. Joe Major appeared in about 70%; Harry Warner Jr. in 80-some%; Coulson in 68%. Most everyone else only showed up in one to five zines.

[[If we used our "real" name, the response would probably be less. At this writing -- late July -- #6 has not added anyone to the mailing list. Steve Swartz is new to the letter column but was on the mailing list as a trade. (See the review of Gasworks in the fanzine list.)]]

Unlike Margaret Simon, I have concluded that you are female. Unlike Taras, I did not always think so. Don't know why; it just seems that way. Thus I restrict my normal chauvinist pig comments and foul language. The female presence in fanzine fandom is not very strong. There are a number of female co-editors: Elizabeth Garrott, Nicki Lynch, Letha Welch. But female faned's who do their own zine? Name five quick.

[[Vicki Rosenzweig does an irregular personalzine, Quipu: that's the only one we get, and yes, we find that troubling.

/ That's two votes for "Frohvet" being female, two votes for male, and a bunch of people who apparently don't care.]]

I think you have done very well with a female presence. A few of Diana Harlan Stein's hot babes or some of Linda Michaels' self-portraits. Margaret Simon peeking through the jungle at the Great White North was the only art which did anything for me, although I admit to getting a huge chuckle from the Rotsler bit under my LOC.

[[We were saving that Rotsler for some-one new in the letter column, it just happened to be you. As to whether Margaret Simon's drawing was a self-portrait, we claim ignorance. Margaret? Comment?]]



JUDITH HANNA

15 Jansons Road, South Tottenham  
London N15 4JU, United Kingdom

Thank you for Twink, and for the nature cuttings. I was particularly interested in the Greenway/river path project. Citizens' action for environmental and social improvement is one of the things I work on -- next issue of our fnz may enlarge on it. It will materialize when (if?) life slows down sufficiently to write about what we're up to.

We won't be getting to the 1998 Worldcon -- but thanks for the offer to look after us if we did. We'll get to the Leeds Corflu -- hot (or should that be cold) on the heels of popping down to Australia to

visit my family. That will be our travel/convention budget for the year! Australia in Feb. is likely to be searing hot -- March in Leeds is likely to be freezing cold.

Enjoyed Kevin Welch's Malzberg essay, and your capable reviews -- which save the trouble of having to read current skiffy to keep up with what it's like. Re: "We Are All...", no doubt many others have noted that Colin Greenland's Plarty [[Editor's note: spelling?]] books assume a future in which people are generally coffee-colored. In the U.K., most black and Asian people now living here were born here, and so naturally, the neat ethnic monitoring categories are being complicated by people who want to identify themselves as "Black British", "Black Asian", or in some Tiger Woods fashion identifying their various strands of cultural/ethnic roots.

[[You're the first to mention the Greenland books; are they in print in the U.S.? / The U.S. Census is under pressure to adopt a "multi-racial" category. Ironically, the principal opposition is from the old-line black organizations, who see their "official" numbers, hence their influence, being diluted.]]

Come and visit if you get to Britain.  
[[Now there's an idea... ]]



MARGARET B. SIMON  
1412 NE 35th Street  
Ocala FL 34479

Thanks for the next Twink! Enjoyed the commentary "We're All African Anyway". I was trying to recall if I'd read any old SF/F books that featured blacks as main

characters or even as minor characters in a story. None came to mind. Sturgeon's Venus Plus X went beyond the barriers of sex and race, envisioning a culture that was bi-sexual, rather Nebbish in looks and either of the couple was able to bear children. I thought that book would rock the world. It rocked my world.

[[We felt that way about The Left Hand Of Darkness. Wonder if anyone's ever asked LeGuin if Sturgeon was an influence? The series about black characters will be continued at some point -- the third part exists in draft. It's just a matter of finding a place for it; we try not to have more than one of our own articles in an issue, and several are backlogged.]]

Re: Michael Whelan and art for sale: I know what you mean about finding a treasure and unable to get support to buy such. At ConFrancisco, there were affordable originals by the Dillons, as well as other famous SF/F artists. I am still kicking myself for not bidding on one, but I had to leave anyway before the art auction.

[[Editor's note: We had mentioned to Margaret seeing the original of Whelan's cover for The White Dragon in an art show for \$5,000; tried unsuccessfully to get up a syndicate to bid on it.]]

A Jest (acronymical apologies): Frohvet:  
Furthering Responsible Observations  
Homeward Via Extra Terrestrials.



