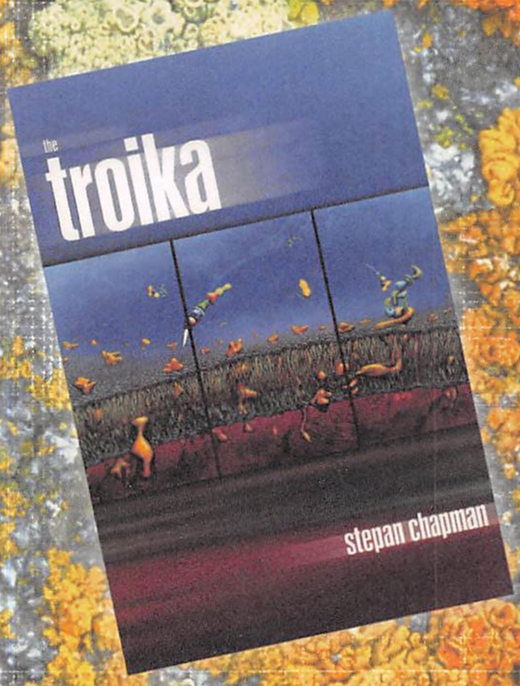
THE MINISTRY OF WHIMSY



THE TROIKA
Stepan Chapman

- 1997 Philip K. Dick Award Winner
  Locus Recommended Reading List
  Already in its second printing!
- *"A novel of rare power and beauty. Highly recommended."* - SFRA

  "A remarkable debut, with the imaginative power of Steve Erickson or Jonathan Lethem." - Interzone

  "A masterful dream voyage through realms of terror and strange beauty." - Asimov's SF Magazine

  "A genuinely original, funny, and eccentric novel." - Locus

ISBN 1-890464-02-3 256 page trade paperback
$14.99 postpaid

WORKS OF CONVULSIVE BEAUTY AND RELENTLESS IMAGINATION

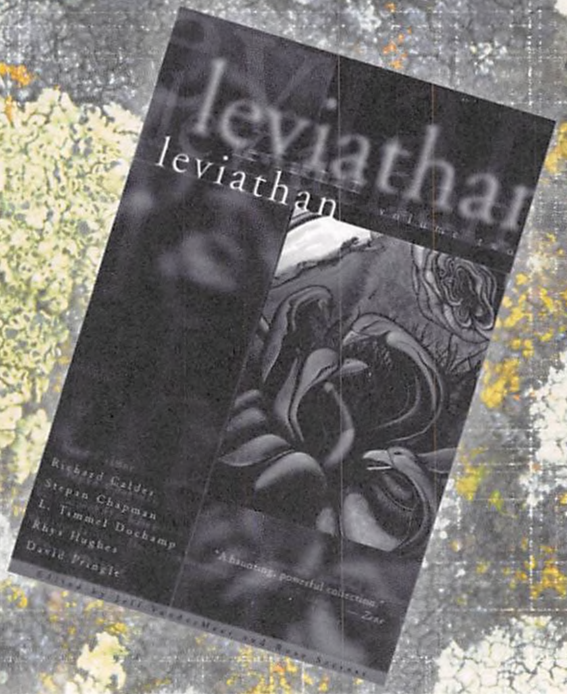
LEVIATHAN 2
Edited by Jeff VanderMeer and Rose Secrest

- FOUR ORIGINAL NOVELLAS BY
  Critically acclaimed novelist Richard Calder
  Philip K. Dick Award winner Stepan Chapman
  Tiptree Award runner-up L. Timmel Duchamp
  Welsh sensation Rhys Hughes
- Featuring an introductory essay by *Interzone* editor David Pringle and interviews with all four writers

PRAISE FOR LEVIATHAN 1

- *"One of the best collections of quality fiction at any level that I've seen in years."* - Tangent

ISBN 1-890464-03-1 192 page trade paperback
$11.99 postpaid



Order THE TROIKA and LEVIATHAN 2 together from *The Ministry of Whimsy* for only $24.00 postpaid. Send check or money order made out to "*Ministry of Whimsy Press*" to POB 4248, Tallahassee, FL 32315

Visit the Ministry of Whimsy's award-winning website. We're your internet nexus for fantastical literature, from interviews to reviews, essays to fiction, contests, and more... **www.mindspring.com/~toones/ministry.html**

Design: J Spinks 'J&TSpinks@nettally.com'

Contents

Notes from the Sofa 2

Bruce Sterling
Personal Appreciations 3
Bibliography 9

Lisa Goldstein
The Narcissus Plague 15
Personal Appreciations 19
Bibliography 23

Leigh Brackett
The Shadows 25
Personal Appreciations 33
Bibliography 38

Tiptree Awards
Fire in the North 41
Water off a Black Dog's Back 43
Never Mind the Bullocks... 55
Tip(Ping) the Balance 58
Seventh Annual Award List 59

Ten Years of Readercon
Introduction 61
Gene Wolfe 63
Philip K. Dick 65
Samuel R. Delany 67
John Crowley 69
Thomas M. Disch 76
Barry N. Malzberg 79
Michael Bishop 80
Richard Powers 81
Brian Aldiss 83
Judith Merill 84
Ursula K. LeGuin 86
Terri Windling 88
Cordwainer Smith 92
William Gibson 97
Larry McCaffery 98
Kim Stanley Robinson 102
Algis Budrys 105

The Readercon Committee 109

READERCON 10

Editors: Steve Pasechnik, David G. Shaw, B. Diane Martin

Design and Production: David G. Shaw, Belm Design. Text is set in Adobe Minion, titles set in FF Gothic. Pages were produced using Quark XPress 3.32 on a Power Macintosh 8100.

Cover painting by Richard Powers is used with the permission of the Richard Powers estate.

Notes From the Sofa

SOFA

Welcome to Readercon 10! Being members of a society that has a base-tennumeric system, the tenth Readercon has special significance to us. We'll be celebrating our accomplishments, both at the conference and in this special Souvenir Book.

All three of us have many fond memories of Readercons past. And it's not the big events that make Readercon special for us. Adina fondly remembers Readercon 1, where she heard so much laughter coming from the panel room, that she *had* to investigate that first Kirk Poland. Ellen was captivated one day at Readercon 8, when Hal Clement walked down the hall whistling the theme from *Masterpiece Theater*. Merryl remembers the stress and anxiety before Readercon 8, and the sense of *correctness* she felt on first viewing the Virtual Gibson.

It has been a great honor for us to have Readercon in our keeping these last two years. The world would be a sadder, lonelier place for us without this annual gathering. So with a tiny tear (and a *big* sigh of relief), we pass the position of Con Chair back to Diane Martin and on to Amy West. We'll also be turning Program Chair back to David Shaw and Eric Van, who ought to be all rested and refreshed from their time off. (Right guys?)

And about our hotel... For some time now, it has been clear that the space available in the Westborough Marriott has not been sufficient for much of our unique programming. Therefore, we have contracted to hold Readercon 11 at the Westin in Waltham, where there will be more space for readings, discussions, and other special events which we have not yet been able to offer. In addition, the hotel is more accessible to those of you who cannot get to Readercon by car.

If you are reading this at the convention, you have got a lot of great stuff to look forward to. If you are reading this afterwards, we hope you had a great time at Readercon 10!

Merryl Gross
Adina Adler
Ellen Brody

Readercon 10 Sofa

The Chairman of the Rad: Bruce Sterling

STERLING

by John Shirley

I'll tell you a dark secret about Bruce Sterling: if he'd been of Asimov's generation, he'd have been a Futurian. He'd have been a card carrying member of that combination Science Fiction fan club and writer's incubator that was so important to the future of the field. He'd have been a Futurian founding father like Damon Knight and Asimov and Van Vogt. At least for awhile. Unlike nowadays, when he appears as a glassy-smooth, sharp-dressed commentator, eerily articulate on CNN and The Learning Channel — back then he'd have been more or less like the other seminal Futurians, at first: gesticulating wildly with shaking hands, spraying spittle while stammering out titanic ideas. But Bruce is an evolver. He'd soon have turned the powerful suction of his perceptions outward, beyond the technophilic, space-fetishistic horizon, and taken in the rest of the world: he'd have absorbed the Angry Young Man thing, the proto-beats like Gertrude Stein, the Italian Futurists, the surrealists, the radical political theorists of the time and he'd have said: Science fiction could be so much more! The guys with tape holding their horn-rims together, wiping spit off their chins, would look at him owlishly and back away. And he'd then scowl and shrug and start, what, Sci-Cubism or something. "Sci-Cubism is science fiction cubed," the imaginary early-middle 20th century Sterling would write, "multiplied by all the factors to which it has so far been blinded by its brilliant but stunting myopia." Fanzine writers would've excoriated him — and he'd have responded with, say, a progressive zine maybe called "TRUTH IN HELL," some sort of mimeographed broadsheet, which would generate both outrage and a fervent following...

Illustration: The Java Boyz

The truth is, Sterling is at heart a Futurian. He is a born cognitive-intuitive prophet (as opposed to a mystical prophet), and he has an insatiable hunger for the sense of wonder. He refines that drug, the sense of wonder, out of the raw stuff of the indeterminate future.

His lust for the future is kind of disgusting at times, really. You can almost see him snorting with desire for it. The guy's got a hard-on for the future. It's sick, really.

No, a sci-fi nerd he may be on one level, but because he's cursed with both genius and vision, the Futurians wouldn't have been enough for him, because he's a guy of grand scope and capability, which has always excited in me a teeth-grinding envy.

Remember real correspondence? Remember letters?

Before we got caught up making money and spending quality time with kids and playing computer games and surfing internets and addicted to the compressive convenience of email?

I was looking at some old letters (actually typed on real paper) from Sterling, circa early-mid '80s. In one he describes trying to talk a reluctant William Gibson buying one of these new "word processor" things, like Bruce has. Bruce got one, of course, probably before he'd paid the rent.

His tone in the letters is like he is in person: challenging, brisk, tautly discursive, and often quite ruthless. Yet he was kind to me, encouraging me, though I think I was the older writer. I would write him tremulously insecure letters, childishly expecting wealth and fame overnight for my supposed literary gifts to the world, and Bruce would tell me that my time would come, and who cares what the science fiction world thinks...

But he also told me to stop whining. He'd tell me sharply and he'd tell me clearly. I was pretty young (Bruce was always way more mature than the rest of us, in certain ways) and I needed the wake-up calls (still do) and he knew it.

"... writers," he said, "are destined to be ruthlessly winnowed out by pitiless, long-term selective pressure."

STERLING

You can see this view of life in general, along with his insanely ambitious scope, in all his books, from *Involution Ocean*, and *The Artificial Kid* (wherein evolution is seen both as a cruel taskmaster and as a sort of existential redeemer), up through Holy Fire: life is a winnowing, and the universe is ruthless. Some of this view may derive from having lost his mother and sister in a plane crash, when he was young. Some of it may have come from the boyhood time he spent in India, where his father had employment: India's grinding poverty speaks eloquently of survival of the fittest. But in the same works there is always a vision of transcendence, a sense that the universe, though harsh and inscrutable, is not meaningless, and that the destiny of man has magnificence about it. In that sense Bruce has always had a glimmer of the 19th century Romantic about his work.

In his letters, way back when, Sterling would toss off remarks like this: "I did read the Roderick Jensen article in *American Scientist* on Classical Chaos. In fact I'm building up a substantial file on this topic and the related topics of complex dynamic systems, computer graphics, and cellular automata. I don't understand it yet but I do sense its importance. I don't think it has much to do with evolutionary theory, though its implications seem so fuzzy, so all encompassing, that I suspect chaos theory could be applied to almost anything. It strikes me as being a metaphor for the information age in much the same way that clocks and steam engines were universal metaphors for the times of Newton and Darwin. I don't think, as Rucker pretends to in his latest non-fic book *Mind Tools*, that the universe is a cellular automaton — anymore than the universe was a clock or a steam engine. But the imagery is already in the zeitgeist and the quality of the buzzwords is maximum primo ..."

The strange thing is, that's often the way he talks in person ...

And yes, we talked about cyberpunk. "The sort of recognition we have now, is nothing compared to what it might be if we were really in control of our topics and material. People hunger forthis stuff, they sense its importance, its value ..."

If there was, in those days, a bit of Lord Byron about Bruce there was also a fair amount of Mao Tse Tung. Not that he was ever even faintly a Communist — but he was and is a gleefully radical visionary, and he talked both jokingly and quite seriously, at once, about our "ideological axis" and the Movement (in science fiction), and was delighted when we began teasingly but affectionately calling him "Chairman Bruce."

Bruce is opinionated, you say? Even noisily so? A bit overbearing at times? Is it so?

Does the Pope launder mafia money? You bet. Let's face it, Bruce has a messiahnic streak, and he can talk the ontological pants off you, and he's a one-man soundbite factory and he's a charismatic son of a bitch and, yes, the guy could have been a successful politician (God help us) or cult leader if he'd wanted to. Luckily for the world, he chose the field of futurism.

Make no mistake: his status is not simply "famous science fiction writer". Despite landmark books like *Schizmatrix* and *Islands in the Net* and *Heavy Weather* and *Globalhead* and *Crystal Express* and *Holy Fire* — books that will be, in Gibson's words (in a letter to me after he read *Schizmatrix*, "ripped off by other science fiction writers for their ideas, for decades to come" — despite all that, the world perceives him increasingly as another, hipper Alvin Toffler. He's practically a guru over at *Wired* magazine, and he delivered killer soundbites on a recent TV special about infowar. He's invited to speak about computer crime and internet freedom all over the civilized world and in some places only marginally civilized.

Indeed, Bruce is often jetting around the globe. His lifestyle could become pretty heady, and maybe has, once or twice, but because he married Nancy, who's just as smart as he is (so he knows he can't get away with anything), and twice as steady, he always makes it safely back to the home he's built in his beloved Austin.

Illustration: The Jeep Zone

His popularity in Russia and other distant overseas venues may obtain from the fact that he personifies the Globalhead concept. While there's a lot of the Texan in Bruce, the motherfucker has always thought globally. He has a gift for getting into the mindsets of other cultures, and subcultures. Way before World Beat was around; Bruce

knew that the world would be united by the media, what we now call the internet, and he knew that it would be a marvelous paradox: both a unity and a bubbling pot of ever-emerging diversity. And he's championed that diversity, that plurality, that unity, all along.

Of course many SF writers saw a certain big dichotomy coming (still fully to manifest itself), but it was Bruce Sterling who articulated the dilemma so eloquently in the Shaper-Mech stories. And he predicted the use of viruses deliberately applied as medical tools long before other science fiction writers. Many of his predictions about bioengineering are, to put it simply, coming true.

The Stapledonian scope of a Bruce Sterling novel comes at you like that holy-grail of a storm his Storm Troupers pursued in *Heavy Weather* — too big to deal with sometimes, world-scaled, yet having direct impact on individuals: you'd better hold onto that particular lamp post, pal, or the wind will sweep you away. He evokes the big picture and then shows us just how it breaks up into the interacting pixels of everyday life.

Bruce Sterling's current work in progress is *Distraction*, his biggest novel yet, encompassing those strange bedfellows, science and politics. The book is bound to be conceptually groundbreaking: Bruce has created, and will continue to create, lush fields of paradigms that other writers will continue to graze on.

It's Bruce's world...but because he loves diversity, he lets us live there too.

STERLING

In Praise of Bruce Sterling

by Rudy Rucker

Bruce first entered my life in about 1982, via the U.S. mail. He sent me a review he'd written of my first two novels — for a free weekly newspaper in Austin — and he sent me copies of his first two novels *Involution Ocean* and *The Artificial Kid*. His review of my work was maybe the first good one that I'd gotten — as Bruce would say, "It scratched me where I itched." This Texas kid not only understood what I was trying to do, he thought I'd succeeded, and by God it gave me more courage to live. I read the two books Bruce sent me with delight, particularly *Involution Ocean*. The book's Melvillian saga of a crew of stoners on a planet of dust was wonderfully shaggy and wry. And it had a completely bizarre ending.

I met Bruce in the flesh at a science fiction convention in Baltimore in 1983. He was there with his wife Nancy, William Gibson, and Lew Shiner. And after the con they drove down to my house in Virginia. I was impressed by how familiar Bruce immediately seemed, how smooth and sarcastic and wonderful to listen to, all those weird radical opinions sliding out in his folksy, idiom-enriched Texian accent. His discourse is studded with colorful, arcane bits of knowledge and spiced with unexpectedly stark nihilism. Next to Bruce, I always feel shy and tongue-tied, especially on panels! I overcompensate by trying to talk even more than him, and everyone just waits for me to shut up so they can listen to the Sterling enchantment some more.

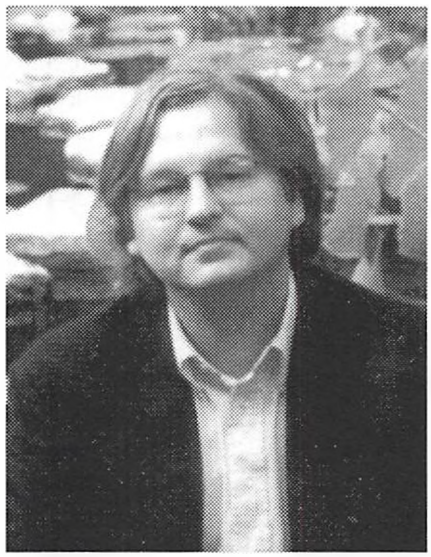
In the mid 1980s Bruce started putting out his zine *Cheap Truth* which served as a steady source of comfort for me. I was unemployed and living in Jerry Falwell's Lynchburg on less and less bucks per year and writing my own brand of science fiction as fast as I could for pathetically small advances and essentially no public recognition. But *Cheap Truth* cared, *Cheap Truth* believed. "Yes Rudy," *Cheap Truth* seemed to tell me, "You're right, and the magazines who won't buy your stories are run by fools. Continue to labor, oh my brother, and someday the Revolution will come."

And then William Gibson's *Neuromancer* hit big-time and the word cyberpunk came into play. I went to Austin in the summer of 1985 to be on

STERLING

what was, I think, the first-ever SF con panel on "Cyberpunk," along with John Shirley, Bruce, Lew Shiner, Pat Cadigan, and Greg Bear. Shirley and I stayed at Bruce's house. I remember sitting around with them and watching a video of the British pilot episode for Max Headroom, and thinking, "Man, this is real, this is out in the world, we've got a tiger by the tail." To make it the more perfect, Bruce had a tinker-toy early computer painfully computing increasingly detailed zooms of the Mandelbrot set, using a Basic program written by none other than Charles Platt. It was clear that the new frontier of SF was right here in Sterling's apartment, not out in some space-capsule with a bunch of Republikkkan astrotuf astronauts.

Around the same time, Bruce and I wrote our first science fiction collaboration, "Storming the Cosmos," which can be found in Bruce's excellent story collection *Globalhead.* It's about the Tunguska event. We took off on Bruce's fascination with things Soviet; he dug up a great trove of research information to use. A few years later we did another story together, "Big Jelly," not yet collected in any anthology, but even better. Though it's not my favorite thing to admit, I think "Storming the Cosmos" and "Big Jelly" are just about the two best stories I ever did (and probably my other best story is "Probability Pipeline," which I wrote with Marc Laidlaw). I'm not sure this would hold at the novel length, but at the short-story length, working with another author adds an lot of texture. Like, you know how sometimes writers say "after a while, my characters start deciding what they want to do"? Imagine what it's like if some of your characters are having scenes for them written by Bruce Sterling!



One of the remarkable things about SF writing is that it does lend itself so well to collaboration, I think much more so than does "straight" fiction. The reason might be that in SF we're actually writing about something "real" rather than just a bunch of been-there-done-that emotions. We're on a quest, man, seeking out a great vision of bizarrerie and, just like real scientists, we sometimes work in teams. Like Bruce and William Gibson thinking about steam-based computers in Victorian England in *The Difference Engine.*

Bruce's novels keep getting better. Schismatrix was a really important book for me, it had so many wonderful things in it; in my mind I can't really distinguish it from the Mech/Shaper stories in his *Crystal Express* collection. Within that collection, the incredible "Twenty Evocations" cooks the whole mythos right down into a spoonful. A perfect story. I still like to think about Mechs and Shapers and get confused about which trends in today's society are which. Is Bill Gates, for instance, a Mech or a Shaper?

Digging out my old hardback of *Schismatrix,* I find a page corner turned down and a passage marked by a thumbnail line in the margin. "Ecstasy seized him. He pressed his face against the tree, sobbing in frenzy, torn with deep visionary rapture. As his mind coalesced he burned with insight, a smoldering oneness with this living being. Helpless joy pervaded him as he joined its serene integration." Hmm, yes, I can definitely relate.

Islands in the Net made a tremendous impression on me. Towards the end there is a tribe of Tuareg guerillas singing a song that keeps alive the history and survival knowledge of their tribes. "We must be the friends of the grass,/We must apologize to it and treat it kindly,/it's enemies are our enemies,/We must kill the cow and the sheep ... /We will buy Iron Camels from GoMotion Unlimited in Santa Clara California."