· MICHAEL A. BURSTEIN  
P.O. Box 1713  
· Brookline MA 02146

Thanks for the last few issues of Twink. I've been reading your discussion of black characters in SF with some interest, because of my own fiction. You know I'm a new writer; my first published story, "Tele-Absence" (Analog July 1995, Hugo nominee 1996, plug plug) had a black boy as protagonist of the story.

What's odd about that, of course, is that I'm not black. I'm a white Jewish male, and although both my protagonist and I grew up in the same city, as I wrote the story I couldn't help but feel that I was co-opting some other group's experience. Oh, I don't agree with the argument that one should not write from the point of view of another race or sex, as that would eliminate a lot of good fiction. But as I wrote the story, I kept wondering if my portrayal was "accurate", if a black male reader would say that I got it right.

The truth, of course, is that it depends on the reader. One black friend of mine really got into the story and into my character; another didn't really feel that I had captured the essence of his experience at all.

But it is food for thought. Thanks for making me think with Twink.

[[You just have to go with what works at the moment. We had an experience, writing a story with a viewpoint character of one gender, when a character of the "opposite sex" suddenly leaped up and usurped the story. It came as a great surprise even to us, and we were writing it!]]

JOY V. SMITH  
3403 Providence Road  
Lakeland FL 33810

Thanks much for Twink (issue #6). I like the name, and that is a great cover. I would have liked Starkle a lot too. (I love James H. Schmitz and Witches Of Karres, Agent Of Vega, etc.)

[[Thanks! You seem to be the first who has actually got the title.]]

Sorry I won't be able to contribute to Twink special issue #7, as all I feel

about Gormenghast is ignorance.

Interesting article about Barry Malzberg. I feel as if I've gotten the flavor of the man and of the book (The Engines Of The Night). I appreciate the editor's note re: Ellison and Malzberg -- a little wearing.

Black characters in SF is an excellent idea for a series of articles. Don't forget Recoil by Claude and Rhoda Nunes.

[[Not familiar with that. Is it in print in the U.S.??]]

I enjoyed Margaret B. Simon's World Horror Con report. And there was a very nice selection of book and magazine reviews and LOC's.

I'll loc  
if you will!



TOM FELLER  
P.O. Box 68203  
Nashville TN 37206

[[Note change of address.]]

Thanks for sending the zine.

There is also a scene in Earth Abides by George R. Stewart in which the main character, having traveled halfway across North America, encounters a black family.

Strictly speaking, H. Rider Haggard did not write SF. However, some of his books are definitely fantasy and are set in Africa. Of his books that I have read, King Solomon's Mines presents the most sympathetic portrait of blacks. It's only fantasy by inference, however. The main character, Alan Quartermain, meets Ayesha (She Who Must Be Obeyed), definitely a fantasy character, in She And Alan.

[[There are some who would classify Haggard as fantasy. Some years ago Niekas, if we recall correctly, did a feature arguing Kipling, or some of his work, as SF/fantasy. We're not sure we agree on

either count, but it's worth arguing.]]

The reason that Mimosa is listed in the SFC Bulletin is that Dick and Nicki are former winners of the Rebel Award, given annually at DeepSouthCon. Recipients are chosen on the basis of their contribution to Southern fandom. This makes the Lynches dues-EXEMPT members of the Southern Fandom Confederation, and we consider them Southern fans no matter where they live. Furthermore, they started Mimosa when they were living in Chattanooga.

[[Ah well, something more we didn't know. We only got heavy into fanzine fandom in 1996, so we'll have to trust that veteran fans will continue to enlighten our ignorance.]]

In the new movie Men In Black, there is a remark about Dennis Rodman being an alien. One of the characters comments that he picked a poor disguise.

Keep up the good work!

[[Thank you. We suppose the rules of basketball stipulate that players must be human, so if Rodman were an alien, the Chicago Bulls ought to forfeit their recent NBA championship.]]

MURRAY MOORE  
377 Manly Street  
Midland, Ontario  
L4R 3E2, Canada

I like Sheryl Birkhead's cover for Twink #6 as much now, as I begin this letter, as when I saw it when I first removed #6 from its envelope. Starting with a pair of Rotsler alien heads, Sheryl did well. The cover is also collation proof. It can't be stapled to the rest of the issue upside down.

[[But then we would have had the editorials upside down. Of course some would say that's an improvement.]]

I haven't attended a Corflu, not because of lack of interest, but because of too much geography. There always is a lot of geography between where I am and where Corflu is. For instance, Corflu in 1998 will happen in Leeds, England. If you are seriously interested in hosting a Corflu, my understanding is, you, or a member of your host team, attends a Corflu, and make your pitch in person.

[[What we hear, unofficially, is: Florida in '99, Seattle in 2000. By the

time we got to be "next in line", we'd have lost interest. We have not given up on a con of some sort in Columbia MD but that idea is on the back burner.]]

I expect a pseudonymous fan would have a better chance winning TAFF, DUFF, or GUFF. If the fan was sufficiently brilliant in print, the fan in the host country might want to meet the mystery fan. Hosting a con is a more practical matter. What matters is that the host team is good at details, such as setting up enough chairs and remembering to reserve function space in the hotel.

[["Brilliant": well, that lets us out. TAFF/DUFF, etc, are for fans who can't afford to pay their own way. We'll vote on both to support worthy candidates.]]

I am not up on the intricacies of Worldcon bidding, such as in which years Toronto is eligible. I sat in on one of the Torcon 3 bid committee meetings last June. I can't imagine all these people would have put in as much work as they have, unless Worldcon can be held in Toronto in 2003.

[[The rotation is: East, West, Central. As several readers have already pointed out, Ontario is arbitrarily defined as being in Central Region, which is: 2000, 2003, 2006, etc.]]

I read Gormenghast, many years ago. I recall the experience as pleasant, the novel dense with detail. Further than that, deponent can say nothing. Barry Malzberg is a literary taste I have failed to acquire. Jack Vance, Philip K. Dick, Theodore Sturgeon, H.P. Lovecraft are authors enjoying the attention of special editions. R.A. Lafferty is getting some attention. He should be near the head of the line of couldn't-be-mistaken-for-anyone-else authors for a magnitude of greater attention.

Toronto in 2003.

LYN MCCONCHIE  
Farside Farm, R.D. Norsewood  
New Zealand

And herewith a LOC since I am between editing several books sold and have a spare couple of weeks. If one doesn't count finishing the lambing, the cow due to calve, writing letters, articles, short stories, and talking to half the area via

phone, fax, or back door. Some people STILL ask what I do all day out in an isolated rural area...

You mentioned in "We're All African Anyway", "George Stewart's now forgotten classic Earth Abides..." Hummm. It may be forgotten in the states but I assure you it isn't on this side of the world. I'd say pretty well every New Zealand and Australian fan would have a copy. I certainly do.

[[Interesting. Unless some small press has reissued it, Earth Abides has been out of print in the U.S. for years. We wonder why it should be so popular in New Zealand?]]

And Joseph Major's comment that Verne's research was often less than complete in which he then examples "the active volcano in North Carolina". Is Joseph saying there IS no active volcano or that he doesn't believe there could be one? Either way I'd be very careful making statements like that on volcanoes. I daresay people around Mt. St. Helen's had been saying similar things for years. Maybe Verne was simply postulating that a volcano there was active in "his world" for the purposes of the story. A bit like adding a new street, building, town area to set a mystery background where none of that actually exists. No one objects over an author who does that.

[[We're pretty sure there is no volcano in North Carolina. As for invention, if the plot hinges on, say, there being a police station next door to Carnegie Hall, some credibility will be lost by anyone who's been there and knows it isn't so.]]

As for the name of the zine. I don't find Twink either hard to pronounce or unusual. Why, well, to begin with I grew up in the era of "tinking out typing errors", and then too, the editor of the NZ Cat Fancy Yearbook, for which I write several articles each year, is also named Twink. And yes, it's her legal name. I enclose a page from the latest yearbook to prove that.

[[The lady's name is "Twink McCabe". And Guy Lillian III says his father once had a dog named Twink. We're beginning to feel more secure about the title -- at one point we thought about changing it.]]

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My fanac always slows in the summer due to the effect of high temperatures on my energy and thought processes. But the heat wave broke today; it's time to commit some fanac.

While it was hot, rather than operate my computer I devoted my evenings to catching up on reading the fanzines that had come in of late, including your own. I liked your use of paired Rotslers to make up a cover -- quite successful.

How I feel about Gormenghast? Frankly, I hadn't thought about this subject for decades until you brought it up, and I long ago parted with Peake's books. They were available in a paperback series from Ballantine, I think, in the 1950's... Disappointingly, if one is a Peake fan, I found them not at all involving and remember nothing about them.