A few years later I wrote a book called *The Hacker and The Ants.* Here's a sentence from that book, "My current job was with GoMotion Incorporated of Santa Clara, California. GoMotion got its start selling kits for a self-guiding dune buggy called the Iron Camel." I don't know that anyone but Bruce ever noticed this.

Fortunately it's a two-way street. While he was working on *Heavy Weather,* Bruce and I went to Monterey together to be on a panel for a computer group called SIGCHI. And Bruce kept talking about tornadoes and about how he wanted to come up with some really ultimate monster F-6 tornado. So I told him about how in fluid dynamics a vortex has to be a thread that has each of its ends on a boundary (such as the ground and the top of the atmosphere) — but that it's also possi-

ble to bend the thread around into a loop and get a vortex ring. So I think that's where Bruce got the idea for his F-6, a tornado whose top and bottom connect into a ring making a giant torus. "Oklahoma City seems to be under siege by a giant doughnut."

When I read that, I called Bruce up and said, "Did you get that idea from me?" And he said, "Of course, man. That's why I hang with you." And I felt really good.

Holy Fire is another great novel, this one about an extremely old woman who gets a radical rejuvenation treatment and becomes a beautiful twenty-year-old. Due to this radical change in her body she is no longer human in the old sense of the word; she's post-human. Other SF writers have come up against the task Bruce faces here, how to depict people after technology has made them into superhuman; I would say that no other writer has ever succeeded so well. Here's one of his statements about post-humans: "Machines just flitted through the fabric of the universe like a fit through the brain of God, and in their wake people stopped being people. But people didn't stop going on." Awesome.

Bruce tells me he's finished another novel and is at work on the one after that which will be, I think, novel number nine. Fortunately I'm eight years older than him, so I have a bit of a head start and I'm working on number eleven. Knowing Bruce is coming up on me keeps me honest, keeps me writing hard, makes the game worth playing. Really it hasn't changed all that much since the only one reviewing my books was Bruce in the free Austin newspaper. It's a joy and an honor to be the friend and colleague of such a great writer and of — shucks — such a swell guy. Thanks, Bruce, for your books, your leadership, and your wonderful flow of spoken words.

STERLING

A Sterling Bibliography

STERLING

Compiled by Bob Ingria

Novels and Other Book Length Works

Involution Ocean
Jove, 1977

The Artificial Kid
Harper & Row, 1980

Schismatrix
Arbor House, 1985

Islands in the Net
First US edition: Morrow/Arbor House, 1988
First UK edition: Legend, 1988

The Difference Engine (with William Gibson)
First UK edition: Gollancz, 1990
First US edition: Bantam Spectra, 1991

Heavy Weather
First US edition: Bantam Spectra, 1994
First UK edition: Millennium, 1994

Holy Fire
First UK edition: Orion, 1996
First US edition: Bantam Spectra, 1996

Schismatrix Plus
Ace, 1996
Ominibus collection of the novel *Schismatrix* and several short works originally collected in *Crystal Express*

Distraction
TOR, forthcoming

Nonfiction

The Hacker Crackdown: Law and Disorder on the Electronic Frontier
First US edition: Bantam, 1992
First UK edition: Penguin, 1994

Short Story Collections

Crystal Express
First US edition: Arkham House, 1989
First UK edition: Legend, 1990

Globalhead
First US edition: Mark V. Ziesing, 1992
First UK edition: Millennium, 1994

Edited Collections

Mirrorshades: The Cyberpunk Anthology
First US edition: Arbor House, 1986
First UK edition: Paladin, 1988

Short Stories and Novellas

Each story is given with its first publication. Those stories that have been collected are also followed by the name(s) of the collection(s) in which they appear:
MS = *Mirrorshades: The Cyberpunk Anthology*
CE = *Crystal Express*
GH = *Globalhead*

Man-Made Self
Lone Star Universe: Speculative Fiction and Fantasy from Texas, eds. George W. Proctor and Steven Utley, Heidelberg, 1976

Swarm
F&SF April, 1982, CE

Spider Rose
F&SF August, 1982, CE

Spook
F&SF April, 1983, CE

Cicada Queen
Universe 13, ed. Terry Carr, Doubleday, 1983, CE

Red Star, Winter Orbit (with William Gibson)
Omni July, 1983
Burning Chrome, William Gibson, Arbor House, 1986, MS

Twenty Evocations (also as 20 Evocations, and Life in the Mechanist/Shaper Era: 20 Evocations)
Interzone #7 Spring, 1984
Mississippi Review #47/48, 1988, CE

Sunken Gardens
Omni June, 1984, CE

Telliamed
F&SF September, 1984, CE

Dinner in Audoghast
Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine May, 1985, CE

The Unfolding (with John Shirley)
Interzone #11, 1985

Mozart in Mirrorshades (with Lewis Shiner)
Omni September, 1985, MS

Green Days in Brunei
Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine October, 1985, CE

The Compassionate, the Digital
Interzone #14 Winter 85/86, GH

Storming the Cosmos (with Rudy Rucker)
Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine mid-December, 1985, GH

STERLING

The Beautiful and the Sublime
Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine June, 1986, CE

Flowers of Edo
I*saac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine* May, 1987 first published in Japanese in *Hayakawa's Science Fiction Magazine*, CE

The Little Magic Shop
Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine October, 1987, CE

The Gulf Wars
Omni February, 1988, GH

Our Neural Chernobyl
F&SF June, 1988, GH

Dori Bangs
Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine September, 1989, GH

We See Things Differently
Semiotext(e) #14, 1989, GH

The Sword of Damocles
Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine February, 1990, GH

The Shores of Bohemia
Universe 1, ed. Robert Silverberg & Karen Haber, Doubleday Foundation, 1990, GH

How We Won the War on Drugs (with Lewis Shiner)
Penthouse Hot Talk March, 1990

The Angel of Goliad (with William Gibson)
Interzone #40, 1990

Latter-Day Martian Chronicles
Omni July, 1990

Hollywood Kremlin
F&SF October, 1990, GH

Jim and Irene
When the Music's Over, ed. Lewis Shiner, Bantam Spectra, 1991, GH

Mare Tranquillitatis People's Circumlunal Zaibatsu: 2-1-'16 (excerpt from *Schismatrix)*
Storming the Reality Studio, ed. Larry McCaffery, Duke University Press, 1991

The Moral Bullet (with John Kessel)
I*saac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine* July, 1991, GH

The Unthinkable
F&SF August, 1991, GH

Are You For 86?
Globalhead, 1992

Sacred Cow
Omni January, 1993

Deep Eddy
Asimov's August, 1993

Memo from Turner
The Wild Palms Reader, ed. Roger Trilling & Stuart Swezey, St. Martin's, 1993

Big Jelly (with Rudy Rucker)
Asimov's November, 1994

The Littlest Jackal
F&SF March, 1996

Bicycle Repairman
Intersections, ed. John Kessel, Mark L. Van Name & Richard Butner, Tor, 1996

Cheap Truth

From 1983 through 1986, under the name Vincent Omniaveritas, Sterling wrote and edited 18 issues of "Cyberpunk's one-page propaganda organ" (his characterization), *Cheap Truth*. The following entries give a complete table of contents for each issue. Issue numbering and capitalization follow the original texts.

Cheap Truth One
Quest for Decay
Cheap Truth Top Ten

Cheap Truth 2
Editorial: "Dirt Cheap Literary Criticism with The Honesty Of Complete Desperation"
Public Shudders At "Best of the Year"
Raging Diatribe From Our New York Correspondent
"Best of the Year" Reprise: Europe Reels
Cheap Truth Top Ten

Cheap Truth 3
Barrington Bayley Retrospective
Interview with the Martyr

Cheap Truth 4
Reptile News
Cheap Truth Top Ten (Nonfiction Special)

Cheap Truth 5
Editorial: "Exploring a 21st Century Pop Ideology"
Mom Said It Was Okay
Sf and Rock Videos

Cheap Truth 6
Ice Cracks Up with '83 Best Of The Year
SF: A Rhapsody. After Swift

Cheap Truth 7
Squirming Mags
State of the Field
The Tech-Head's Workshop

Cheap Truth 8
Real Sf Fans Don't Read Priest
Clarke: A Social Study

Cheap Truth 9
Editorial: Ghettos Are Insular Places.
Squirming Mags: Second Installment
Social and Political Issues
Gripe Time

Cheap Truth 10
How the Other Half Reads
Son of Kent State

Cheap Truth 11
Sf Writer Eats Own Foot To Survive!
Cheap Truth Raymond Chandler Interview

Cheap Truth 12
Punk Postures
This Year's Model

Cheap Truth 13
Pop Agitprop

Cheap Truth 14
Cheap Truth Tours Central America with Sue Denim
And Now For That Popular Feature, "Ask Sue"

Cheap Truth 15
Editorial: Science Fiction Today Is In A Rare State of Ferment.
Report On the Sophomore Class Dress Code by Hunilla De Cholo
Cheap Truth Top Ten

Cheap Truth 16
Editorial: How Stands The Empire?
Fault-Line Skirmishing by Phaedrus
Pilgrimage To Node Zero by Seth L. Lapcart
Cheap Truth Top Ten (With Helpful Quotes from Locals)

The Last *Cheap Truth*
"Node Zero" Demolished! Omniaveritas Shot! (Austin, Texas November 1986)

Cheap Truth Special Unnumbered Edition
Sturgeon: Mercury Plus X (Brian Aldiss)

Articles and Essays

The New Science Fiction
Interzone #16, 1986

Max Headroom
Stardate January/February, 1986

Preface
Burning Chrome, William Gibson, Arbor House, 1986

Preface
Mirrorshades: The Cyberpunk Anthology, ed. Bruce Sterling, Arbor House, 1986

Preface from *Mirrorshades*, 1986
Storming the Reality Studio, ed. Larry McCaffery, Duke University Press, 1991

Catscan: Midnight on the Rue Jules Verne
Science Fiction Eye #1, Winter, 1987

Catscan: The Spearhead of Cognition
Science Fiction Eye #2 August, 1987

Catscan: Updike's Version
Science Fiction Eye #3 March, 1988

Catscan: The Agberg Ideology
Science Fiction Eye #4 August, 1988

Jack Womack's Terraplane
New York Review of Science Fiction Issue #3, November, 1988

Catscan: Slipstream
Science Fiction Eye #5 July, 1989

Responses to Kathryn Cramer's article "The New Generation Gap"
New York Review of Science Fiction Issue #12 August, 1989

Introduction
Axolotl Special #1, ed. John C. Pelan, Pulphouse/Axolotl, 1989

Introduction
Patterns, Pat Cadigan, Ursus, 1989

David S. Garnett's *Zenith: The Best in New British Science Fiction*
New York Review of Science Fiction Issue #13, September, 1989

Catscan: Shinkansen
Science Fiction Eye #6 March, 1990

Beyond the Feebs We Know
Science Fiction Guide #16, May, 1990

The Movement of Misconceptions
Going GaGa No. 6, May, 1990.

Signal
Interzone #37, 1990

Catscan: My Rihla
Science Fiction Eye #7 August, 1990

A Workshop Lexicon (revised and expanded from The Turkey City Lexicon, with Lewis Shiner)
Interzone #39, 1990

Cyberspace™
Interzone #41, 1990

Precessing the Simulacra for Fun and Profit
Monad: Essays on Science Fiction #1, ed. Damon Knight, Pulphouse, 1990

Catscan: Cyber-Superstition
Science Fiction Eye #8 Winter, 1991

The Cyberpunk Bust
Interzone #44 February, 1991

STERLING

STERLING

New Maps of Bohemia
Forbidden Lines April/May, 1991
condensed from a talk given at Chimeracon VII, March 3, 1991.

Postmodern Palaeontology
Interzone April, 1991

Cyberpunk in the Nineties
Interzone June, 1991
Aboriginal SF July/August, 1991

Get the Bomb Off My Back (op-ed piece)
New York Times October 13, 1991

Holding the Invisible Hand
Vector No. 164, 1991.

Catscan: Digital Dolphins in the Dance of Biz
Science Fiction Eye #9 November, 1991

Catscan: A Statement of Principle
Science Fiction Eye #10 June, 1992

Outer Cyberspace
F&SF June, 1992

Buckymania
F&SF July, 1992

Think of the Prestige
F&SF September, 1992

Comics
Science Fiction Age November, 1992

Catscan: Sneaking for Jesus 2001
Science Fiction Eye #11 December, 1992

Artificial Life
F&SF December, 1992

Internet
F&SF February, 1993

War Is Virtual Hell
Wired 1.01 February, 1993

Magnetic Vision
F&SF April, 1993

Superglue
F&SF June, 1993

Catscan: Return to the Rue Jules Verne
Science Fiction Eye #12 Summer, 1993

Introduction
SPASM: Virtual Reality, Android Music, And Electric Flesh, Arthur Kroker, St. Martin's Press, 1993

"Creation Science"
F&SF August, 1993

Robotica, 1993
F&SF October/November, 1993

Watching the Clouds
F&SF January, 1994

Spires on the Skyline
F&SF March, 1994

Catscan: Electronic Text
Science Fiction Eye #13 Spring, 1994

Compost of Empire
Wired 2.04 April, 1994

The New Cryptography
F&SF May, 1994

The Dead Collider
F&SF July, 1994

Idees Fortes: So, People, We Have a Fight on Our Hands
Wired 2.07 July, 1994

The Artificial Body
F&SF October/November, 1994

Triumph of The Plastic People
Wired 3.01 January, 1995

Bitter Resistance
F&SF February, 1995

Electrosphere: Good Cop, Bad Hacker
Wired 3.05 May, 1995

Embrace Your Weird
Nova Express Volume 4, Number 1, Spring/Summer 1995

Idees Fortes: The Aleph
Wired 4.01 January, 1996

Catscan: Memories of the Space Age
Science Fiction Eye #14 Spring, 1996

About "Our Neural Chernobyl"
Paragons, ed. Robin Wilson, St. Martin's, 1996

Netizen: Merchants of Venom
Wired 4.05 May 1996

Is Phoenix Burning?
Wired 4.07 July 1996

Foreword
The Exploded Heart, John Shirley, Eyeball Books, 1996

Introduction
Schismatrix Plus, Ace, 1996

Greetings From Burning Man
Wired 4.11 November, 1996

Art and Corruption
Wired 6.01 January, 1998

The Spirit of Mega
Wired 6.07 July, 1998

Speeches and Other Online Texts

This section includes the transcripts of speeches and other texts by Sterling that are available online, but not in print form. It is not, however, an exhaustive list of online versions of published texts. Most of these texts are available, either directly or via links, at:
http://lonestar.texas.net/~dub/sterling.html

Cyberview '91
1991

The Wonderful Power of Storytelling
Computer Game Developers Conference, San Jose, CA, March, 1991

GURPS' Labour Lost
Updated version of The Cyberpunk Bust, for dissemination by the Electronic Freedom Foundation, 1991

The Truly Malicious Hacker
2nd Conference on Computers, Freedom, & Privacy, Washington, DC, March, 1992
Available on Videocassette from Computers, Freedom & Privacy Video Library Project, Topanga, CA

Free as Air, Free As Water, Free As Knowledge
Library Information Technology Association, San Francisco, CA, June, 1992
also published in *Thinking Robots, An Aware Internet, And Cyberpunk Librarians: The 1992 LITA President's Program*, eds. R. Bruce Miller and Milton T. Wolf, Library and Information Technology Association Chicago, Illinois, 1992

Bruce's Suggested Periodicals
circa January, 1993

Opening Statement to the House Subcommittee on Telecommunications and Finance
Washington DC, April 29, 1993

License to Dream (with William Gibson)
Convocation on Technology and Education, National Academy of Sciences, Washington DC, May 10, 1993

Excerpts from interview with Bruce Sterling on ABC/Australia's Attitude program
September 8, 1993

We're All In This Together, Aren't We?
Association of Research Libraries, November, 1993

Remarks: When Copying isn't Theft
Computers, Freedom, and Privacy Conference IV, Chicago, March 26, 1994

The Virtual City
Rice Design Alliance, Houston, Texas, March 2, 1994

Science or Fiction
American Center for Design "Living Surfaces" Conference, San Francisco, October, 1994

Speech
High Technology Crime Investigation Association, Lake Tahoe, November, 1994

The Dead Media Manifesto: A Modest Proposal and Public Appeal
1995

The Life and Death of Media
Sixth International Symposium on Electronic Art (ISEA '95), Montreal, September 19, 1995

Lifelike Characters
Computer Characters '95, Snowbird, Utah, September 29, 1995

Speech (with William Gibson)
School of Information Studies, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY

Interview by e-mail by Cyril Fiévet
Cybersphere, October, 95

Transcript of Club Wired chat session
November, 1995

Ask Bruce Sterling
Sterling's answers to questions submitted to the Ask A Texan feature of *Texas Monthly Online*, February 8 through 15, 1996

Welcome Note for Sterling's Dead Media Mailing List
June 28, 1996

State of the Digital Nation
Vancouver, BC, Summer, 96

Bruce Sterling's Cyberpunk Canon
Bruce Sterling's Idea of What Every Well-Appointed "Cyberpunk SF" Library Collection Should Possess (circa August 1996)

Denise Caruso interviews Bruce Sterling for The Site (transcript)
MSNBC, September, 1996

Transcript of Club Wired chat session
November, 1996

Sterling Versus Virus Writers
IBM's antivirus online Web site, January 10, 1997
http://www.av.ibm.com

Chatting with Bruce Sterling at LoneStarCon 2 by Thomas Myer
SF Site Interview, August 29, 1997

Interview by Ernest Lilley (originally broadcast on the Sci-Fi Talk radio show)
SFRevu, October, 1997

STERLING

Closing Speech
Computers, Freedom, and Privacy Conference 1998, Austin Texas, February 20th, 1998

The Future? You Don't Wanna Know
Hotwired (no date)

Brief Interview with Bruce Sterling by Jay Patton
Central Arizona SF Society (no date)

Casino Economics and the New World Disorder
MIT, Cambridge (no date)
Available on Videocassette from Computers, Freedom & Privacy Video Library Project, Topanga, CA

Interviews

Bruce Sterling by Andy Robertson & David Pringle
Interzone #15, 1986

Interview by Takayuki Tatsumi
Science Fiction Eye #1, Winter, 1987

Bruce Sterling by Don Webb
New Pathways August, 1987

Bruce Sterling by Charles N. Brown
Locus v21:5 No.328 May, 1988

Coming in Under the Radar (interview by Jude Milhon)
Mondo 2000, No. 7, Fall 1989

An Interview with Bruce Sterling
Across the Wounded Galaxies: Interviews with Contemporary American Science Fiction Writers, Larry McCaffery, Editor, University of Illinois Press, 1990.

Bruce Sterling by Charles N. Brown
Locus v26:5 No.364 May, 1991

Bruce Sterling Interview by Jon Lebkowsky
bOING-bOING #9, May, 1992

"The Cops and Hackers Can Go to Hell" by Tim Concannon
Interzone May, 1994

Under Heavy Weather: An Interview with Bruce Sterling conducted by Dwight Brown, Lawrence Person and Michael Sumbera
Nova Express Volume 4, Number 1, Spring/Summer, 1995

Bruce Sterling: Unstable Networks by Charles N. Brown
Locus v36:5 No.424 May, 1996

Immaculate Perception by Marc Savlov
The Austin Chronicle, April 97, vol 16, issue 33, April 18—24, 1997

Critical Studies and Reviews

Schismatrix
Faren Miller, *Locus* v18:5 No.292 May, 1985

Mirrorshades: The Cyberpunk Anthology
Faren Miller, *Locus* v19:11 No.310 November, 1986

Islands in the Net
Faren Miller, *Locus* v21:5 No.328 May, 1988

The Wars of the Coin's Two Halves: Bruce Sterling's Mechanist/Shaper Narratives
Tom Maddox, *Mississippi Review* #47/48, 1988

Bibliography of Bruce Sterling
L. W. Currey, *New York Review of Science Fiction* Issue #13, September, 1989

Crystal Express
Dan Chow, *Locus* v23:3 No.344 September, 1989

The Difference Engine
Tom Whitmore, *Locus* v25:3 No.356 September, 1990

The Difference Engine
Russell Letson, *Locus* v25:5 No.358 November, 1990

The Difference Engine
Glenn Grant, *Science Fiction Eye* #8 Winter, 1991

Difference Dictionary
Eileen Gunn, *Science Fiction Eye* #8 Winter, 1991

The Difference Engine
Edward Bryant, *Locus* v26:6 No.365 June, 1991

The Hacker Crackdown: Law and Disorder on the Electronic Frontier
Russell Letson, *Locus* v29:3 No.380 September, 1992

Globalhead
Mark R. Kelly, *Locus* v30:1 No.384 January, 1993

Heavy Weather
Russell Letson, *Locus* v33:3 No.404 September, 1994

Heavy Weather
Nova Express Volume 4, Number 1, Spring/Summer, 1995

Bruce Sterling: A Bibliography, compiled by Lawrence Person and Bruce Sterling
Nova Express Volume 4, Number 1, Spring/Summer, 1995

Holy Fire
Gary K. Wolfe, *Locus* v37:3 No.428 September, 1996

Holy Fire
Russell Letson, *Locus* v37:3 No.428 September, 1996

The Narcissus Plague

by Lisa Goldstein

GOLDSTEIN

The man in the tollbooth had the Narcissus Plague. "We moved when I was nine," he said earnestly. I held my dollar out to him. watched it sway in the breeze. "My dog never did get used to the new house. One day he got out and chased the mailman up a tree. No one was home, and the neighbors had to call the police..."

Finally he took my money and I sped away. A minute later I looked in my rearview mirror and saw that the car after me was stall trapped at the booth. A narrow escape, I thought. I checked my oxygen mask and surgical gloves and hurried toward the newspaper office where I work.

I parked in the lot and rode the elevator up to my floor. "Hi, Amy, how are you?" my editor, Thomas, asked. This is the only way we greet each other now. It's meant to assure other people that we can still take an interest in them, that we don't have the plague.

"Fine, how are you?" I said. He followed me down the hall toward my cubicle.

"Hi, guys," my co-worker Gary said, heading toward his desk. "I stayed up all last night working on that article you wanted, Thomas."

We turned and watched him go. If it had been anyone else in the office we would have worried about the plague. but Gary has talked about nothing but himself for as long as any of us can remember.

"Listen — I've got an assignment for you," Thomas said. 'Someone at one of the labs says she's come up with a cure."

"A cure? You're kidding me," I said.

"I'm not, but it's possible she is. That's what I want you to find out. Her name's Dr. Leila Clark."

He gave me the doctor's address and phone number, and I hurried to my desk to call. To my annoyance an answering machine came on. "Hello, you've reached the office of Dr. Leila Clark. We can't answer your call right now, but if you leave your name and number I'll get back to you just as soon as I go visit my boyfriend. He said he was going to break up with that other woman, but I bet he hasn't done it. He's been saying he'll break up with her since last winter, when I caught them at our favorite restaurant together — "

I hung up. The chances for a cure did not look good.

The lab turned out to be on the other side of the park from the newspaper's offices. The sun had risen above the clouds; it was turning into a warm, beautiful day. I decided to walk.

The fountain in the center of the park was stagnant, green algae lapping at the rim. Its filtering mechanism had clogged; it was making strange mechanical whimpering noises as it tried to get the water to circulate. The person responsible for fixing it probably had the plague, I thought. It only took about a week for the virus to render you unfit for anything but talking about yourself. Things were breaking down all over the city.

The Narcissus Plague had not always been this virulent. Ten or twenty years ago people talked about the Me Generation, the Greed Decades as if those things were normal, just human nature. But about six months ago the virus mutated, became far stronger. Shortly after that a team of doctors isolated the virus they think is responsible for the plague.

My boyfriend Mark was one of the first victims of the more virulent strain. At the time I had no idea what was happening to him; all I knew was that he had changed from the concerned, caring man he had once been. "What makes you think I'd be interested in your old girl friends?" I'd asked him angrily, over and over again, and, "Why don't you ever ask me how my day went? Why do we always have to talk about you?" Now he lives with his mother, sitting in his old room and talking eagerly to anyone who comes by. I try to visit him about once a week.

I came to the end of the park, found the laboratory offices, and went inside. The receptionist area was deserted, but I heard laughter and cheering from somewhere within. I went past the receptionist's desk and down a hallway, following the sounds. A group of men and women were gathered in one of the offices. Glasses and bottles of champagne lay strewn across the desk; they had probably gone back to their offices and quickly lifted their oxygen masks for a celebratory drink.

A woman turned toward me. She was young, with blond hair braided down her back and a white lab coat with "Leila Clark" stitched on the pocket. "Hello, Dr. Clark, how are you?" I said. "I'm Amy Nunes. The paper sent me — "

"How are you?" the woman said. "I'm Debra Lowry." Her voice sounded a little slurred, but even so I thought that I've heard it before. She looked down at her lab coat and laughed a little

GOLDSTEIN

too loudly. "Oh, sorry — we've been celebrating. This is Dr. Clark."

Another woman detached herself from the group. She looked more like someone who'd made a major medical discovery, a woman in her mid-forties, with long black hair streaked with gray and tied back in a ponytail. "Hello, how are you?" she said. "I sent word to all the papers, but you're the only one who seems to have shown up. I suppose everyone else must be out with the plague." She stretched out a gloved hand, realized she was still holding a champagne glass, and set the glass down.

"I tried calling — " I said. I shook her hand, glove touching glove.

"Things have been a little hectic here," she said. She took a folder from a stack on the desk and gave it to me. "Here — this handout will give you the details."

I opened the folder; it had the kind of scientific detail so beloved by our science section. I took out my tape recorder and turned it on. "You say this is a cure for the plague?

"Yes."

"But how can you be sure it works?"

"Everyone I've treated so far has recovered." Dr. Clark played with the champagne glass on her desk. "You see, I was almost certain I'd discovered a cure, but I needed subjects to test it on. Of course we couldn't experiment with animals — they don't seem to get the plague, or if they do, it takes a form we can't understand, since they don't communicate by using language. So I asked everyone working here if they would sign release form." She waved her hand, nearly knocking over the glass. They all agreed that if they got the plague, I could administer the drug. Our receptionist Debra was one of the people who manifested symptoms."

Debra nodded. "So she gave me a pill — "

"You're the one who did the answering machine message!" I said, recognizing her voice.

"Oh my God!" Debra said, and ran down the hallway. "You see, you don't remember what happened to you when you've been ill," Dr. Clark said. "After you recover, it seems a blur to you, as if it happened to someone else."

"How soon will your drug come on the market?" I asked.

"Not as soon as I'd like, unfortunately. Because of the crisis, the Food and Drug Administration is moving as quickly as possible, but even at their quickest they're not very fast. And a good many of them are out with the plague. Have you ever tried dealing with a bureaucrat with the plague?"

I nodded sympathetically.

"At the soonest, we'll get FDA approval in six months, maybe a year." She took a bottle of pills off her desk. "Here they are."

The pills — red and yellow capsules — caught the light and shone like jewels. "How long does the cure take?"

"A week. The pills should be taken twice a day. But the results are immediate — within a few minutes of taking the first pill."

"And are there side effects?"

"None that we know of."

I cleared my throat. "My — uh, my boyfriend Mark — "

Dr. Clark shook her head. "I'm sorry — I can't prescribe anything to anyone who hasn't signed a release form. I don't want to jeopardize our standing with the FDA."

She set the bottle back on its shelf. Just fourteen of them, and Mark would be the person he had been before. If I could distract her some how . . . But there were at least a dozen people crowded into the doctor's office. There was no way I could get the pills.

I got some background information from Dr. Clark — where she was born, where she went to school — and made my way hack to the office.

Thomas stopped me before I got to my cubicle. "Amy," he said. There was an edge of excitement in his voice I had never heard before.

Because of the plague I never knew what to expect from the paper. Some days the printers run whole sections of autobiography, some days they catch it in time and leave huge parts of the paper blank.

"What is it?" I asked.

"Gary got the plagues" he said. "You're got to come see this."

"Gary? How can you tell?"

"Come on," he said.

Gary seems to have always had the plague — that is, Gary has never paid attention to anyone else in his life. Unlike the victims of the plague, though, he's always been very sneaky about it, managing to turn the conversation toward himself with all the subtlety and dexterity of a master chess player. Intrigued, I followed Thomas down the hall.

Gary was in his cubicle. So were a number of other people, all of them sitting around his desk and watching him. "I like to be noticed." Gary was saying. "I love it when people pay attention to me.

That's what I live for. I have to have someone listening to me and watching me at every minute..."

Almost everyone was trying not to laugh. "One day, I remember, we were sitting around and talking about the president," Gary was saying. "So I started talking about the president too, and then the president's brother, and then my own brothers and finally I got to my favorite topic, myself. Another time I thought that Thomas was getting too much attention, so I went down two floors and had him paged from a pay phone. Then I went back to work — it was much easier to talk about myself after he'd gone."

One of the more enterprising reporters on the paper had turned on his tape recorder. If Dr. Clark had indeed found a cure for the virus Gary was going to have a very hard time living this one down.

"How long are you going to let him go on like that?" I whispered to Thomas.

"Oh, I don't know," he said. He felt to make sure his mask and gloves were in place. "It's almost lunchtime — probably we'll send him home then."

I left Gary's cubicle and went back to my desk. Before I could start on the story about Dr. Clark my friend Barbara knocked on my partition and sat in the room's other chair. "Hi, how are you?" she said.

"Fine. How was Washington?"

"You won't believe it," she said. "The pilot on the flight back got the plague. There we all were, looking out the window or reading our in-flight magazines, and the next minute this guy comes over the intercom to tell us that his fingers are nearly all the same length. On and on you wouldn't believe how much mileage this guy could get from his hands. Every so often you'd hear a scuffle in the cockpit, where the copilot was trying to gain control of the intercom, but the pilot held on grimly all the way home." She sighed. "For three and a half hours. Talk about a captive audience."

"What happened when you landed?"

"Oh, he landed fine. He wasn't that far gone. There was a stretcher waiting for him at the landing gate — I guess he'd bored the traffic controllers too."

"Listen," I said. "I just interviewed a doctor who says she found a cure for the plague."

"Really? Do you think she's on the level?"

"God, I hope so," I said.

I visited Mark after work. I'm not sure why I still see him — I guess do it out of respect for the person he once was, for the memories I have of our times together.

Mark's mother let me in. Her eyes looked tired over her oxygen mask. "He's in his room," she said, pointing with a gloved hand.

I thanked her and went down the hallway to Mark's old room. He was staring out the window with his back to me, and I stood there a while and watched him. He was tall and thin, with straight brown hair that shone a deep red in the light. For a moment I desired him as much as I ever had before he became ill. Maybe this time, I thought he would turn and smile at me, kiss me, lead me toward the bed.

Suddenly I realized that he was not looking out the window at all. He was admiring his reflection in the glass "Hello, Mark," I said "How are you?"

He turned. He seemed eager to see me. He always seems eager to see me — victims of the plague need other people to talk to. "When I was a kid, we used to turn the sprinklers on on hot days," he said "All the kids in the neighborhood would run through them. And then the ice cream truck would come, and we'd all go and get ice cream."

He went on in the same even, contemplative tone. He never noticed that my attention wandered, that I looked out the window as often as I looked at him.

When he was well he had never talked so much. He would think before he spoke, weigh each of his words carefully. I had never met anyone before who so clearly meant what he said. Six months ago he had asked me, with no wasted words, if I thought we could move in together.

He'd gotten the plague instead. And here I was, trying to find the man I loved somewhere within this garrulous stranger. I sighed and checked my watch. I try to spend at least an hour with him.

Finally the long hour ended. I stood up to leave. He looked sad to see me go, but he did not stop his flow of reminiscences. I knew from previous weeks that he was incapable of asking me to stay. In a very real sense I was not a separate person to him. I was Audience.

I said goodbye to Mark's mother and drove home. Once there, I took off my mask and gloves and microwaved a day-old pot roast. When the beep sounded, I took it over to the couch and ate, staring bleakly at my television set. I did not want to turn on the TV; these days, with the plague so rampant, you never know what you might see.

I should call someone, I thought. I should call my friend Barbara. But I'd heard too many stories

GOLDSTEIN

GOLDSTEIN

about people calling old friends who turned out to have the plague.

Still, I looked at the phone with longing. The very first words spoken over a telephone had been words of need, of desire, I thought. "Watson, come here — I need you," Alexander Graham Bell had said. How many times since then had people tried desperately to connect over the phone? Because we do need other people; we need them terribly. What would happen to us if the whole world got the plague?

I opened my handbag and took out the folder Dr. Clark had given me. I had already written and turned in my article, but I wanted reassurance. Could it be that she had actually discovered a cure?

I made my way through her technical explanations. I understood very little of it, but her conclusion was nothing if not clear. "Over a three month period," she had written, "we have treated seventy-nine people with the plague virus, all of them successfully."

I closed the folder. Six months to a year seemed far too long to wait for Mark's cure. Tomorrow I would return to Dr. Clark's office and steal her pills.

Thomas was in a jubilant mood the next day; we'd scooped all the other papers with the news of a possible cure. He made no objection to a follow-up article on Leila Clark. I walked back across the park to the laboratory.

I passed the ragged speaker who sometimes stood by the fountain, exhorting people to come to Jesus. "Yesterday someone gave me a slice of pizza!" he was yelling. "I had just enough money to get a Coke to go with it! Coke and pizza, my friends! Coke and pizza!" He paced back and forth in front of the fountain, his arms punching the air. I gave him a wide berth.

Debra Lowry was sitting at the receptionist's desk. "Hello, how are you?" she said. "You're the reporter who was here yesterday, aren't you?"

Yes, I'm Amy Nunes." I said. "I'd like to ask Dr. Clark some more questions. Is she in?"

Debra looked at her calendar. "She's at Channel 7 right now, doing an interview . She'll be back in about fifteen minutes, but only to meet with the staff and pick up her messages. She's got another interview after that."

"Shall I wait in her office?" I moved back toward the hallway.

"I'm sorry — no one's allowed in Dr. Clark's office."

So much for that idea. I sat in a leather-and-steel chair and picked up a Cosmopolitan from the glass coffee table. "Men Are Too Much Trouble: How I Learned to Love Myself," the cover said.

The phone rang constantly all people who wanted to hear more about the cure. I looked at my watch. Fifteen minutes passed, then thirty. Dr. Clark had obviously been detained at Channel 7.

I thought of Mark. I couldn't sit still while the cure, his cure, was only a few steps away. I stood and walked toward the hallway.

"Ms. Nunes," Debra Lowry said, calling after me "Ms. Nunes!"

I turned. Debra had come around her desk and was hurrying toward me.

Very deliberately. I took off my mask and gloves. "Last summer I went to the Grand Canyon," I said. "It was huge — I've never seen anything so big. I have pictures right here."

Debra backed away. She may have been cured of the plague, but obviously the old fear still lingered. "After I saw the Grand Canyon I went to Yellowstone." I said, moving toward her.

She looked back toward the front door, toward safety. "And then Mount Rushmore," I said. She turned and fled.

I ran down the hallway and into Dr. Clark's office. The bottle of pills was still on her desk. I grabbed it, shoved it into my coat pocket. and hurried out the door. The receptionist area was deserted.

On my way to the elevator I passed a group of people holding microphones and lights and cameras. Leila Clark stood in the center of them. She seemed to be enjoying the limelight; I hoped she'd remembered to sign a release form.

I drove to Mark's house. His mother let me in, surprised and pleased to see me so soon after my last visit. I took a glass from her kitchen, filled it with water. "What — " she asked.

I said nothing, but hurried down the hallway. Mark turned from the window. "Here," I said, giving him the pill before he could say anything. "Swallow this."

He looked into the glass, studying something — his own reflection? — that I couldn't see. "Swallow the pill," I said again, and this time he did.

"I always dreaded going to school after summer vacation," he said. "I hated having to put on shoes

after going barefoot all summer. They never seemed to fit right somehow ..."

Slow long would it take? Would it even work at all? Seventy-nine successes — would Mark be the first failure?

Mark continued to talk. I heard about his friends at school, the ones he liked, the ones he hated, his first crush. I heard about his teachers.

"I never liked getting used to a new teacher," Mark said. "Some of them were nice, but some of there were horrible. like Mrs. Plauscher. I — I — You." He looked at me, found my eves. "Oh, you!" he said. "Where have you been?"

GOLDSTEIN

Lisa Goldstein: Personal Appreciations

A fabulist in whom are blended a post-modernist apprehension of genre tropes, a deceptively childlike appreciation of the magical, and the ability to lay bare the vicissitudes of contemporary relationships; a prose writer with a style that manages to be both lean and evocative; a woman who manages to create strong female and male characters — one might think that if all these qualities were combined in a single author, that author would be widely celebrated. Yet Lisa Goldstein, in whom, indeed, these qualities are combined, remains perhaps the most neglected major author of her generation. Over the past 18 years she has put forth a considerable body of work, smallish, lovingly crafted books that here each attracted a fair share of praise, but the awards lists here for the most part overlooked her. An examination of the award winners during that same period of time reveals that prize-winning novels generally are much larger than Goldstein's books, veritable bug-crushers by comparison, and that the authors of these novels are in the main people who engage in self-promotion (both in the best and worse senses of the term). Though a good number of these novels have been deserving, nonetheless it would seem that an outgoing personality, a healthy dash of hutzpah, and a tendency to be long-winded are prerequisites for winning awards. (Perhaps SFWA should consider creating a Nebula for the best novel weighing less than two pounds).

Lisa, whose novels are slim and whose personality is reserved, seems ill suited to become one of those writers whose work is annually included on the awards lists. I have on occasion suggested to her that a make-over might be in order. Aggression therapy, an exciting haircut with a rainbow coloring job, some punkish accessory or a piercing, customary suits of solemn skintight black leather — all these might go a long way to fixing her image in the public eye. That, and a 600 page novel.

"Just jam three shorter novels together," I've advised. "Chances are no one will notice, and if they do, you can just offer some bullshit explanation."

Fortunately for us all Lisa has resisted my advice and remained very much her own person. As a result, it may be that genre accolades will be forever beyond her reach, but I am convinced that a greater reward will be hers — her work, with its quiet insistence and cunning structures, will last far longer than will the reputation and readability of many of the immense, epoch-spanning sagas that have earned lesser authors Flavor-of-the-Month status and bowling trophies up the wazoo.

My favorite Goldstein novel is *Tourists*, in which an academic, Dr. Mitchell Parmenter, travels with his family to the exotic city of Amaz to study an ancient manuscript. Amaz is a wonderful invention, a place of mystery, menace, and whimsy such as might have been created by the sensibilities of a Camus, a Kafka, and a James Thurber during a three-day bender. For those of you who've read *Tourists*, I won't bore you with a summary; to those who haze not, I urge you to correct this oversight. I will say, however, that it was while reading *Tourists* that I realized how extraordinarily complex Goldstein's work was, how impacted with subtext and image system and theme — there was enough substance here to fill a book 2 or 3 times the size. And yet how easily it all went down! The fact that I could read the book so quickly, absorbing subliminal devices rather than taking conscious note of the information they contained, left me at the end with a feeling of disorientation much like the one that afflicts Goldstein's protagonist. It was as if I had experienced all Dr.

GOLDSTEIN

Parmenter's confusions and dislocations. The subtle artifice of this effect so impressed me that I reread the book at once, thinking there must be some trick to it all; but I came to understand that the trick that had worn the words of the book into such a smooth passage was similar to that which had worn down the stones of her perplexing city — Goldstein's painstaking care and craft had the same effect upon her prose as would constant exposure to weather and the tread of thousands upon thousands of feet upon a heavily traveled thoroughfare, grinding into each stony inch the dusts and detritus of a myriad of lives and moments. I found myself recalling the answer given by an English gardener when asked how he got the lawn of old estate so smooth — "Just plant some grass seed and roll it every day for six hundred years." That is Goldstein's trick — the tightly focused care, the lapidary caution she lavishes upon each word choice, each rhythm, each small packet of information compressed into a line of dialogue or a few millimeters of description. That is what makes her unique, inimitable, and what in the end will place her in the pantheon of the most important fantasists of air era. She is our Alice Walker, and we would be remiss — in fact we would be damn fools — not to take notice of the fact.

— Lucius Shepard

No one could say we speculative fiction writers don't have our fond and rather sad delusions. One of the fondest, most deluded, and perhaps saddest is the one that has taken on the flavor of a sort of mass psychosis and finds its expression as a kind of party game whenever writers get together and have too much time on their hands.

The delusion is this: that someday popular culture will find us so brilliant, prophetic, fascinating and charismatic as a group that yes, even movies will be made about us, about the speculative fiction 'literary movement'.

Once this has been established as rule #1 of the party game, the group hastens on to the second and most important part. To wit, of the current great pool of actors and actresses worldwide, who will play whom in this film?

There hasn't been a lot of consensus on the casting so far (and I won't tell you who's going to play me if you'll be kind enough to forgo telling me who's going to play you), but there is total agreement on one writer and one actress. Lisa Goldstein will be played by Winona Ryder.

There. Now that you know that, you'll have no trouble recognizing her if you run into her at this convention, just in case you don't already know what she looks like.

Maybe you didn't know that you needed to know that. But you do. Lisa is a master of illusion.

She doesn't look like a master of illusion. She's on the petite side, with outrageously thick black hair, pale skin, an impeccable complexion, narrow and photogenic bone structure, and can usually be found wearing all black or otherwise dark-hued plumage. In other words, she looks like the archetypal New Yorker.

Wrong! Illusion numero uno. She's from California, born and raised in Los Angeles, fergawdsake. There was at one time, deep inside of her, a long-legged tan beach-baby blond screaming to be let out, but Lisa killed her with a silver bullet to the head and a stake to the heart. The blond hasn't been heard from since.

Many people think that Lisa is shy. Wrong! Illusion numero duo. Lisa is humorously cynical. She's also a proudly self-confessed depressive. She's just modest and won't brag about it much. She can be snapped out of it by the application of much chocolate or the mention of the name "Spark" (her dog).

She looks like a pale wraith who only lives ephemerally. In fact she practices Tai Chi and volunteers time at the Oakland public library.

Her brother Larry is a university math professor who practices aikido and once kept a rabbit the way you or I keep cats, just so Lisa could practice pulling it out of hats.