[[The trilogy is in print in a new, one-volume trade paperback from Overlook Press. It's filed under "Literature", not SF, at least in Barnes & Noble.]]

Regarding your series "We're All African Anyway", one groundbreaking SF story with a black main character that you haven't mentioned so far is Ray Nelson's "Turn Off The Sky", which appeared in the August 1963 F&SF with that issue's cover illustration depicting him. This story read more contemporary than its pub date, having anticipated a lot of what was going to happen later in the 1960's...

[[We don't know that story.]]  
In the lettercol you write, "SF remains almost exclusively an English language phenomenon." This ignores vast quantities of SF written and published in French, Russian, and Japanese that I know of, and probably many other languages. Not all of it is translated from English.

[[No doubt some original SF is written in other languages; very little of it has penetrated the dominant (i.e. English language) SF market. How many fans at the average Worldcon come from non-English-speaking countries? As many as 100?]]

I've been publishing for nearly 40 years and I don't have, nor have I ever had, people from all 50 states on my mailing list. I don't have any Swiss fans on my list, but besides Canada and the U.K. I have readers in Australia, New Zealand, Sweden, France, and Lithuania.



Howard County (and other jurisdictions) are considering legislation to fine people for false burglar alarms. County police, who answered over 19,000 false alarms last year, are pushing for a \$100 fine for first offenses. Presently, businesses and homeowners have no motivation to correct alarms constantly going off due to systems defects or user error.

#### QUOTE OF THE DAY

"I have always had a love-hate relationship with SFWA anyhow. I feel that a writer's [sic] organization should have more to do than hand each other awards."

-- Marion Zimmer Bradley, editorial in MZBFM #34.

Story Project Update: Form rejection slip from Realms Of Fantasy. The name of editor Shawna McCarthy appeared thereon but that's no guarantee as to who read the story, assuming anyone actually did.

Last issue we alluded to the archangel Gabriel appearing on the Tarot card "The Lovers". Obviously our mind was elsewhere. Gabriel is on the card "Judgment"; the angel on "The Lovers" is Raphael. Sorry 'bout that, Chief...

Coming in "late Feburary" [sic]: "John-Con '98", on the Homewood campus of Johns Hopkins. We assume that's the University, not the medical school. From their flier we gather it's heavily gaming-oriented, though it says: panels, art show, dealers' room, movies...

Kremblon me, steerble arbeit vombish Boston? Yar isturbe kreeb Philadelphia?

Margaret Simon advises that the person referred to as "Doug Beason" in her World Horror Con report last issue is in fact Doug Winter. Also, the reference to Marilyn Monroe having been at the con hotel before her death was a joke. We all run into occasional glitches in research and proofreading.

Story Project Update, Continued: Our story was rejected by The Silver Web (Ann Kennedy, editor) -- form slip with "too traditional" scrawled on the bottom. We're starting to get bored with this; maybe we'll take a break and resume in the fall.

Useless Facts Dept.: The most common first name on our mailing list is "Steve", of which we have five. (Curiously, all go by "Steve", not "Steven".) Three Roberts; two each of Joseph, Elizabeth, and Thomas.

Have you noticed how people still speak of "dialing" the telephone even though phones don't have dials any more? Even the buttons retain the terminology: re-dial, speed-dial. We wonder how long this anachronism will remain in the language.

An article in Popular Mechanics suggests the famous 1947 Roswell "UFO" incident involved a real crash of a real, disc-shaped craft -- but that it was an Air Force project, built by conscript German and/or Japanese scientists. Our only hesitation at accepting PM's eminently sensible theory is to wonder: What does the government gain, all these years later, by continuing to promulgate blithering nonsense about "weather balloons" and "parachute test dummies"? Why not just admit the truth?

Y'know, you aren't required to wait until we yellow-flag your copy before responding. Pick something -- an article, a letter; take pen in hand and begin. This is not an essay contest; a publishable ¶ or two will keep us happy...

Okay, now there are three people on the mailing list who know who we "really" are. (Four if you count Elaine Stiles.) We did in fact meet with Steve Stiles at a local Burger Thing, and had a pleasant chat. Well, we enjoyed it, and Steve didn't seem too weirded out... Of course we swore him to secrecy regarding our "real" identity. The words "your wife" and "scalpel" were used... (Just kidding! Gack, we wonder about fans sometime...)