Her husband, Doug Asherman, is a musician, computer programmer, and kung fu movie connoisseur. He makes sure Lisa stays supplied with caffeine and arcane oriental inspirations.

Lisa eats, drinks, sleeps illusion. She writes about labyrinths, ladders, and countries that may or may not exist. The last is perhaps an inherited trait: her mother came from either three countries or none, a nebulous area that may have been Austria, or Hungary, or Czechoslovakia, and was all of them at one time or another.

Lisa writes about magicians, masquers, escape artists, miracle workers, and the good who endure. Miracles and endurance are in her bloodlines: Both her parents survived the concentration camps of the Holocaust.

Starting out from Oakland, Lisa and Doug once embarked on a great walkabout, taking several

years to traverse the greater Bay Area, looking for the perfect place to live. They moved from place to place to place until they got to the Pacific Ocean and found they'd run out of places. So they clicked their red heels together and said, "There's no place like home, there's no place like home," and were instantaneously transported back to Oakland, where they live happily, probably ever, and probably after. Gertrude Stein once said about Oakland: "There's no therethere." Which of course makes it about the most perfect place in the world for a great illusionist to live.

I most recently met clandestinely with Lisa in the midst of a loud crowded art show opening in San Francisco. It was the perfect cover. We quietly exchanged paper bags with no one there the wiser. What was in the bag Lisa gave me? I won't tell you. That's my business. What was in the bag I gave Lisa? I'll only tell you of a couple of items: what looked to be fluffy stuffed toy dogs but which were actually shoes, and a set of grainy, dim Polaroids of the tunnels of the London underground. It's up to you to figure out what uses she will put these items to.

She was wearing black, of course. She'd also just had her hair cut. Very short. "Holy shit, Lisa!" I said. "Now you really look like Winona Ryder."

"I know," she said, in a humorously depressed voice. "Isn't that the pits?"

— Michaela Roessner

Photo: Rosemarie Lisa

GOLDSTEIN

Lisa Goldstein came into my life as a manuscript on my desk at Simon & Schuster.

I opened it, and read: "In the town where my mother grew up there was a rabbi who could work miracles."

I was 23 years old, a junior editor at Pocket Books for the Timescape line. My boss, David Hartwell, knew a little about Lisa from his Wiscon and San Francisco contacts. When he got in the ms. of her first novel, he thought it might appeal to me.

He was so right. I was instantly sucked into a vision that I fit right into: a world where the myth, magic and wizardry of all my favorite books wedded perfectly with the 20c history of my family's culture. Here was a mysterious young wizard with the charisma of Le Guin's Ged, the self-doubt of T.H. White's King Arthur, the sexiness of the Outsider, and the competence of Tolkien's Gandalf busying himself, not with the affairs of Hobbits or even Elves, but of my own Jewish people. Nobody had ever made the two connect before: what Jewish fantasy there was, was mostly flavored with Eastern European shtetl folklore whose tropes were as alien to this American girl as Tibetan tantricism. Inasmuch as I defined myself by the books I loved, what Lisa did was to give me a place in the twentieth century.

When I left Pocket Books to strike out on my own as a writer, my single greatest regret was leaving *The Red Magician* behind for someone else to finish editing and seeing through the publishing process. *The Red Magician* went on nonetheless to be published to high praise, and eventually to win the National Book Award for Best Novel.

I remember Lisa turning up in New York to accept her award, a small young woman fragile with jetlag. She wasn't rich; she worked a regular job, and the award had come right in the middle of the big backpacking trip through Europe that people in their 20's saved up for in those days. It had been a tough decision for her, to agree to cut up the trip in the middle, to stand on a stage in New York and demand that the literati who were honoring her work that day pay heed to the significance of the fantasy genre.

For that, alone, I thank and honor her. But over the years there's been a

GOLDSTEIN

lot more between Lisa Goldstein and me: together we've had a sunset reunion in the Oakland hills; a riotous dim sum feast in San Francisco; an unexpected gift of song with her husband, Doug Asherman (who is a gift in himself); and, above all, her books and stories — each one proving what should not need to be proven, but doing so richly and elegantly: that the tradition of the great fantasists of our youth can be renewed with the vision of modern, Jewish, American, scholarly, sensitive, visionary woman to create something as new as next year and as old as the hills where people gathered to hear and to tell stories — the hills of Jerusalem, Rome, Oakland, and beyond.

Lisa, thank you.

— Ellen Kushner

Lisa Goldstein is one of the real treasures of the fantasy field. In a better world, we wouldn't have these tall walls dividing fantasy from mainstream fiction, and Ms. Goldstein's books would be cherished by readers of Alice Hoffman, Toni Morrison and Margaret Atwood as they are by those of us who also haunt the genre shelves of our local bookstores.

While I deeply regret this relegation of fantasy fiction (or "post-realist" fiction, as I've heard rebellious young writers impishly call it) to a second class category of its own, I am also damn proud of our genre for enthusiastically supporting a wide diversity of works — including the magical realism of Lisa Goldstein. With her lucid prose, insightful characterizations and breath of subject matter, Ms. Godstein is one of the writers taking down that ghetto wall, brick by brick.

She has my gratitude and admiration.

— Terri Windling

A Goldstein Bibliography

GOLDSTEIN

Compiled by Bob Ingria

Novels and Other Book Length Works

The Red Magician
Pocket, 1982

The Dream Years
Bantam Spectra, 1985

A Mask for the General
Bantam Spectra, 1987

Tourists
Simon and Schuster, 1989
With minor changes: Tor/Orb, 1994

Strange Devices of the Sun and Moon
Tor, 1993

Summer King, Winter Fool
Tor, 1994

Walking the Labyrinth
Tor, 1996

Short Story Collections

Author's Choice Monthly Issue 3: *Daily Voices*
Pulphouse, Eugene, Oregon, 1989

Travellers in Magic
Tor Books, 1994

Short Stories and Novellas

Each story is given with its first publication. Those stories that have been collected are also followed by the name(s) of the collection(s) in which they appear:
DV = *Author's Choice Monthly* Issue 3: *Daily Voices*
TiM = *Travellers in Magic*

Ever After
Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine December, 1984, DV, TiM

Tourists
Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine February, 1985, DV, TiM

Preliminary Notes on the Jang
Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine May, 1985, TiM

The Dream Years (excerpt)
The Bantam Spectra Sampler, ed. Lou Aronica, Bantam Spectra, 1985

Daily Voices
Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine April, 1986, DV, TiM

Scott's Cove
Amazing September, 1986

Cassandra's Photographs
Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine August, 1987, DV, TiM

After the Master
I*Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine* May, 1988

Death is Different
Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine September, 1988, DV, TiM

My Year with the Aliens
Full Spectrum, ed. Lou Aronica and Shawna McCarthy, Bantam, 1988

City of Peace
Interzone #30, 1989

The Blue Love Potion
Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine June, 1990

Midnight News
Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine March, 1990, TiM

A Traveler at Passover
Pulphouse: The Hardback Magazine Issue 10, ed. Kristine Kathryn Rusch, Pulphouse, 1991, TiM

Alfred
Asimov's December, 1992, TiM

Breadcrumbs and Stones
Snow White, Blood Red, ed. Ellen Datlow and Terri Windling, AvoNova, 1993, TiM

Infinite Riches
Asimov's April, 1993, TiM

The Woman in the Painting
F&SF July, 1993, TiM

Rites of Spring
Asimov's March, 1994, TiM

Split Light
Travellers in Magic, Tor, 1994

A Game of Cards
Travellers in Magic, Tor, 1994

The Narcissus Plague
Asimov's July, 1994

Brother Bear
Ruby Slippers, Golden Tears, ed. Ellen Datlow and Terri Windling, Morrow AvoNova, 1995

Stronger Than Desire
The Sandman: Book of Dreams, ed. Neil Gaiman and Ed Kramer, HarperPrism, 1996

GOLDSTEIN

Fortune and Misfortune
Asimov's May, 1997

Down the Fool's Road
F&SF October-November, 1997

The Fantasma of Q____,
Ms. March/April, 1998

Articles and Essays

Read This
The New York Review of Science Fiction #2, October, 1988

Introduction
Author's Choice Monthly Issue 3: *Daily Voices*, 1989

Remember Philip K. Dick: An Anecdote
The New York Review of Science Fiction #70, Volume 6, No. 10, June, 1994

Review of The Sparrow by Mary Doria Russell
The New York Review of Science Fiction Volume 9, No. 1, September, 1996

Review of Jack Faust by Michael Swanwick
Science Fiction Age Vol 6, No 1, November, 1997

Interviews

Lisa Goldstein by Pat Murphy
Interzone #42, 1990

Spectral View: Lisa Goldstein by Debora Hill and Sandra Brandenburg
Figment #9, 1992

An Interview with Lisa Goldstein by David G. Hartwell
MZBFM #30, Winter, 1996

The Shadows

by Leigh Brackett

BRACKETT

For countless numbers of its years there had been no sight or sound or sense of man upon the world of the little blue star. But now, without warning, a remembered thing had come suddenly into the air again — a quiver, a subtle throbbing that meant only one kind of life. The shadows felt it, the shadows that had waited so long and patiently. They began to stir among the ruined walls. They rose and shook themselves, and a soundless whisper ran among them, a hungry whisper, wild and eager. "Man! Man! Man has come again!"

The galactic survey ship lay in an expanse of level plain, ringed on one side by low mountains and on the other by a curving belt of forest. A river ran across the plain and there was much grass. But nothing cropped it, and there were no tracks in tbe mud of the riverbank to show that anything had.

Hubbard sniffed the warm air and dug his feet into the soil, which was rich and dark. He grinned broadly. "This is something like it," he said. "A pretty world. Real pretty."

He was a young man. His field was anthropology, and this was his first voyage out. For him, the stars still shone brightly. Barrier looked at him between envy and sadness. He said nothing. His gaze roving off across the plain and the forest, studied the sky — a suspicious, somber gaze. He was old enough to be Hubbard's father and he felt every year of it, pressed down and running over.

"Of course, the colors are all wrong," said Hubbard, "but that's nothing. After they'd lived with a blue sun for a while people would think it was the only kind to have."

Barrier grunted. "What people?"

"Why, the colonists, the people that will live here some day!" Hubbard laughed suddenly. "What's the matter with you? Here at last we've found a beautiful world, and you're as glum as though it were a hunk of dead rock."

"I guess," said Barrier slowly "That I've seen too many hunks of dead rock, and too many beautiful worlds that — "

He broke off. This was no time to talk. In fact, it was not his place to talk at all. If he didn't like what he was doing anymore he could go home to Earth and stay there, and leave the stars to the young men who had not yet lost their faith.

The mountains, the plain, and the forest were very still in the bright blue morning. Barrier could feel the stillness. No wing cut the sweet air, no paw rustled the tangled grass, no voice spoke from among the curious trees. He moved restlessly where he stood, looking rather like an old hound that scents danger where there should be game. That was Barrier's job, his science, the oldest science of mankind — to venture into strange country and feel the invisible, sense the unknown and survive. He was head of the Ground Exploration team, and an expert on exploring. He had been at it all his life. Too long.

Hubbard said, "I wish Kendall would come back. I want to get started."

"What do you think you're going to find?"

"How do I know? That's the fun of it. But on a world like this there's bound to be life of some kind."

"Human life?"

"Why not?"

Again Barrier grunted, and again he said nothing.

They waited. Other men were scattered about the plain and the riverbank, taking samples of soil, rock, water, and vegetation. They stayed close to the ship, and all were armed. The technical staff, after checking solar radiation, atmospheric content, temperature, gravitation, and the million and one other things that go to make a world habitable or otherwise for Earthmen, had rated this planet Earth-Type A, and in obedience to Survey ruling the ship had landed to determine surface conditions. So far, they had all been favorable. So far.

Barrier fidgeted, and listened to the silence.

Presently a speck appeared far off in the sky. It gave off a thin droning, coming closer, and developed into a small 'copter which settled down beside the ship, a gnat alighting beside a whale. Kendall and his observer and cameraman got out.

Barrier went up to him. "What did you find?"

"More of the same," said Kendall, "and nothing in it. Except — " He hesitated.

"Except what?"

"Over there beyond the forest. I thought it might be the ruins of a city."

"There!" cried Hubbard. "You see?"

Kendall shrugged. "The boys said no, it was just a bunch of rocks grown over with the woods. I don't know. You can decide for yourselves when you see the pictures."

BRACKETT

The men who were out on the plain and the riverbank had come ruming up. They were all young men, like Hubbard. Only the Captain, the chief of Technical, a couple of research scientists and Barrier were old. There was an uproar of voices, all talking at once. The Survey ship had made few landings and it had been a long time since the last one. They were like youngsters let out of confinement, bursting with excitement and pride at what they had found.

Barrier went with them into the ship, into the main salon. There was a brief wait while the film, which had been developed automatically on exposure, was fed into the projector. The lights were cut. The small screen came to life.

They all watched, with intense interest. The panorama unfolded in natural color, like and yet unlike Earth. On closer inspection, the forest trees were not trees at all, but monstrous flowers with stems as thick as trunks, bearing clusters of brilliant and improbable blooms. Barrier caught a glimpse of something that might have been a butterfly or a drifting petal, but other than that, nothing moved.

He asked, "Were there any signs of animal life?"

Kendall shook his head. "No."

Impatiently, Hubbard said, "The 'copter probably frightened it away."

"Frightened things run," said Barrier. "There's nothing running."

Hubbard swore under his breath, and Barrier smiled. It had become a personal necessity for Hubbard to discover life here, and no wonder. He had had very little chance to practice his anthropology, and the voyage was almost over. His insistence on animals arose from the fact that without them there were not likely to be men.

"There," said Kendall, and held up his hand. The film was stopped on a frame showing an area of tree-flowers and clambering vines rather more open than the forest proper. Humps and ridges of stone showed here and there among the tangled growths.

"You see what I mean," said Kendall, and gestured again. The film rolled, repeating the long low swings the 'copter had made across the area. "I got as close as I could, and I still couldn't figure it."

"It sure looks like a city," said Hubbard. He was quivering with excitement. "Look there. See how regular those lines are, like streets, with houses fallen down on either side."

Two other voices spoke up. Aiken, the expert on planetary archaeology, admitted cautiously that it might be a city. Caffrey, the geologist, said that it might just as well be a natural rock formation.

"What do you think, Barrier?" asked Captain Verlaine.

"Can't tell from the picture, sir. I'd have to examine the stones."

"Well," said Verlaine, "that seems to settle it. Make that area your first objective. Don't you agree, Cristofek!'

Cristofek, who was Chief of Technical, nodded emphatically. "And Barrier, in case it does turn out to be a ruin, make every effort to discover what sort of inhabitants it had and, above all, what happened to them."

Barrier stood up. "All right," he said. "Let's be on our way."

The seven men of his team joined him — all, like Hubbard, specialists, young men picked for physical condition and trained in the use of arms. Aiken and Caffrey were among them, also a lad named Morris who was in charge of the walkie-talkie. Barrier consulted Kendall about bearings, and then went with the others to gt his gear. Within a quarter of an hour they were marching off across the plain.

Barrier felt a twinge of nostalgia so strong as to be a physical pain — nostalgia for the days when he had been green and eager like the rest, baving the ship, which he bated, for the uncrossed horizons of new worlds, full of a shivering fascination, full of hope. The hope had been the first to go, and then the fascination.

Now, looking at the bright landscape, beautiful in spite of its unearthly tints, he found himself thinking that he would like to be in a certain bar he remembered in Los Angeles, not worrying about anything, not pondering meanings and significances and the shapes of alien leaves, forgetting completely the dark conviction that had grown in him over the years.

Schmidt, the entomologist, was chattering with Gordon, whose field was zoology, about worms and insect forms, of which many had been found. Hubbard speculated with Aiken on The City. They already called it that. The high grasses swished against their boots. The wind blew softly and the sun was warm. But apart from the eight invading humans there was nothing sentient to enjoy these blessings. Barrier disliked the empty silence. It was unnatural in such a lush and joyous setting.

His eyes roved constantly, grey eyes set in a face the color of old leather and surrounded by the complex wrinkles that come from squinting

against numberless foreign suns. For a long time they saw nothing. And then, more and more, they narrowed and watched a certain sector to their left.

Barrier lifted his hand, and the little column stopped.

"Over there," he said. "Do you see those shadows?"

They all stared.

Hubbard laughed. "Cloud shadows."

"There are no clouds."

"Well, then, it's the wind making ripples in the grass." He glanced sidelong at Barrier. "What's the difference what makes them? They're only shadows!"

Barrier said heavily, speaking to them all, "Will you please try to remember that you are not on Earth? In a strange world anything, a shadow, a blade of grass, may be alive and deadly."

Their faces regarded him, intelligent, uncomprehending, trying not to show that they thought he was being a trifle ridiculous. He knew that they now felt hardened veterans of the star-worlds, with the vast experience of their four or five landings behind them, and all on planets that had had only normally dangerous life-forms: He could not make them understand the things he had seen, the inimical stealthy things that hated man.

He motioned them on again. They had already forgotten the shadows, but he had not. There seemed to be a number of them — how do you count shadows? Smallish clots of darkness they were that flitted along some distance away, losing themselves in the waving grass, difficult to see in the brilliant sunshine, but unmistakably there. They seemed to be running parallel with the men. They looked like perfectly normal shadows and Barrier would not have given them a second thought — except that in his experience a shadow must be thrown by something, and here there was nothing, not even so much as a patch of cloud or a bird's wing.

They marched on across the beautiful, empty, silent plain. And then, again, Barrier called a halt.

They had come to the edge of a stream that ran down toward the river, cutting itself a cleft in the soil of the plain. Caffrey immediately scrambled down the steep bank and began to study the layers of silt and sand and clay. Gordon followed him, casting back and forth along he discovered a hideous small creature that resembled a purple prawn. Something else, that might have been a snake or an eel, went off with a ropy slither between the wet rocks.

Hubbard danced up and down. "I told you there was life here!"

Barrier said gently, "I never denied it."

He glanced upstream. The shadows were bunched together hovering over the cleft. They had not come any closer, but they were watching. He could not see with his eyes that they were watching, for they were only featureless blobs of gloom. But he felt it, in every nerve, in every pore of his prickling skin. There was something ugly about being watched by shadows.

Abruptly, Caffrey began to dig like a terrier in the soft ground midway up the bank. Presently he held up an object like a blackened, broken stick that was knobbed at one end. He handed it to Gordon, who voiced a sharp exciamation and cried out for Barrier.

"It's a bone," said Gordon. "The leg bone of a large deer I should say, or a small horse. You know what I mean, the equivalents thereof."

Hubbard was quite beside himself. "Vertebrate life! That proves that evolution here has followed practically the same path it did on Earth." He looked around, as though he expected to see a man materialize from among the rocks.

Barrier said to Gordon, "How old is that bone?'

Gordon shook his head. "It's been in the ground a long time. How long would you say, Caffrey!'

Caffrey squinted at the bank. "Judging from its depth under the present topsoil, I should guess five or six hundred years, maybe more. That's only a guess of course. There are so many factors I haven't any data for."

"In other words," said Barrier, "a long time." He frowned at the ancient bone, and then at the deserted landscape around him.

Morris sent word of their find back to the ship. They marched on.

The shadows followed.

There were several miles of the flat grassland now between them and the ship. It lay glinting dully in the blue light, Leviathan at rest. The outposts of the forest, solitary clumps and little clustered groves of the giant flowers and equally lofty ferns, sprang up around the men, gradually screening off both the plain and the sky, until they walked in a warm blue gloom shot through with the brilliant spectral colors of the blooms.

At first they went slowly, on the watch for dangerous plant-forms. Apparently there were none. Hansen, the botanist, chanted aloud with wonder at every step. Schmidt was entranced by huge butterflies and numerous insects that crept and flew and made tiny buzzings. Gordon and Hubbard

BRACKETT

BRACKETT

peered eagerly, but there was nothing for them to see.

Barrier walked ahead, going with a lanky noiseless stride like an Indian. His eyes were anxious, and his nerves on edge.

It was very lovely in the forest, with the blooms of many colors nodding overhead. Barrier thought of a garden at the bottom of the sea. The glades were full of blueness like still water. There began to be wisps of mist along the ground.

He thought for a time that they had lost the shadows. Then he saw them again, low-down, slipping along between the rough, pale flower-trunks. They had changed their formation. They were all around the men now, in a circle. They had come closer. Much closer.

Barrier made the men bunch up. He pointed out the shadows to them, and this time they were less inclined to shrug them off.

"Better let me talk to the ship," he said, and Morris clicked the switch on the walkie-talkie. He did that several times, repeating the call letters, and then he shook his head.

"Sorry," he said nervously, "I'm blanked out. There's some electrical disturbance, very strong..."

Barrier glanced at the shadows. Creatures of force? They must be, since they were not solid matter. Electronic discharge from their bodies might well disrupt the small transmitter.

He considered turning back. They were now about equidistant from the ship and the area of the possible ruins, and if the shadows had anything evil in mind, turning back could not stop them. The ship was well out of reach. Besides, he had his orders, and if these shadows were a native life-form, it was his duty to find out about them.

They had made no hostile move as yet. Hostile or not, could shadows hurt men? And if so, how did you fight them?

The ground mists were thickening. They must be approaching swampy ground, although he had not noticed any on Kendall's films. Tenuous wreaths and veils hung in the blue glades each separate droplet glittering with diamond fires in the filtered sunlight. The breeze rippled them to and fro very prettily. They were not fever mists. Barrier forgot them, returning his watchful attention to the shadows.

Within the past few minutes they had drawn their circle in until they were only a few feet away from the men. They glided round and round, utterly silent, in a kind of nervous dance. The men were all watching them now. Hubbard spoke to Barrier, and his voice had an edge of fright.

"What are they? What do they want?"

"They're only shadows," said Barrier irritably. "What does it matter what they want?" Then he called out to the others "Keep together. If things get rough we'll turn back. But no matter what happens, don't bolt. If you do, there won't be any way to help you."

They went on, treading on each other's heels staring around them. The shadows wove and bounded. Quite suddenly, Schmidt screamed. His gun went off with a snarling hiss. It flared again and again into a clot of darkness, which did not flinch.

"It touched me," Schmidt shuddered. "It touched me!"

He began to run, not very far, because there was no space within the ring of shadows to run in. Barrier caught him by the arm.

"Shut up," he snarled. "Shut up!"

Schmidt stood shivering. "It was cold. Cold as death."

"You're not dead, are you?"

"No."

"You're not hurt?"

"I — No."

"Then shut up." Barrier glared at Schmidt, at the others. "The next one of you that panics, I'll knock him flat."

He was afraid himself. Miserably afraid. But he said, "They haven't hurt us yet. Maybe they can't. Anyway, let's wait awhile before we blow our tops."

The young men swallowed and straightened their faces out into stiff lines and tried hard not to see the shadows. Schmidt twitched as he walked. Barrier wished there was a sound in the forest. A squeak, a grunt, a roar that meant something warmblooded and alive. There wasn't. Even their own footfalls were deadened on the soft ground.

The mists thickened, sparkling, bright. The alien sun was blotted out. The shadows skulked and clung. Sweat poured down the cheeks of the men, stained their drill jackets. Hubbard said, licking his lips, "How much farther?"

"Another mile or two."

Barrier wished the mists were not there. They made him feel shut in and suffocated. He worried about bogs. The blue daylight was maddening. He thought of the honest yellow glare of Sol and wondered what madness it was that sent men out to the ends of the galaxy seeking other suns.

He stumbled suddenly, and looked down. At first he thought the obstacle was a rounded stone half buried in the mold of fallen petals. And then

he knew it wasn't. He stooped and lifted it up and held it out to Hubbard.

"You wanted man," he said.

Hubbard rubbed his palms up and down along his thighs. He stared at the thing in Barrier's hands, and the others stared over their shoulders, and the thing grinned at them with a single gaping line of teeth.

Hubbard reached out and took it.

"It's very old," he said. "As old as that." He pointed to Gordon's trophy.

Schmidt said in a curiously shrill voice, "There were men here once, and animals. Now there aren't any. They're all dead, and I know what killed them." He stared hard at the shadows.

Barrier swore. "That's fine talk from a scientist. I thought you people were trained not to jump to conclusions."

Hubbard muttered, "Barrier is right." He looked at the skull and repressed a shiver. "Come on, I want to see those ruins."

They went on, so close together that their shoulders rubbed. The mists grew denser and brighter and heavier. The men sweated, ignoring the shadows, desperately ignoring them.

Without any warning, the shadows sprang.

There was a moment's terrible screaming from the men, and then there was silence, and after that a few stifled, horrid sounds. The skull fell from Hubbard's grasp and rolled away grinning a wise grin as it went. Barrier swayed where he stood, clawing blindly with his hands at his own flesh.

He could see the others. Through a veil of shadowy gloom he could see them, dimly, and the gloom was behind his eyes and not before them. Some of the men had tried to run, and the shadows had caught them as they ran. Two of them kicked and groveled on the ground. Their outlines were indistinct, blurred over. Their eyes were crazy. So were Barrier's.

The shocking swiftness of that leap, the noiselessness, the awful cold that poured in suddenly upon the flesh — the loathsome sense of an intruder grasping at mind and body, taking them overfrom within....

It was inside him. The shadow was inside him. Its icy substance interpenetrated his warm and living flesh — its alien and unreadable intelligence was clinging tight against his own and it was shaking him, driving him, and he was going to die....

They're dead, all the men and animals, and I know what killed them — Schmidt was gone, plunging off into the mist, taking with him the terrible invader in his flesh. There were still shadows, a lot of them, running loose, for there had not been enough men. Some of these went after Schmidt.

Barrier forgot his orders, his command, his pride. Blind black terror overwhelmed him and he ran. He wanted to outrun the thing that held him, to shake it free and lose it utterly, and go on running right off this filthy blue-lit world. But he couldn't. It was part of him. He would not lose it till he died.

He ran, through the silent forest, where the nodding blossoms were shrouded thick in mist and the flower-trunks were hidden, and there was nothing but himself and the nightmare that dwelt in his flesh, and a darkness in the air around him.

Several times he fell, but something forced him up and on again. He had lost all track of the other men. He had almost forgotten them. Once, far off, he heard a shriek and knew that someone was dying, but he did not care. His mind was lost inside the shadow.

He was only distantly aware that suddenly the mists were gone and he was staggering over ground that had once been cleared but now was overgrown, though not so thickly as the forest. He stumbled among stones, reeled and scrambled around great hummocks from which peeped shattered cornices, and crossed an open space where his feet brought forth a sound of dry sticks cracking. He looked down and saw that the sticks were human bones.

He sobbed and turned his head to see the little group of shadows that hovered at his heels.

"Are you waiting your turn?" he yelled at them, or tried to yell, and made only a hoarse whispering. His face, so strangely blurred and dimmed, twisted into an insensate mask of rage. He bent and picked up the old bare bones from around his feet and threw them at the shadows, and cursed, and sobbed, and then he ran again, five paces, ten, across the crackling open space, and there was a hummock too high to climb and too wide to go around. He butted himself against it, into a knee of stone that thrust out between the creepers, and then he fell. His body jerked convulsively, and was still....

He was looking at a moon. It was a red moon, small but very close. There were mountains on it, and gouged-out hollows. His mind made idle pictures of them, a face, a crouching rabbit. There were stars. He did not recognize them. Presently another moon came up, a larger one, and pallid green. He tired of making pictures on the moons.

BRACKETT

BRACKETT

Someone was moaning, close at hand.

Mildly curious, Barrier turned his head. He saw a man, lying curled up with his knees against his chest and his arms clasped over his head. He seemed to know the man. He studied the partly visible face. Of course he knew him, it was young Hubbard, who had been looking for men....

Barrier sprang up. Cold sweat burst out of him and his body trembled, standing rigid in the moonlight. He searched inside himself as a man will search for a remembered pain, sick and praying not to find it.

It was gone. The shadow was gone. He clutched at Hubbard, and saw that the unholy dimness had left his features. He shook Hubbard and shouted at him, and then he saw that there were other men huddled on the ground, two, three, four of them.

He ran from one to the other, and they looked up at him with empty, frightened eyes. Schmidt was not among them, nor Morris.

Six. Six living out of eight. And the shadows had gone away out of their flesh.

For one short second he was hopeful. Then he looked out across the open space where the bones were and saw the company of dark and restless blots that moved among the spiky ribs and tumbled, careless limbs. He almost laughed that he had considered hope.

He returned to Hubbard. "How did you get here?" he asked and slapped the young man's face until he answered.

"I don't know. I — just ran." Hubbard gave a racking shiver "Oh God, Barrier, that thing inside me just like smoke blows through a bush, and cold...."

Barrier slapped him again. "Where're Schmidt and Morris?"

"I don't know."

Barrier set about getting the others on their feet. None of them knew precisely how they had gotten there. None of them knew what had happened to Morris, but Aiken said:

"I saw Schmidt. I was running and I passed by Schmidt lying on the ground, at least I think it was Schmidt, it had his specimen case still strapped around it, and it was dead. Oh yes, there wasn't any doubt at all about its being dead."

He turned away suddenly and tried hard to be sick.

Barrier said slowly, "So they finished off two of us, and brought the rest of us here. I suppose they want to complete the job at their leisure. So here we are. We can't communicate with the ship, and they won't send Kendall out to look for us before morning. And if we're still alive by then, and Kendall does happen to find us, and lands — what do you think they'll do about it?"

He glanced toward the shadows.

Nobody answered.

"I wonder," said Barrier at last, "if fire would keep them off."

The others stared at him. Then they scurried about, gathering dead creepers, dry grass, anything that would burn. They made fires, a ring of them across the mouth of the cul-de-sac where they were caught. They waited, breathless with hope.

The shadows crept up toward the flames. Then, as though delighted with them, they began to flit back and forth around the fires, frolicking over and through them, almost, it seemed, playing tag among the columns of smoke.

Hubbard wept.

Mist was crawling up out of the forest. The small red moon was sinking, and the larger pale green one shed a ghastly light. The fires burned low and the shadows danced around them.

"They look real cute there, don't they!' said Barrier viciously. "Having fun."

The flames died down, became beds of embers. Some of the shadows began to make tentative small rushes toward Barrier and the five who were left of his team.

Caffrey whispered, "I guess they're coming for us." He still had a withered blossom stuck in his buttonhole.

The shadows darted nervously, toward the men and then back to the glowing red embers. Beyond them tenuous arms of mist advanced and coiled between the ruins. They began to obscure the remaining moon, and as the light faded the shadows moved more swiftly, with a greater eagerness.

Aiken had been rooting among the creepers that shrouded the hummock. Suddenly he bleated, "There's a passage here, a doorway. Maybe we could get inside and — and barricade it."

"Against shadows?" said Barrier, and laughed.

"It's better than nothing." Hubbard said. "Anything's better than just sitting here."

He scrambled toward Aiken, who had disappeared, and the others followed. All at once, Barrier began to laugh. They stared at him, their faces round and startled. Barrier shouted at them, laughing.

"You still don't get it, do you? You still think you can run and hide, and put up little defenses, and win out somehow in the end because you're men

and man always wins out. You haven't learned yet, have you?"

"Learned what?" asked Hubbard, in a low, queer voice.

Barrier studied the shadows. "Why should I tell you, though? It took me half a lifetime and a lot of worlds to learn the truth. Why shouldn't I keep it to myself, and let you die happy?"

Apruptly, Hubbard sprang at him. He was like an enraged child, boiling with a confused fury of which the greater part was the fear of death. Barrier caught his wrists.

"You dirty yellow-belly," Hubbard squealed. "You're supposed to be our leader, you're supposed to show us what to do, and what do you do? You give up." He called Barrier a number of evil names. "The great explorer, the big brave leader, hell! You're just an old man with all the guts run out of you. You should have gone back to Earth and let somebody that could fight take over."

Barrier thrust him away, quite hard but without anger.

"All right," he said, "I'll let you in on it. Earth was a soft planet. Oh, she tried to put her foot down — ice ages, volcanoes, plagues, floods, droughts, and famines — but it was too late, and it wasn't enough, and now we've got the upper hand of her. But the other worlds are tougher. Sooner or later, they find a way....

"We aren't welcome in the universe. I don't know why. Maybe it's because we aren't content to be the animals we are, but must always be pretending that we're something else, prying about and upsetting things, grasping after stars, making trouble and screaming because it hurts. I don't know. I only know that we're hated. Everywhere I've been, wherever there was a man, they'd been gotten rid of somehow."

He glanced up at the alien stars, dimming now with the mist that rolled across them.

"They hate us," he said softly. "Their children hate us. Everywhere we have enemies, but never any friends."

Then he sighed. "You're right, Hubbard. I am an old man, with the guts worn out of me. You run on in and hide, now, and I wish you luck. Me, I don't like holes."

The shadows were hard upon him now. One brushed against him, and its touch was cold, cold as the bones that lay in the open space. Swiftly, so swiftly that none of the men could stop him, Barrier whirled and leaped through them, running like a deer.

He took them by surprise, the small dark blots that hung so close to him. He got past them, trampling on the brittle bones. And then the shadows followed, spreading out fanwise behind him, and three or four racing on to catch him.

He was some distance ahead of them. He heard Hubbard's voice shrieking after him, but not the words it said. He put out every ounce of strength that was in him, rushing between the heaped-up ruins, into the arms of mist that reached along the ground.

The shadows were closing in. But it was the mist that sprang.

It rolled around and wrapped him in, and where it touched his flesh he knew that the glittering droplets were not drops of mist at all but tiny flecks of life, separate, sentient, gathered together in formidable colonies of cloud. And he knew two other things, in that second when it was too late for knowledge — that the mist had not touched him nor the others in the forest, and that it had moved into the ruined city after them, against the wind.

Tiny flecks of life, glittering like powdered gems. And they hated man with a curious, inherited enmity.

There was a numbing agony in Barrier, an ecstasy of curious anguish that made his body twitch and dance. His throat convulsed, but no sound came out of it, and his eyes were filled with motes of fire. He tried to run again, and could not, and somewhere far away in another world, Hubbard was still shouting.

The shadows came. A broken thought went tumbling into the stricken emptiness of his mind — They work together, damn them, and they both hate man. Then there was the horrid cold the alien presence sweeping through him, and this was death....

The mists drew back. The tearing anguish left him, and the chill darkness that possessed him was somehow healing to his seared nerves. It was like being shocked with icy water, so that suddenly he could see and think again, even through the gloomy veil that dimmed his sight and mind.

The shadows leaped and swirled around him, and where they leaped the mists that were not mists at all drew back, sullen and reluctant, but coiling all the same upon themselves. And the shadow-thing that was inside of Barrier made him turn and go back toward the ruins, not fast this time, but slowly because he had been hurt, giving Barrier, in some unfathomable way, of its own strength.

BRACKETT

BRACKETT

The others came behind, a rear guard, dodging, weaving pouncing on the stealthy tentacles of mist that sought to reach around them to the men who stood gaping by the great hummock. Here and there a glistening cloud engulfed a single shadow, and suddenly it was not.

Barrier's face, obscured by the dim aura, took on a strange expression.

He sat down at Hubbard's feet and the shadow left him and they were as they had been before, the men, the shadows the little beds of ash still glowing, and the wavering mist beyond.

Hubbard swore meaningless oaths meant to conceal his shame. "Were you crazy, Barrier? Did you think you could draw them all away from us?"

Aiken said, "He was trying to get away, to get a warning to the ship so maybe they could save us." He bent over. "Barrier, listen. Barrier...."

He paid them no attention. He was watching the shadows that hovered between them and the mist. A few of them were darting as they had before, from the burned-out fires to the men and back again.

"They want us to put on more fuel," he said slowly. "The fires help them keep the mist away." He turned abruptly to the others. "They saved me, did you see that? They came after me, and one protected me with its own body, and some of them died." He was shaking a little. "We were wrong about them. They were trying to help us in the forest. They followed us like — "

A word hovered on his tongue and he considered it, thinking of his boyhood and a small soiled terrier who had eaten his boots and loved him and once had interposed his body between Barrier and a fearsome hissing thing. It had only been a gopher snake, but the idea was the same.

"I think," he said, "that those shadows were the dogs, the protectors, of the men who lived here once. Different from our own, but trained to hunt down and turn aside enemies from their men. It was the mist that killed Schmidt and Morris, of course. We didn't keep together, and the shadows couldn't save us all."

The men stared at the shadows. It was hard to change their minds now, but they could not deny what they had seen. Their faces softened, just a little, losing some of the hard fear. Then Hubbard said, "But what about them?" and he pointed at the bones.

Barrier shook his head. "Whatever killed them, it wasn't the shadows." His voice had an odd faraway note. His mind was very busy with something, taking it apart and studying the pieces intently and then putting it back together a different way. At last he smiled a little and went toward the shadows. He began to talk to them, putting out his hands, and they clustered around him, bounding up playfully.

"They must have been lonesome all this time," he said "guarding their masters' bones."

Aiken said, "Down there in that passage — it's built of solid rock and hasn't crumbled a bit — there are some symbols cut in the wall. I haven't really looked at them, but — well, it seems as though all the people in the city gathered here to die at once, and it could be that they left a message or two in the strongest places.

"Let's look," said Hubbard.

They went down through the opening Aiken had found, all except Barrier, who was still playing with the shadow-dogs, and smiling. He was only mildly interested when they came back, Aiken and Hubbard both flushed and joyous.

"Those symbols," said Aiken. "They're pictographs, so simple and clear anyone could read them. They must have hoped, those people, that someone would come along sooner or later. Anyway, they told what happened to them, or rather, what was going to happen. The planet had already entered the edges of a cloud that was death for lung breathers. That's why the animals died too, and only the lungless creatures lived. And Barrier?"

"Yes?"

"They mentioned the dogs. They drew quite clear pictures of them at work, so that strangers would know.

Barrier nodded. He looked at the dark blots romping about his feet. "They've waited all this time. Well, they can wait a little longer."

Then he straightened up, still with that odd, wry smile.

"Seems like I spoke too soon," he said. "Maybe there's enough worth in us that here and there some little world will give us another chance. Anyway, it's nice to know there's one place where we have some friends."

They heaped fuel on the fire, and the shadows danced. Barrier watched them, looking somehow younger, like a man who has rediscovered hope.

Leigh Brackett/Edmond Hamilton: My Great Loves, My Great Teachers, My Great Friends

BRACKETT

by Ray Bradbury

I was best man at their wedding January 1st, 1947. That almost says it all, yet it must be explained.

Edmond Hamilton truly came into my life on my 21st birthday, 1941. I was selling newspapers on a street corner, Norton and Olympic in Los Angeles one afternoon when Julius Schwartz, my temporary agent, showed up on the corner with Edmond Hamilton, carrying a copy of Super-Science in which appeared my short story "Pendulum," written with Henry Hasse, and sold for roughly thirty dollars. It was my first pulp sale after nine years of writing, starting when I was twelve.

Ed and Julie invited me back to their motel room, a block up the street by wondrous coincidence, where they drank whiskey and I drank a Coke, to celebrate my grand success. Leigh Brackett showed up. In the following weeks we motored down to the beach and lay out in the sun and talked writing and literature, literature and writing. Ed became my best new teacher and Leigh followed after. From that year on, every Sunday I ambled down to Muscle Beach near the Santa Monica pier and sat on the sand watching Leigh play volleyball. We then ate hotdogs while I read her incredibly fine science fiction and detective stories and she read my incredibly bad imitations and kicked me on to doing better.

There were five years of Sunday meetings until I finally discovered my own viscera, my own ganglion, my own secret self, and surged ahead. By 1946 Ed Hamilton has moved west and he and Leigh were courting, and I traveled out to Arcadia beyond L.A., to start drinking mint juleps and getting yet more advice from my tutors and chums. After their marriage, and mine which occurred in September 1947, we lived within three hundred yards of each other on the beach in Venice and every Thursday night I trudged down the shore to try to learn to drink Scotch instead of the 89 cent muscatel I toted along. Ed taught us both. He loved to recite Yeats, or some of Shakespeare's Sonnets, or give me tips on Shaw, and the years went on and Leigh became a first class screenwriter working for Howard Hawks, and Ed plunged back into *Captain Future* and comic strips, but still there were the grand evenings of damning editors and remembering Thomas Love Peacock and Frost. I never did learn to drink the hard stuff, but I drank in Ed's wondrous recitations and got Leigh to say, "Damn you, you bastard." when I sold my first story to *Collier's* magazine when I was 25. And one night a year before he died, Ed in a quiet moment when he and I were coming back from a walk to the liquor store turned to me and for the first time said, "Ray, I love you." Ed was not one to say that sort of thing often, probably never. I grabbed and hugged him and gave love back.

Then, quite suddenly it seemed, the years were gone, and Ed with them. And Leigh came to stay overnight with Maggie and me and by this time I had almost learned the hard stuff, and it was a grand last night. A few months later she called me from the hospital out in the upper desert and was in high spirits, the doctor was

BRACKETT

shooting her full of drugs, wise man, and she was on her way to follow Ed, and we laughed together so as not to cry. I remember her laughter still and thank that doctor for his loving decision to make her high with a system full of injections so that feeling no pain and laughing, the next day, she was gone.

I hear the laughter now and hear Ed remembering Dr. Johnson and Boswell and telling me about a wondrous bookstore in Long Beach, the Acres of Books, where he took me to wander through a city block of shadows and dust and time, and hand me his favorite Maugham or *Mr. Salteena's Plan*. I remember that January First Wedding Day and grieve at their going away. Teachers and friends shouldn't do that. But they did.

Ed and Leigh, Leigh and Ed, dearly beloved friends, I miss you still. It will never stop.

Leigh was my literary heroine long before I met her. The Stark novellas she wrote for *Planet Stories* and *Thrilling Wonder* were even better than Burroughs, who was the first writer of his kind I ever read. You found the pulps on second-hand book-stalls in obscure London street markets. They were already yellowed and threatening to disintegrate even when I bought them. But in those days they were cheap. The very appearance of *Weird Tales, Startling* or *Amazing* was enough to turn me on. The stories were often crap, but the pictures were great and every so often you found a gem. I've written elsewhere about Leigh and C.L. Moore as the Queens of the SF Pulps. The sensibility they brought to the tale of romantic, otherworldly adventure was unequalled. I actually read very little science fiction as a kid, but I did read particular authors with great enthusiasm and Leigh was one of my favourites. I loved *The Sword of Rhiannon*, for all its rather loose use of the Celtic pantheon, and I loved her thrillers. I even have the detective novel she ghosted for George Saunders. It was a revelation to me that she was also the final writer on *The Big Sleep* and scripted some of my other favourite films. Her work influenced some of my earliest published stories.

I met Leigh and her husband Edmond Hamilton at an sf convention in the early 1960s. I've also told the story elsewhere of how Ed sought me out to congratulate me on destroying even more of God's creation than he had managed to in his own distinguished career of planet-smashing. From then on we became great friends, in constant touch until their deaths in 1977. We enjoyed a mutual respect. We were totally at odds politically — except for our fundamental love of freedom and respect for individuals — and were constantly arguing. I was frequently astonished at their views (on the Hollywood witchhunts, for instance, which they supported) and didn't much care for the company they kept in Hollywood, yet I loved them both. We traded Assam tea for their own farm's maple syrup, we swapped stories, we continued to argue. I loved to hear Leigh reminisce about Douglas Fairbanks, a mutual hero, or tell the story of Howard Hawks sending for her to work on *The Big Sleep* and discovering that the hard-bitten guy he'd expected was a country girl in a gingham dress, taking it in his stride and putting her to work on the picture. She was one of those women Hawks admired from a distance and rarely messed with — women like Leigh usually went into his movies rather than his life.

She didn't have much time for bullshit. When Hawks had her script *El Dorado*, after the huge success of her *Rio Bravo*, she told him he was wasting his money. You're making exactly the same movie, she said. Don't pay me again. Just use the old script and change the names... Hawks insisted, but she knew what she was doing.

By a peculiar irony our paths didn't cross after 1975. In 1976 I was in the US celebrating the bicentenary and they were in Cornwall, England, not altogether sure they were happy with the way the Revolution had turned out... The next thing I knew I had a letter from Leigh telling me of Ed's death. I fully expected the next news. I couldn't imagine either surviving the other for long. They were great, generous, old-fashioned American hearts and the world shrank a little when they left it.

— Michael Moorcock

Leigh Brackett: Queen of the Martian Catacombs

BRACKETT

By Andy Duncan

One of my undergraduate fiction-writing students at the University of Alabama recently handed in a story about a lone protagonist being pursued across a desolate landscape by a mysterious, unstoppable hunter. Like most early drafts, it was almost entirely free of any detail that would indicate who this protagonist was, what kind of society he came from, where the story was set, and so on. It also was wordy. The student's ambition is to write fantasy, but like most of my students, his reading in fantasy has mostly been novels—and long, endless novels at that (Robert Jordan, etc.). Building a fantasy world in the span of a short story, he said, was a daunting prospect.

One of my responses was to show him the opening scene of Leigh Brackett's story "Queen of the Martian Catacombs" (*Planet Stories* 1949), which introduced Brackett's most famous character, the heroic Eric John Stark. Brackett's first few pages not only immediately establish the identical situation — lone protagonist, desolate (Martian) landscape, unstoppable hunter — but, in only a page or two, briskly and vividly scatter a score of clues about the background of the story, including religion (Stark curses, "by the Nine Hells"), economics (Stark wears a shirt "of Venusian spider silk," implying interplanetary trade), and politics (the Earth Police Control is after Stark, implying that Earth has, to some extent, colonized Mars or has jurisdiction over it).

I think my student got the point. If nothing else, he carefully wrote down in his notebook the name "Leigh Brackett," and I felt I had done another good deed for the field. What more can we do for science fiction and fantasy, we writers and readers and teachers of it, than to recommend authors, and keep our founders, and our heroes, from being forgotten?

Now I have the honor of introducing Leigh Brackett again. Let me begin with some of her beginnings:

> I was watching the sunset. It was something pretty special in the line of California sunsets, and it made me feel swell, being the first one I'd seen in about nine years. The pitch was in the flatlands between Culver City and Venice, and I could smell the sea. I was born in a little dump at Venice, California, and I've never found any smell like the clean cold salt of the Pacific — not anywhere in the Solar System.
> ("The Halfling," *Astounding* 1943)

> The ship moved slowly across the Red Sea, through the shrouding veils of mist, her sail barely filled by the languid thrust of the wind. Her hull, of a thin light metal, floated without sound, the surface of the strange ocean parting before her prow in silent rippling streamers of flame.
> ("Enchantress of Venus," *Planet Stories* 1949)

> What a great day it was for everybody, when David came home from deep space. It was a day that will remain for a long while on the calendar of the McQuarrie family, marked heavily in red.
> ("The Woman from Altair," *Startling Stories* 1951)

> He came alone into the wineshop, wrapped in a dark red cloak, with the cowl drawn over his head. He stood for a moment by the doorway and one of the slim dark predatory women who live in those places went to him, with a silvery chiming from the little bells that were almost all she wore.
> ("The Last Days of Shandakor," *Startling Stories* 1952)

> Len Colter sat in the shade under the wall of the horse barn, eating pane and sweet butter and contemplating a sin.
> (*The Long Tomorrow*, 1955)

Leigh Brackett was one of the two most influential women science-fiction writers of the 1940s (the other being Catherine L. Moore) — and one of the most influential science-fiction writers of the decade, period. She was born in 1915 and grew up a child of the California coast. "In those days," she recalled, "there was a handful of little houses, an overarching sky, wind and sun and seagulls, and I loved it. There were winter gales that never seem to blow any more, and beautiful fogs so thick you could bite them and taste the salt. It was a place where I could be alone. I used to walk out to

BRACKETT

the end of a long jetty and sit on the stringer with my feet in the ocean, feeling it breathe, looking out to where the Pacific ran over the edge of the world and dreaming great... but most of all I was learning what it felt like to be me."

Crucial to that learning process was a pivotal reading experience: Edgar Rice Burroughs's *The Gods of Mars*. For Brackett, Mars became "the Ultima Thule, the golden Hesperides, the ever-beckoning land of compelling fascination." Appropriately, her first published science fiction story, which appeared in *Astounding* in 1940 (the year Brackett turned twenty-five years old), was titled "Martian Quest."

Through the 1940s and the early 1950s, Brackett contributed mostly to second-tier magazines such as *Planet Stories* and *Thrilling Wonder Stories* a body of work crucial to the subgenre that Russell Letson, more than 30 years later, would name the "planetary romance." The Burroughs influence is evident in Brackett's exotic adventure stories set amid the ancient feuds and ruins of a dying planet preeminently Mars but, later, Venus and points west. Brackett, in turn, influenced a host of other authors, including Jack Vance, Philip Jose Farmer, Marion Zimmer Bradley, Frank Herbert, and Gene Wolfe.

These same Brackett stories were important in the development of the subgenre Fritz Leiber later dubbed "sword and sorcery." Here Brackett's influence is evident in the works of Andre Norton, Michael Moorcock, Tanith Lee, Karl Edward Wagner, and many others.

One famous Brackett disciple is Ray Bradbury. As a young writer in Southern California, Bradbury idolized Brackett, who was five years older and who seemed to be living the life of Bradbury's dreams. Brackett was generous with her help and advice, and the two collaborated on "Lorelei of the Red Mist" (*Planet Stories* 1946). Ray Bradbury's Mars owes more to Brackett than to any other writer. Brackett's Mars is the Mars of *The Martian Chronicles*, but Bradbury moves the background to the foreground, with no heroic Eric John Stark figure to distract us from his very Brackett-like planet of deserts, of ruins, of ghosts.

The pervasive sense of loss in Brackett's fiction is well summarized by John Clute: "Where Burroughs's Mars had been characterized by naive barbaric energy, Brackett's represents the last gasp of a decadence endlessly nostalgic for the even more remote past." Brackett's stories, like the stories of so many other writers of the 1940s and 1950s, demonstrate that so-called "depressing" and "downbeat" science fiction wasn't invented in the 1960s, that genre sf has been for generations — among other things — a literature of loss, regret, entropy, failure, and defeat. Edmond Hamilton, her husband and biggest fan, observed that one of Brackett's favorite themes was "a strong man's quest for a dream and... his final failure when it turns to smoke and ashes in his hands." The very titles of her stories repeatedly emphasize loss ("Citadel of Lost Ships," "The Citadel of Lost Ages"), disappearance ("The Vanishing Venusians," "The Moon That Vanished"), death ("Thralls of the Endless Night," "Queen of the Martian Catacombs"), and finality ("The Last Days of Shandakor," "Shannach — the Last," "Last Call from Sector 9G"). My favorite Brackett title, besides being beautiful, incorporates all these themes: "The Lake of the Gone Forever."

In 1946 Brackett married fellow science-fiction writer Edmond Hamilton, who had been publishing for 20 years and who was a seminal figure (with E.E. "Doc" Smith and Jack Williamson) in the development of slam-bang, galaxy-spanning space opera. Hamilton made no secret of the fact that his own writing improved markedly thanks to Brackett's influence. "My own work was usually done at high speed," he recalled, "and often contained hasty pages. But I soon found that having a built-in critic right in the house pulled me up short when I did something too hurried and careless." Hamilton also learned from Brackett that there were ways to write a story other than plotting it out first. "I just start writing the first page," Brackett explained to him, "and let it grow." Brackett modestly gave Hamilton credit, in turn: "If he learned a little bit about style from me, I learned a whole lot about structure from him."

In 1949, Brackett and Hamilton moved from California back East, making the cross-country drive with another husband-and-wife writing team, Catherine L. Moore and Henry Kuttner. (What a road trip that must have been!) In 1950, Brackett and Hamilton bought a dilapidated, skunk- and blacksnake-infested 1819 farmhouse outside rural Kinsman, Ohio, and set about restoring what would become their lifelong home. For years, when she wasn't at the typewriter, Brackett could be found nailing shingles, picking and canning blackberries, even cutting the grass with a scythe.

Brackett was quick to deny any Luddite tendencies: "Don't talk to me about the evils of technology! When we were able to afford a powerful little

garden tractor with a sickle-bar and a mower, life became a whole lot easier."

Yet she became fascinated by the nearby Amish community, a society that did without 20th-century creature comforts not as a lark or out of financial necessity but because of generations-old religious and cultural beliefs. "This led her to remark," Hamilton recalled, "that if modern civilization disappeared, the Amish would be perfectly fitted to live in a nonmechanical world." These musings led, in 1955, to Brackett's best novel, *The Long Tomorrow*, set in a post-holocaust rural society that has outlawed cities, science and technology. It is one of the best known pastoral novels in science fiction, and like so many pastorals, its title notwithstanding, its gaze is not into the future but into the past.

Brackett maintained she would have written more Mars stories in the 1960s and 1970s, but editors no longer wanted them, because "the planet, they believe, has become too harsh a reality for my brand of legend." Her Eric John Stark novels of the 1970s were set instead on the imaginary planet of Skaith. But a new generation of fans, undaunted by science, continued to discover and enjoy Brackett's old Mars stories. A Minnesota fan named Margaret Howes sent Brackett detailed Martian maps of her own devising, based both on Brackett's stories and on the most current Viking photographs. Brackett was delighted to see her creations laid out before her: "Jekkara and the Low Canals, and Valkis, and Barrakesh where John Ross met the man from Shandakor, and Shandakor itself, and that other lost city of Sinharat, beautiful derelicts in those haunted seas of drifting sand."

Hamilton died in 1977, Brackett in 1978. In their later years, they formally collaborated for the first and only time on "Stark and the Star Kings," a story that teamed Brackett's hero Eric John Stark with the heroes of Hamilton's Star Kings series. They wrote the story for Harlan Ellison's *Last Dangerous Visions* anthology, but the book and the story remain unpublished.

Science fiction was only one of Brackett's three simultaneous writing careers. Brackett also is highly esteemed for her private-eye and crime fiction, especially the novels *No Good from a Corpse* (1944), which some claim to be the best traditional private-eye novel written by a woman, and *The Tiger Among Us* (1957), the violent story of a family threatened by teenage hoodlums. Some of Brackett's best science-fiction stories make use of the hard-boiled private-eye dialogue she did so well; a prime example is "The Halfling" (*Astounding* 1943):

> He laughed and said, "You'll live. That critter damn near took half your face off, but with your style of beauty it won't matter much. Just take it easy a while until you make some more blood."
>
> I said, "The hell with that. I got work to do."

BRACKETT

Brackett also had a nearly 35-year career as a Hollywood screenwriter. She wrote private-eye pictures such as Howard Hawks' *The Big Sleep*, starring Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall, and Robert Altman's *The Long Goodbye*, starring Elliott Gould. (Brackett and Bogart much admired each other — he nicknamed her "Butch" — and some say the tough-talking narrator of Brackett's 1944 story "The Veil of Astellar" is based on Bogart.) She wrote Westerns such as Hawks' *Rio Bravo* and *El Dorado*, both starring John Wayne. She also worked extensively in television. The only science-fiction movie she worked on was her last, *The Empire Strikes Back*, for which she received a posthumous Hugo Award (her only one). At the time I was 16 and never had heard of Leigh Brackett, though I sure had heard of George Lucas. Some of you may have been 16 at the time as well; do you remember our reaction as the end credits rolled on *The Empire Strikes Back*? Han Solo was a comatose prisoner; Luke was maimed and grieving his paternity and (possibly) his own capacity for evil. Remember how disappointed, frustrated, disturbed we were, that a Star Wars picture could be so downbeat? We didn't realize, at 16, that "Gosh! Wow!" were not the only possible responses to science fiction; we hadn't read "The Lake of the Gone Forever." Brackett liked to refer to her lucrative Hollywood work as "fairy gold." "Fairy gold is lovely when it comes," she wrote in 1976, "but if it doesn't, I've got my workroom here in Kinsman, and no mortgages. Besides, I like writing science fiction. Aside from the pleasure of congenial work and the making of a living, science fiction has given me much that is beyond price: lifelong friends, a worldwide family, and a marriage that has lasted almost thirty years to date. Even fairy gold won't buy all that!" Ladies and gentlemen, it is my pleasure to present: Leigh Brackett.

A Brackett Bibliography

BRACKETT

Compiled by Bob Ingria

Novels and Other Book Length Works

No Good from a Corpse
Coward-McCann, 1944

Stranger at Home (as by George Sanders)
Simon and Schuster, 1946

Shadow Over Mars
Consul, 1951, reprinted as *The Nemesis From Terra*, originally appeared in *Startling Stories* Fall, 1944

The Starmen
Gnome, 1952, reprinted as *The Starmen of Llyrdis*, and, in an abbreviated form, as *The Galactic Breed*, originally appeared in *Startling Stories* March, 1951

Sword of Rhiannon
Ace, 1953originally appeared as *The Sea-Kings of Mars* in *Thrilling Wonder Stories* June, 1949

The Galactic Breed
Ace, 1955 (Ace double with Robert Moore Williams: *Conquest of the Sea*)

The Big Jump
Ace, 1955 (Ace double with Philip K. Dick: *Solar Lottery*), originally appeared in *Space Stories* February, 1953

The Long Tomorrow
Doubleday, 1955

The Tiger Among Us
Doubleday, 1957, adapted by Brackett for the screen as *13 West Street*

An Eye for an Eye
Doubleday, 1957

Rio Bravo
Bantam, 1959, novelization of the screenplay

The Nemesis from Terra
Ace, 1961

Alpha Centauri — or Die
Ace, 1963 , enlarged version of *Teleportress of Venus*, *Planet Stories* Winter, 1955

Follow the Free Wind
Doubleday, 1963

The Secret of Sinharat / People of the Talisman
Ace Books, 1964, *The Secret of Sinharat* originally appeared as *Queen of the Martian Catacombs* in *Planet Stories* Summer, 1949, *People of the Talisman* originally appeared as *Black Amazon of Mars* in *Planet Stories* March, 1951, reissued as *Eric John Stark, Outlaw of Mars*

Silent Partner
Putnam, 1969

The Ginger Star
Ballantine Books, 1974

The Hounds of Skaith
Ballantine Books, 1974

The Reavers of Skaith
Ballantine Books, 1976

The Book of Skaith: The Adventures of Eric John Stark
Doubleday, 1976
Omnibus edition of *The Ginger Star, The Hounds of Skaith*, and *The Reavers of Skaith*

Short Story Collections

The Coming of the Terrans
Ace, 1967

The Halfling and Other Stories
Ace, 1973

The Best of Leigh Brackett
edited by Edmond Hamilton, Nelson Doubleday, 1977

Edited Collections

The Best of Planet Stories No. 1
Ballantine, 1975

The Best of Edmond Hamilton
Nelson Doubleday, 1977

Short Stories and Novellas

Each story is given with its first publication. Those stories that have been collected are also followed by the name(s) of the collection(s) in which they appear:
CoT = *The Coming of the Terrans*
HOS = *The Halfling and Other Stories*
BoLB = *The Best of Leigh Brackett*

Martian Quest
Astounding Science Fiction February, 1940

Treasure of Ptakuth
Astounding Science Fiction April, 1940

The Tapestry Gate
Strange Stories August, 1940

The Stellar Legion
Planet Stories Winter, 1940

Water Pirate
Super Science Stories January, 1941

The Demons of Darkside
Startling Stories January, 1941

Interplanetary Reporter
Startling Stories March, 1941

Lord of the Earthquake
Science Fiction June, 1941

A World is Born
Comet Stories July, 1941

No Man's Land in Space
Amazing Stories July, 1941

The Dragon Queen of Jupiter
Planet Stories Summer, 1941

Retreat to the Stars
Astonishing Stories November, 1941

Child of the Green Light
Super Science Stories February, 1942

Child of the Sun
Planet Stories Spring, 1942

The Sorcerer of Rhiannon
Astounding Science Fiction February, 1942

Out of the Sea
Astonishing Stories June, 1942

Cube From Space
Super Science Stories August, 1942

Outpost on IO
Planet Stories November, 1942

The Halfling
Astonishing Stories February, 1943, HOS

Citadel of Lost Ships
Planet Stories March, 1943

Blue Behemoth
Planet Stories May, 1943

Thralls of the Endless Night
Planet Stories Fall, 1943

Shadow Over Mars
Startling Stories February, 1944

The Jewel of Bas
Planet Stories Spring, 1944, BoLB

The Veil of Astellar
Thrilling Wonder Stories Spring, 1944, BoLBTerror Out of Space
Planet Stories Summer, 1944

I Feel Bad Killing You
New Detective Magazine November, 1944

The Vanishing Venusians
Planet Stories Spring, 1945, BoLB

Lorelei of the Red Mist (with Ray Bradbury)
Planet Stories Summer, 1946
The Best of Planet Stories No. 1, ed. Leigh Brackett, Ballantine, 1975

The Moon that Vanished
Thrilling Wonder Stories October, 1948, BoLB

The Beast-Jewel of Mars
Planet Stories Winter, 1948, CoT

Queen of the Starhope
Thrilling Wonder Stories April, 1949

Sea-Kings of Mars (excerpt) (also as The Sword of Rhiannon)
Thrilling Wonder Stories June, 1949;

Queen of the Martian Catacombs
Planet Stories Summer, 1949

Enchantress of Venus (also as City of the Lost Ones)
Planet Stories Fall, 1949, HOS, BoLB

The Lake of the Gone Forever
Thrilling Wonder Stories October, 1949, HOS

The Dancing Girl of Ganymede
Thrilling Wonder Stories February, 1950, HOS

The Truants
Startling Stories July, 1950, HOS

The Citadel of Lost Ages
Thrilling Wonder Stories December, 1950, HOS

Black Amazon of Mars
Planet Stories March, 1951

The Starmen of Llydris
Startling Stories March, 1951

The Woman from Altair
Startling Stories July, 1951, BoLB

The Shadows
Startling Stories February, 1952, HOS

The Last Days of Shandakor
Startling Stories April, 1952, CoT, BoLB

Shannach — the Last
Planet Stories November, 1952, BoLB

The Big Jump
Space Stories February, 1953

The Ark of Mars
Planet Stories September, 1953

Minus Bisha
Planet Stories January, 1954, CoT

Runaway
Startling Stories Spring, 1954

The Tweener
The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction February, 1955, BoLB

Teleportress of Alpha C
Planet Stories Winter, 1955

Last Call From Sector 9G
Planet Stories Summer, 1955

BRACKETT

BRACKETT

The Queer Ones (also as The Other People)
Venture Science Fiction March, 1957, BoLB

So Pale, So Cold, So Fair
Argosy July, 1957

All the Colors of the Rainbow
Venture Science Fiction November, 1957, HOS

The Road to Sinharat
Amazing Stories May, 1963, CoT

Purple Priestess of the Mad Moon
The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction October, 1964, CoT

How Bright the Stars
Flame Tree Planet, ed. Roger Elwood, Concordia, 1973

Come Sing the Moons of Moravenn
The Other Side of Tomorrow, ed. Roger Elwood, Random, 1973

The Ginger Star
Worlds of If January/February (+1), 1974, *The Book of Skaith*, Nelson Doubleday, 1976

Mommies and Daddies
Crisis, ed. Roger Elwood, Nelson, 1974

Screenplays

In addition to writing screenplays for feature films, Brackett also produced teleplays for various television series, including Checkmate, Suspense, the Alfred Hitchcock show, and the Rockford Files.

The Vampire's Ghost (John K. Butler, screenplay; Leigh Brackett, story)
Republic Pictures Corporation; Lesley Selander, director; 1945

Crime Doctor's Man Hunt
Columbia Pictures Corporation; William Castle, director; 1946

The Big Sleep (with William Faulkner and Jules Furthman; from the novel by Raymond Chandler)
Warner Bros.; Howard Hawks, director; 1946, script distributed by Script City, Hollywood, Calif., 1946

Rio Bravo (with Jules Furthman; from a story by Barbara Hawks McCampbell)
Armada / Warner Bros.; Howard Hawks, director; 1959

Gold of the Seven Saints (with Steve Frazee and Leonard Freeman)
Warner Bros; Gordon Douglas, director; 1961

13 West Street (with Robert Presnell Jr. and Bernard C. Schoenfeld; based on Brackett's novel *The Tiger Among Us*)
Ladd Enterprises / Columbia; Philip Leacock, director; 1962

Hatari! (from a story by Harry Kurnitz)
Malabar / Paramount Pictures; Howard Hawks, director; 1962

El Dorado (from Harry Brown's novel *The Stars in Their Courses*)
Laurel Productions / Paramount Pictures Corporation; Howard Hawks, director; 1967

Rio Lobo (with Burton Wohl)
also known as: *San Timoteo*
Cinema Center Films / Malabar; Howard Hawks, director; 1970

The Long Goodbye (from the novel by Raymond Chandler)
E-K-Corporation / Lion's Gate Films / United Artists; Robert Altman, director; 1973, script distributed by Script City, Hollywood, CA

The Empire Strikes Back (with Lawrence Kasdan, from a story by George Lucas)
also known as: *Star Wars: Episode V: The Empire Strikes Back*, 20th Century Fox / Lucasfilm Ltd; Irvin Kershner, director; 1980, the complete script is available in *The Empire Strikes Back Notebook* edited by Diana Attias and Lindsay Smith, Ballantine Books, 1980

Articles and Essays

The Science-Fiction Field
Writer's Digest July, 1944

Beyond Our Narrow Skies
The Best of Planet Stories No. 1, ed. Leigh Brackett, Ballantine, 1975

Introduction
Sword Woman, Robert E. Howard, Zebra, 1977

Fifty Years of Wonder
The Best of Edmond Hamilton, Nelson Doubleday, 1977

Afterword
The Best of Leigh Brackett, Nelson Doubleday, 1977

Critical and Other Studies

Biographical Sketch
Planet Stories Winter, 1942

Biographical Sketch (with Photo)
Startling Stories Fall, 1944

Leigh Brackett, Marion Zimmer Bradley, Anne McCaffrey : A Primary and Secondary Bibliography
Rosemarie Arbur; G.K. Hall, 1982

Pulp Culture: Hardboiled Fiction and the Cold War
Woody Haut; Serpent's Tail, 1995.

The Creators of Science Fiction - 5: Leigh Brackett
Brian Stableford; *Interzone* February

Fire in the North

by Candas Jane Dorsey

TIPTREE

I'm writing this in early May. The northern half of the province is burning. On a bad day like this, when the forest fire smoke drifts south, I wake up with fire in my head too, and when I open the door to let the cats out, the air is palpable: yellow, thick and abrasive.

With every breath reminding me that we are only a link on a great Gaian food-chain, it becomes less surprising to me that I write more brutally than I expected to do when I began, thirty years ago, as an awkward, ambitious teenager, to tell secrets in public: that is, when I began to write poetry and fiction. When the air is like this, and I have to make an effort to remember clear air, I can understand first sentences like *There is a scarred, twisted old madwoman in a cage in the courtyard* (from *Black Wine*, Tor 1997) or *He got it from his father, who fucked him regularly from the night of Grant's sixth birthday until Grant was fourteen and tall for his age...* (from "Mapping," published in *Tesseracts*[5], ed. Rune and Meynard, Tesseract Books, 1996).

All this is after the fact. At the time, I didn't know where they came from, just as when I woke this morning I didn't know why I was in so much pain. It isn't until you have a chance to look at the landscape that you understand the ecology of a creative work, and even then, so much is going on beneath the surface that the author can never get to the bottom if it.

One simply has to have the courage to keep breathing no matter how thick the air is and how much the breaths hurt.

And one simply has to remember that all of this pain is metaphorical. A miner with black lung disease, like the one I read about in the paper today whose widow had been refused a survivor's pension, would laugh at me.

I teach writing. Sometimes it's to adult continuing-education students, sometimes I'm the visiting writer in schools. I have a entertaining portfolio of detail material, but I'm really there to tell them all the same few, important things.

First I tell them that this might hurt, but that they will not die. Most of them laugh, though the committed ones simply watch as I tell them it may feel like they are going to die when they feel the difficult stuff appear, but that they will not really die, and they don't have to protect themselves from death with drink or drugs. They simply must write.

The fact is that a book arises from a swamp, not just any old wetland protected by Ducks Unlimited or the Sierra Club. No, this is a grotty little mosquito-breeding hole on the back forty of the subconscious, where everything the person has ever owned, learned, seen, thought, or dreamed is dumped. Sometimes it's dumped there because we think we're done with it, sometimes because the conscious mind asks for orderly storage but the subconscious, always lazy, simply collects the haulage fee, hauls the material out of sight and tips it off the back of the pickup truck any which way. That's the Lightning Stroke of Genius part (and more on that later).

Now, some people have more avaricious subconsciouses than that. They open Pick-a-Part businesses and clutter up the back forty with racks of dismantled material salvaged from dismantled or shattered experience. When the conscious call for plot material, sub-bots in overalls scurry about the aisles pulling parts that may work, which the conscious mind can buy at great personal cost. That's the blood, sweat and tears part.

When we go out in public though, we don't admit the chaos. We have a strong desire to save face, and also to protect our subconscious from criticism, because if its feelings get hurt, it won't work, or at best will send only clichés out front.

Which brings me to being asked about the writing of *Black Wine* for the Readercon 1998 Programme Book. Frankly, I would rather have had dental work. A writer is the worst person to ask for a commentary on his or her work. We are not objective. Half the time we aren't even conscious. We are befuddled from breathing bad air, or lightheaded from the hyperoxygenation, or exhilarated by the clean air of the best days of spring.

But, I hear you say, you canny reader you: how can this be so? Writers can talk for hours, especially after midnight, about what they were trying to do in such-and-such book, how they developed the theme, and so on.

Ah, but, I respond, that's a book already written. We start learning critical techniques in grade school. Articulate writers just happen to have both sets of skills. This means we can fake it, and make our after-the-fact fabrications sound really plausi-

TIPTREE

ble. (After all, if I say it's about thus-and-so, and I wrote it, are you going to contradict me?)

And further, if we know the truth, or part of it, we often don't want to admit it.

So what spawned *Black Wine*? Hmmm. Years as a child care worker? A strong interest in social justice? Feminism? Queer politics?

Let me for once tell the truth. First of all, I had to write a novel. It was time. I am not a natural novel-writer. So I beavered away at one, and it wasn't working. I didn't know enough to finish it. I put it away and looked around for a simpler book to write. A colleague made a chance comment that a short story I was describing sounded more like a novel. It was a nice simple quest story with some breezy moments of self-referential irony. It was then called *The Book of Essa*. I figured that compared to the complicated tangle of existential angst, alienation and technical challenge I'd gotten myself into with the book I was working on, this would be a breeze.

Don't laugh. That was then. I was younger.

A lot younger.

So when the day came, in the midst of *The Book of Essa*, that I found myself sitting down at my old Kaypro and writing "There is a madwoman in a cage in the courtyard," I was astonished. I still don't know where it came from. I know that it made the story less simple...

There are lots of little games I had fun playing, like the remaking of idiomatic expressions, and there are events I deliberately moved in from the real world, like the Tienanmen Square massacre (including the experience of a western woman who saw the guard kill for the first time seconds after telling her he was a good person). Stuff like that is easy to track. Harder to track is where the dark, quirky, curious or dreamlike stuff comes from. Some of it does come from actual dreams: like the image for the Carrier of Spirits. And I remember where the hanging woman came from a one-page sketch many years before, which was so creepy that I filed it away and tried not to think about it. But once the story had moved to the brutal realm in the south, it seemed like what might happen to Annalise and Ed when they were caught.

Still, I remember wondering sometimes if I really wanted to do this (be a writer at all, that is) as some of the more difficult segments emerged.

The courage needed to go through those moments, to accept that material, is great.

The 16-year-old daughter of a colleague of mine believes that all writers have to be *born naturals*. I worry about this attitude, which I find in people of all ages who want to begin writing and don't dare, as if it's an ability encoded in a gene that only a few lucky folks have. Her mother wants her to learn from writers who are not her mother and therefore whose word can be trusted, that writing is more about practice and hard work. I am concerned about this young woman's *born naturals* misapprehension for another reason. While writing the truth won't kill you, misconceptions like that can

I am not joking. I knew a young man who suicided partly because his father was a famous writer, he too wanted to write, and he was in despair because he wasn't as good as Rilke. He was 24. His diaries quoted some of Rilke's poems written when Rilke was 70. The young man never saw (deprived himself fatally of any change to see) the problem: he wanted what Rilke had spent a lifetime getting: his life.

Once at a writer's retreat I was having an attack of angst because I wasn't good enough, couldn't write, etc. etc., and rather than sit gnashing teeth in front of the computer, I went out to the porch with *Zen Mind Beginner's Mind* by Shinryu Suzuki, which I had been reading one lesson at a time for some years. I was, after all those years, only a few lessons into the book. This day, the lesson I read in mid-angst made me laugh aloud. Suzuki (this is all from memory, so forgive the small deviations from the actual text, which I highly recommend by the way) talked first about making bread, and how Buddha said that we must become bread, we must simply put ourselves in the oven. He said, "It is better not to be too idealistic. If an artist is too idealistic, he has no alternative to commit suicide, because the gap between what he can do and what he wants to do is too great. It is better just to become bread." In other words, just do it and quit thinking about it.

In 1971, as a young and beginning writer, I studied with W.O. Mitchell, who, Canadians know but others might not, was (he died this spring) one of the core writers of our Canadian prairie experience. W.O. was deeply committed to teaching young writers, but he was rigorous and firm about not quitting. He said in his gravelly voice: "Don't wait for the Lightning Stroke of Genius. You might die first. Just sit down every day and write. It doesn't matter what you write. Eventually you will write well." This is a summary. But he often invoked The Lightning Stroke of Genius to

poke gentle fun at anyone who felt that writers could only write when inspired, or in other words, had to be *born naturals.*

In Lisa Tuttle's book *A Spaceship Made of Stone*, there is a wonderful story, "The Cure," about the end of language. Which is, I think, based on Burroughs' line "Language is a virus from outer space" (which Laurie Anderson has also used in a piece). It is a stunning story. Why I mention it here is that if my colleague's daughter, or any beginning writer reads it, s/he will see that the idea that language is "natural" can be challenged.

High-function language facility is learned. How? By reading a lot and internalising the way others use language, and by writing all the time, even if only a little every day, in order to practice. On that level, would anyone of sixteen years of age expect to get into the Olympics without practice, just by buying some cool exercise gear at the mall and then going off to the Games and expecting a gold medal? No. Einstein failed math, too — but not just because he was smarter — because his brain worked and learned in a different way. He didn't come up with relativity at age 16. He just learned the habits of creativity early, then used them for years, and the experience and habits aggregated.

Unlike an athlete, a writer has the advantage of getting better as s/he get older. Why? Because Life Intervenes. The technical merits of a good sentence are all very well, but a lifetime of writing about what is going on in one's life and in the world adds up to something. Passions accrete information, information which helps their expression.

The practice part, the don't-think-about-it, just-do-it part, is part of it, sure, but so is having things to say. So. When I teach, what I assemble for my students is a picture not of *practice and hard work* so much as of a combination of passion, perseverance, and familiarity with both media: the language, and life.

At each level in our life we have different things to say. We don't attain greatness by being helicopter-lifted to the top of the mountain. We climb up because we want the feel of wind in our faces, the exciting stretch and contraction and bend of joints and muscles, the kinesthetic joy of movement and exertion, the sense of travel, the view from each part of the path, whether deep in the woods or out on a promontory where we can see the curvature of the Earth in daylight or the stars at night. We love the taste of the lowbush blueberry and saskatoons on the lower slopes, the wild strawberries growing in the alpine meadow, and the cold clean water of the artesian spring we find when we are hot and tried and think we can't go on.

The climb is part of the joy. The achievement is in the doing.

"Don't quit," Mitchell said. "Keep the hand moving," Natalie Goldberg says (in her wonderful books, *Wild Mind* and *Writing Down the Bones*: any beginning—and ongoing—writer should read these).

That's what I tell my students. They don't need technical help. They can look that up. They need courage, passion and a long view. They need to keep writing.

TIPTREE

Water Off A Black Dog's Back

by Kelly Link

Tell me which you could sooner do without, love or water."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, could you live without love, or could you live without water?"

"Why can't I have both?"

Rachel Rook took Carroll home to meet her parents two months after she first slept with him. For a generous girl, a girl who took off her clothes with abandon, she was remarkably close-mouthed about some things. In two months Carroll had learned that her parents lived on a farm several miles outside of town; that they sold strawberries in summer, and Christmas trees in the winter. He knew that they never left the farm; instead the world came to them in the shape of weekend picnickers and driveby tourists.

"Do you think that your parents will like me?" he said. He had spent the afternoon preparing for this visit as carefully as if he was preparing for an exam. He had gotten his hair cut, trimmed his nails, washed his neck and behind his ears. The outfit he had chosen, khaki pants and a blue button-down shirt, and no tie, lay neatly folded on the bed. He stood before Rachel in his plain white

FIRE IN THE NORTH

Candas Jane Dorsey

Continued from page 43

That's also what I tell myself in those dark nights (and tea -times) of the soul which all writers suffer. That's what I tell myself when the air is thick and I am worried that its abrasiveness is more than metaphoric.

Become bread. Put yourself in the oven. Do it. Live it.

Keep breathing.

Breathe.

TIPTREE

underwear and white socks, gazing at her as if she were a mirror.

"No," she said. It was the first time she had been to his apartment, and she stood square in the center of his bedroom, her arms folded against her body, as if she was afraid to sit down, to touch something.

"Why?"

"My father will like you," she said. "But he likes everyone. My mother's more particular — she thinks that you lack a serious nature."

Carroll put on his pants, admiring the crease. "So you've talked to her about me."

"Yes."

"But you haven't talked about her to me."

"No."

"Are you ashamed of her?"

Rachel snorted. Then she sighed in a way that seemed to suggest she was regretting her decision to take him home. "You're ashamed of me," he guessed, and Rachel kissed him and smiled, and didn't say anything.

Rachel still lived on her parent's farm, which made it all the more remarkable that she had kept Carroll and her parents apart for so long. It suggested a talent for daily organization that filled Carroll's heart with admiration and lust. She was nineteen, two years younger than Carroll; she was a student at Jellicoh College and every weekday she rose at seven and biked four miles into town, and then back again on her bike, four miles uphill to the farm.

Carroll met Rachel in the Jellicoh College library, where he had a part-time job. He sat at the checkout desk, stamping books and reading *Tristram Shandy* for a graduate class: he was almost asleep when someone said, "Excuse me."

He looked up. The girl who stood before the tall desk was red-headed. Sunlight streaming in through a high window opposite her lit up the fine hairs on her arm, the sharp crease of her pleated white shirt. The sunlight turned her hair to fire and Carroll found it difficult to look directly at her. "Can I help you?" he said.

She placed a shredded rectangle on the desk, and Carroll picked it up between his thumb and forefinger. Pages hung in tatters from the sodden blue spine, and title, binding, and covers had been gnawed away. "I need to pay for a damaged book," she said.

"What happened? Did your dog eat it?" he said, making a joke.

"Yes," she said, and smiled.

"What's your name?" Carroll said. Already, he thought he might be in love.

The farmhouse where Rachel lived had a wraparound porch like an apron. It had been built on a hill, and looked down a long green slope of Christmas trees towards the town and Jellicoh College. It looked old-fashioned and a little forlorn.

On one side of the house was a small barn, and behind the barn was an oval pond, dark and fringed with pine trees. It winked in the twilight like a glossy lidless eye. The sun was rolling down the grassy rim of the hill, towards the pond, and the exaggerated shadows of Christmas trees, long and pointed as witches hats, stitched black triangles across the purple-grey lawn. House, barn, and hill were luminous in the fleet purple light.

Carroll parked the car in front of the barn and went around to Rachel's side to hand her out. A muffled, ferocious breathing emanated from the barn, and the doors shuddered as if something inside was hurling itself repeatedly towards them, through the dark and airless space. There was a sour, animal smell. "What's in there?" Carroll asked.

"The dogs," Rachel said. "They aren't allowed in the house, and they don't like to be separated from my mother."

"I like dogs," Carroll said.

There was a man sitting on the porch: he stood up as they approached the house and came forward to meet them. He was of medium build, and had pink-brown hair like his daughter. Rachel said, "Daddy, this is Carroll Murtaugh. Carroll, this is my daddy."

Mr. Rook had no nose. He shook hands with Carroll. His hand was warm and dry, flesh and blood. Carroll tried not to stare at Mr Rook's face.

In actual fact, Rachel's father did have a nose, which was carved out of what appeared to be pine. The nostrils of the nose were flared slightly, as if Mr. Rook were smelling something pleasant. Copper wire ran through the bridge of the nose, attaching it to the frame of a pair of glasses; it nestled, delicate as a sleeping mouse between the two lenses.

"Nice to meet you, Carroll," he said. "I understand that you're a librarian down at the college. You like books, do you?" His voice was deep and sonorous, as if he was speaking out of a well: Carroll was later to discover that Mr. Rook's voice changed slightly, depending on which nose he wore.

"Yes, sir," Carroll said. Just to be sure, he looked back at Rachel. As he had thought, her nose was unmistakably the genuine article. He shot her a second, accusatory glance. Why didn't you tell me? She shrugged.

Mr. Rook said, "I don't have anything against books myself. But my wife can't stand 'em. Nearly broke her heart when Rachel decided to go to college." Rachel stuck out her lower lip. "Why don't you give your mother a hand, Rachel, setting the table, while Carroll and I get to know each other?"

"All right," Rachel said, and disappeared inside the house.

Mr. Rook sat down on the porch steps, and Carroll sat down with him. "She's a beautiful girl," Mr. Rook said. "Just like her mother."

"Yes sir," Carroll said. "Beautiful." He stared straight ahead, and spoke forcefully, as if he had not noticed he was talking to a man with a wooden nose.

"You probably think it's odd, don't you, a girl her age, still living at home."

Carroll shrugged. "She seems attached to both of you. You grow Christmas trees, sir?"

"Strawberries too," Mr. Rook said. "It's a funny thing about strawberries and pine trees. People will pay you to let them dig up their own. They do all the work and then they pay you for it. They say the strawberries taste better that way, and they may be right. Myself, I can't taste much anyway."

Carroll leaned back against the porch rail and listened to Mr. Rook speak. He sneaked sideways looks at Mr. Rook's profile. From a few feet away, in the dim cast of the porch light, the nose had a homely, thoughtful bump to it: it was a philosopher's nose, a questing nose. White moths, large as Carroll's hand, pinwheeled around the porch light. They threw out tiny halos of dark, and stirred up breaths of air with their wings, coming to rest on the porch screen, folding themselves into stillness like fans. Moths have no noses either, Carroll thought.

"I can't smell the pine trees either," Mr. Rook said. "I have to appreciate the irony in that. You'll have to forgive my wife, if she seems a bit awkward at first. She's not used to strangers."

Rachel danced out onto the porch. "Dinner's almost ready," she said. "Has Daddy been keeping you entertained?"

"He's been telling me all about your farm," Carroll said.

Rachel and her father looked at each other thoughtfully. "That's great," Rachel said. "You know what he's really dying to ask, Daddy. Tell him about your collection of noses."

"Oh no," Carroll protested. "I wasn't wondering at all — "

But Mr. Rook stood up, dusting off the seat of his pants. "I'll go get them down. I almost wore a fancier one tonight, but it's so windy tonight, and rather damp. I didn't trust it not to rain." He hurried off into the house.

Carroll leaned over to Rachel. "Why didn't you tell me?" he asked, almost pleasantly.

"What?"

"That your father has a wooden nose."

"He has several noses, but you heard him. It might rain. Some of them," she said, "are liable to rust."

"Why does he have a wooden nose?" Carroll whispered.

"A boy named Biederbecke bit it off, in a fight." The alliteration evidently pleased her, because she said a little louder, "Biederbecke bit it off, when you were a boy. Isn't that right, Daddy?"

The porch door swung open again, and Mr. Rook said, "Yes, but I don't blame him, really I don't. We were little boys and I called him a stinking Kraut. That was during the war, and afterwards, he was very sorry. You have to look on the bright side of things — your mother would never have noticed me if it hadn't had been for my nose. That was a fine nose. I modeled it on Abraham Lincoln's nose, and carved it out of black walnut." He set a dented black tacklebox down next to Carroll, squatting beside it. "Look here."

The inside of the tacklebox was lined with red velvet and the mild light of the October moon illuminated the noses within, glowing as if a jeweller's lamp had been turned upon them: noses made of wood, and beaten copper, tin and brass. One seemed to be silver veined with beads of turquoise. There were aquiline noses; noses pointed like gothic spires; noses with nostrils curled up like tiny bird claws. "Who made these?" Carroll said.

Mr. Rook gave a deprecative cough. "It's my hobby," he said. "Pick one up if you like."

"Go ahead," Rachel said to Carroll.

Carroll chose a nose that had been painted over with blue and pink flowers. It was glassy-smooth

TIPTREE

and light in his hand, like a blown eggshell. "It's beautiful," he said. "What's it made out of?"

"Papier-mache. There's one for every day of the week." Mr. Rook said.

"What did the...original look like?" Carroll asked.

"Hard to remember, really. It wasn't much of a nose," Mr. Rook said. "Before."

"Back to the question, please. Which do you choose, water or love?"

"What happens if I choose wrong?"

"You'll find out, won't you."

"Which would you choose?"

"That's my question, Carroll. You already asked yours."

"You still haven't answered me, either. All right, all right, let me think for a bit."

Rachel had straight reddish-brown hair that fell precisely to her shoulders and then stopped. Her eyes were fox-colored, and she had more small, pearly teeth than seemed absolutely necessary to Carroll. She smiled at him, and when she bent over the tacklebox full of noses, Carroll could see the two wings of her shoulderblades beneath the thin cotton t-shirt, her vertebrae outlined like a knobby strand of coral. As they went in to dinner she whispered in his ear, "My mother has a wooden leg."

She led him into the kitchen to meet her mother. The air in the kitchen was hot and moist, and little beads of sweat stood out on Mrs. Rook's face. Rachel's mother resembled Rachel in the way that Mr. Rook's wooden nose resembled a real nose, as if someone had hacked Mrs. Rook out of wood, or granite. She had large hands with long, yellowed fingernails, and all over her black dress were short black dog hairs. "So you're a librarian," she said to Carroll.

"Part-time," Carroll said. "Yes, ma'am."

"What do you do the rest of the time?" she said.

"I take classes."

Mrs. Rook stared at him without blinking. "Are your parents still alive?"

"My mother is, "Carroll said. "She lives in Florida. She plays bridge."

Rachel grabbed Carroll's arm. "Come on," she said. "The food's getting cold."

She pulled him into a dining room with dark wood panelling and a long table set for four people. The long, black skirt of Mrs. Rook's dress hissed along the floor as she pulled her chair into the table. Carroll sat down next to her. Was it the right or the left? He tucked his feet under his chair. Both women were silent, and Carroll was silent between them. Mr. Rook talked instead, filling in the awkward, empty pause so that Carroll was glad that it was his nose and not his tongue that the Biederbecke boy had bitten off.

How had she lost her leg? Mrs. Rook watched Carroll with a cold and methodical eye, as he ate, and he held Rachel's hand under the table for comfort. He was convinced that her mother knew this, and disapproved. He ate his peas and pork with a reckless flair, balancing them on the blade of his knife. He hated peas. In between mouthfuls, he gulped down the pink wine in his glass. It was sweet and strong, and tasted of burnt sugar. "Is this apple wine?" he asked. "It's delicious."

"No, it's strawberry wine," Mr. Rook said, pleased. "Have some more. We make up a batch every year. I can't taste it myself, but it's strong stuff."

Rachel filled Carroll's empty glass and watched him drain it instantly. "If you've finished, why don't you let my mother take you to meet the dogs? You look like you could use some fresh air. I'll stay here and help Daddy do the dishes. Go on," she said.

Mrs. Rook pushed her chair back from the table, pushed herself out of the chair. "Well, come on," she said. "I don't bite."

Outside, the moths beat at his face, and he reeled beside Rachel's mother on the moony-white gravel, light as a thread spun out on its spool. She walked quickly, leaning forward a little as her right foot came down, dragging the left foot through the small stones.

"What kind of dogs are they?" he said.

"Black ones," she said.

"What are their names?"

"Flower and Acorn," she said, and flung open the barn door. Two labradors, slippery as black trout in the moonlight, surged up at Carroll. They thrust their velvet muzzles at him, uttering angry staccato coughs, their rough breath steaming at his face. They were the size of small ponies, and their paws left muddy prints on his shirt. Carroll pushed them back down, and they snapped at his hands.

"Heel," Mrs. Rook said, and instantly the two dogs went to her, arranging themselves on either side like bookends. Against the folds of her skirt, they were nearly invisible, only their saucer-like eyes flashing wickedly at Carroll.

"Flower's pregnant," Mrs. Rook said. "We've tried to breed them before, but it never took. Go for a run, girl. Go with her, Acorn."

The dogs loped off, moonlight spilling off their coats like water. Carroll watched them run; the stale air of the barn washed over him, and under the bell of Mrs. Rook's skirt he pictured the dark wood of the left leg, the white flesh of the right leg, like a pair of mismatched dice. Mrs. Rook drew in her breath. She said, "I don't mind you sleeping with my daughter, but you had better not get her pregnant."

Carroll said, "No, ma'am."

"If you give her a bastard, I'll set the dogs on you," she said, and went back towards the house. Carroll scrambled after her.

On Friday, Carroll was shelving new books on the third floor. He stood, both arms lifted up to steady a wavering row of psych periodicals. Someone paused in the narrow row, directly behind him, and a small cold hand insinuated itself into his trousers, slipping under the waistband of his underwear.

"Rachel?" he said and the hand squeezed, slowly. He jumped, and the row of books fell off their shelf like dominoes. He bent to pick them up, not looking at her. "I forgive you," he said.

"That's nice," she said. "For what?"

"For not telling me about your father's — " he hesitated delicately, " — wound."

"I thought you handled that very well," she said. "And I did tell you about my mother's leg."

"I wasn't sure whether or not to believe you. How did she lose it?"

"When I was four, she was walking barefoot in the strawberry field and stepped on a nail. By the time she went to see a doctor, she had septicemia. It had to be amputated just below the knee. Daddy made her a replacement out of walnut; he said the prosthesis that the hospital wanted to give her looked nothing like the leg she'd lost. It has a name carved on it, she used to tell me that a ghost lived inside it and helped her walk." She didn't look at him as she spoke, flicking the dust off the spine of a toppled book with her long fingers.

"What was its name?" Carroll asked.

"Ellen," Rachel said.

Two days after they had first met, Carroll was in the basement stacks. It was dark in the aisles, the tall shelves curving towards each other. The lights were controlled by timers, and went on and off randomly: there was the ominous sound of ticking as the timers clicked off row by row. Puddles of dirty yellow light wavered under his feet, the floor as slick as water. There was one other student on this floor, a boy who trod at Carroll's heels, breathing heavily.

Rachel was in a back corner, partly hidden by a shelving cart. "Goddammit, Goddammit to hell," she was saying, as she flung a book down. "Stupid book, stupid, useless, stupid, know-nothing books." She kicked at the book several more times, and stomped on it for good measure. Then she looked up and saw Carroll, and the boy behind him. "Oh," she said. "It's you again."

Carroll turned and glared at the boy. "What's the matter," he said. "Haven't you ever seen a librarian at work?"

The boy fled. "What's the matter?" Carroll said again.

"Nothing," Rachel said. "I'm just tired of reading stupid books about books about books. It's ten times worse then my mother ever said." She looked at him speculatively, and said, "Have you ever made love in a library?"

"Um," Carroll said. "No."

Rachel stripped off her woolly sweater, her blue undershirt. Underneath, her bare flesh flickered and burned. The lights clicked off two rows down, then the row beside Carroll, and he moved forward to find Rachel before she vanished. Her body was hot and dry, like a newly extinguished bulb.

Rachel seemed to enjoy making love in the library. The library officially closed at midnight, and on Tuesdays and Thursdays when he was the last of the staff to leave, Carroll left the East Entrance unlocked for Rachel while he made up a pallet of jackets and sweaters from the Lost and Found.

The first night, he had arranged a makeshift bed in the aisle between PR878W6B37, Relative Creatures, and PR878W6B35, Corrupt Relations. In the summer, the stacks had been much cooler than his un-airconditioned room. He had hoped to woo her into his bed by the time the weather turned, but it was October already, and they had progressed no farther than PR878W6A9, Woman and the Demon. Rachel pulled PR878W6A9 out to use as a pillow. "I thought you didn't like books," he said, trying to make a joke.

"My mother doesn't like books," she said. "Or libraries. Which is a good thing. You don't ever have to worry about her looking for me here." Her mouth twisted, as if she tasted something bitter.

When they made love, Rachel kept her eyes closed. Carroll watched her face, her body lifting

TIPTREE

beneath him like water. He closed his eyes, opening them quickly again, hoping to catch her looking back at him. Did he please her? He pleased himself, and her breath quickened upon his neck. Her hands smoothed his body, moving restlessly back and forth, until he gathered them to himself, biting at her knuckles.

Later he lay prone and let her move over him, her knees clasping his waist, her narrow feet cupped under the stirrups of his knees. Afterwards, they lay hinged together, and Carroll squinted his eyes shut to make the Exit sign fuzzy in the darkness. He imagined that they had just made love in a forest, and the red glow was a campfire. He imagined they were not on the third floor of a library, but on the shore of a deep, black lake in the middle of a stand of tall trees.

"When you were a teenager," Rachel said, "what was the worst thing you ever did?"

Carroll thought for a moment. "When I was a teenager," he said, "I used to go into my room every day after school and masturbate. And my dog, Sunny, used to stand outside the door and whine. I'd come in a handful of Kleenex, and afterwards I never knew what to do with them. If I threw them in the wastebasket, my mother might notice them piling up. If I dropped them under the bed, then Sunny would sneak in later and eat them. It was a revolting dilemma, and every day I swore I wouldn't ever do it again."

"That's disgusting, Carroll."

Carroll was constantly amazed at the things he told Rachel, as if love was some sort of hook she used to drag secrets out of him, things that he had forgotten until she asked for them. "Your turn," he said.

Rachel curled herself against him. "Well, when I was little, and I did something bad, my mother used to take off her wooden leg and spank me with it. When I got older, and started being asked out on dates, she would forbid me. She actually said, I forbid you to go, just like a Victorian parent. I would wait until she took her bath after dinner, and steal her leg, and hide it. And I would stay out as late as I wanted. When I got home, she was always sitting at the kitchen table, with the leg strapped back on. She always found it before I got home, but I always stayed away as long as I could. I never came home before I had to.

"When I was little, I hated her leg. It was like her other child, the obedient daughter. I was the one she had to spank. I thought the leg told her when I was bad, and I could feel it gloating whenever she punished me. I hid it from her in closets, or in the belly of the grandfather clock. Once I buried it out in the strawberry field, because I knew it hated the dark: it was scared of the dark, like me."

Carroll eased away from her, rolling over on his stomach. The whole time she had been talking, her voice had been calm, her breath tickling his throat. Telling her about Sunny, the semen-eating dog, he had sprouted a cheerful little erection. Listening to her, it had melted away, and his balls had crept up his goose-pimpled thighs.

Somewhere a timer clicked and a light turned off. "Let's make love again," she said, and seized him in her hand. He nearly screamed.

In late November, Carroll went to the farm again for dinner. He parked just outside the barn, where malignant and black as tar, Flower lolled on her side in the cold, dirty straw. She was swollen and too lazy to do more than show him her teeth; he admired them. "How pregnant is she?" Carroll asked Mr. Rook, who had emerged from the barn.

"She's due any day," Mr. Rook said. "The vet says there might be six puppies in there." Today he wore a tin nose, and his words had a distinct echo, whistling out double shrill, like a teakettle on the boil. "Would you like to see my workshop?" he said.

"Okay," Carroll said. The barn smelled of gasoline and straw, old things congealing in darkness; it smelled of winter. Along the right inside wall, there were a series of long hooks, and depending from them were various pointed and hooked tools. Below was a table strewn with objects that seemed to have come from the city dump: bits of metal; cigar boxes full of broken glass sorted according to color; a carved wooden hand, jointed and with a dime-store ring over the next-to-last finger.

Carroll picked it up, surprised at its weight. The joints of the wooden fingers clicked as he manipulated them, the fingers long and heavy and perfectly smooth. He put it down again. "It's very nice," he said and turned around. Through the thin veil of sunlight and dust that wavered in the open doors, Carroll could see a black glitter of water. "Where's Rachel?"

"She went to find her mother, I'll bet. They'll be down by the pond. Go and tell them it's dinner time." Mr. Rook looked down at the black and rancorous Flower. "Six puppies!" he remarked, in a sad little whistle.

Carroll went down through the slanted grove of Christmas trees. At the base of the hill was a circle of twelve oaks, their leaves making a thick carpet

of gold. The twelve trees were spaced evenly around the perimeter of the pond, like the numbers on a clock face. Carroll paused under the eleven o'clock oak tree, looking at the water. It was as smooth as a mirror: the long spokes of the tree trunks doubled across the water. He saw Rachel in the pond, her white arm cutting through the gaudy leaves that clung like skin to their reflections, and bringing up black droplets of water. Carroll stood in his corduroy jacket, and watched her swim laps across the pond. He wondered how cold the water was. Then he realized that it wasn't Rachel in the pond.

Rachel sat on a quilt on the far side of the pond, under the six o'clock oak. Acorn sat beside her, looking now at the swimmer, now at Carroll. Rachel and her mother were both oblivious to his presence, the latter intent on her exercise, Rachel was rubbing linseed oil into her mother's wooden leg. The wind carried the scent of it across the pond. The dog stood, stiff-legged, fixing Carroll in its dense liquid gaze. It shook itself, sending up a spray of water like diamonds. "Cut it out, Acorn!" Rachel said without looking up. All the way across the pond, Carroll felt the water fall upon him, cold and greasy.

He felt himself turning to stone, with fear. He was afraid of the leg that Rachel held in her lap, he was afraid that Mrs. Rook would emerge from her pond, and he would see the space where her knee hung above the ground. He backed up the hill slowly, almost falling over a small stone marker at the top. As he looked at it, the dog came running up the path, passing him without a glance, and after that Rachel, and her mother, wearing the familiar black dress. The ground was slippery with leaves, and Mrs. Rook leaned on her daughter. Her hair was wet, and her cheeks were as red as leaves.

"I can't read the name," Carroll said.

"It's Ellen," Mrs. Rook said. "My husband carved it."

Carroll looked at Rachel. Your mother has a tombstone for her leg? Rachel looked away.

"You can't live without water."

"So that's your choice?"

"I'm just thinking out loud. I know what you want me to say."

No answer.

"Rachel, look. I choose water, okay?"

No answer.

"Let me explain. You can lie to water-you can say no, I'm not in love, I don't need love, and you can be lying — how is the water supposed to know that you're lying? It can't tell if you're in love or not, right? Water's not that smart. So you fool the water into thinking you'd never dream of falling in love, and when you're thirsty, you drink it."

"You're pretty sneaky."

"I love you, Rachel. Will you please marry me? Otherwise your mother is going to kill me."

No answer.

After dinner, Carroll's car refused to start. No one answered when they rang a garage, and Rachel said, "He can take my bike then."

"Don't be silly," Mr. Rook said. "He can stay here, and we'll get someone in the morning. Besides, it's going to rain soon."

"I don't want to put you to any trouble," Carroll said.

Rachel said, "It's getting dark. He can call a taxi." Carroll looked at her, hurt, and she frowned at him.

"He'll stay in the back room," Mrs. Rook said. "Come and have another glass of wine before you go to bed, Carroll." She grinned at him in what might have been a friendly fashion, except that at some point after dinner, she had removed her dentures.

Rachel brought him a pair of her father's pajamas, and led him off to the room where he was to sleep. The room was small and plain, the only beautiful thing in it was Rachel, sitting on a blue and scarlet quilt. "Who made this?" he said.

"My mother did," Rachel said. "She's made whole closetsful of quilts. It's what she used to do while she waited for me to get home from a date. Now get in bed."

"Why didn't you want me to spend the night?" he asked.

She stuck a long piece of hair in her mouth, and sucked on it, staring at him without blinking. He tried again. "How come you never spend the night at my apartment?"

She shrugged. "Are you tired?"

Carroll yawned, and gave up. "Yes," he said, and Rachel kissed him goodnight. It was a long, thoughtful kiss: then she turned out the light and went down the hall to her own bedroom. Carroll rolled on his side and fell asleep and dreamed that Rachel came back in the room, and stood naked in the moonlight. Then she climbed in bed with him and they made love and then Mrs. Rook came into the room. She beat at them with her leg as they hid under the quilt. She struck Rachel, and turned her into wood.

TIPTREE

As Carroll left the next morning, it was discovered that Flower had given birth to seven puppies in the night. "Well, it's too late now," Rachel said.

"Too late for what?" Carroll asked. He started his car on the first try.

"Never mind," Rachel said gloomily. She didn't wave as he drove away.

Carroll discovered that if he said "I love you" to Rachel, she would say "I love you too" in an absent-minded way. But she still refused to come to his apartment, and because it was colder now, they made love during the day, in the storage closet on the third floor. Sometimes he caught her watching him now, when they made love. The look in her eyes was not quite what he had hoped it would be, more shrewd than passionate. But perhaps this was a trick of the cold winter light.

Sometimes, now that it was cold, Rachel let Carroll drive her home from school. The sign beside the Rook's driveway now said "Get your Christmas trees early." Beneath that it said "Adorable Black Lab puppies free to a good home." But no one wanted a puppy. This was understandable; already the puppies had the gaunt, evil look of their parents. They spent their days catching rats in the barn, and their evenings trailing like sullen shadows after the black skirts of Mrs. Rook. They tolerated Mr. Rook and Rachel; Carroll they eyed hungrily.

"You have to look on the bright side," Mr. Rook said. "They make excellent watchdogs."

Carroll gave Rachel a wooden bird on a gold chain for Christmas, and the complete works of Jane Austen. She gave him a bottle of strawberry wine and a wooden box, with six black dogs painted on the lid. They had fiery red eyes and red licorice tongues. "My father carved it, but I painted it," she said.

Carroll opened the box. "What will I put in it?" he said.

Rachel shrugged. The library was closed for the weekend, and they sat on the dingy green carpet in the deserted lounge. The rest of the staff was on break, and Mr. Cassatti, Carroll's supervisor, had asked Carroll to keep an eye on the things. There had been some complaints, he said, of vandalism in the past few weeks. Books had been knocked off their shelves, or disarranged, and even more curious, a female student claimed to have seen a dog up on the third floor. It had growled at her, she said, and then run off into the stacks. Mr. Cassatti, when he had gone up to check, of course, had seen nothing. Not so much as a single hair. He wasn't worried about the dog, Mr. Cassatti had said, but some books had been discovered, the pages ripped out. Maimed, Mr. Cassatti had said, blinking indignantly.

Rachel handed Carroll one last parcel. It was wrapped in a brown paper bag, and when he opened it a blaze of scarlet and cornflower blue spilled out onto his lap. "My mother made you a quilt just like the one in the spare bedroom," Rachel said. "I told her you thought it was pretty."

"It's beautiful," Carroll said. He snapped the quilt out, so that it spread across the library floor, as if they were having a picnic. He tried to imagine making love to Rachel beneath a quilt her mother had made. "Does this mean that you'll make love with me in a bed?"

"I'm pregnant," Rachel said.

He looked around to see if anyone else had heard her, but of course they were alone. "That's impossible," he said. "You're on the pill."

"Yes, well." Rachel said. "I'm pregnant anyway. It happens sometimes."

"How pregnant?" he asked.

"Three months."

"Does your mother know?"

"Yes," Rachel said.

"Oh God, she's going to put the dogs on me. What are we going to do?"

"What am I going to do," Rachel said, looking down at her cupped hands, so that Carroll could not see her expression. "What am I going to do," she said again.

There was a long pause, and Carroll took one of her hands in his. "Then we'll get married?" he said, a quaver in his voice turning the statement into a question.

"No," she said, looking straight at him, the way she looked at him when they made love. He had never noticed what a sad, hopeless look this was.

Carroll dropped his own eyes, ashamed of himself, and not quite sure why. He took a deep breath. "What I meant to say, Rachel, is I love you very much and would you please marry me?"

Rachel pulled her hand away from him. Her eyes burning, her face like stone, she said in a low, furious voice, "What do you think this is, Carroll? Do you think this is a book? Is this supposed to be the happy ending — we get married and live happily ever after?"

She got up, and he stood up too. He opened his mouth, and nothing came out, so he just followed her as she walked away. She stopped so abruptly that he almost fell against her. "Let me ask you a

question first," she said, and turned to face him. "What would you choose, love or water?"

The question was so ridiculous that he found he was able to speak again. "What kind of a question is that?" he said.

"Never mind. I think you better take me home in your car," Rachel said. "It's starting to snow."

Carroll thought about it during the car ride. He came to the conclusion that it was a silly question, and that if he didn't answer it correctly, Rachel wasn't going to marry him. He wasn't entirely sure that he wanted to give the correct answer, even if he knew what it was.

He said, "I love you, Rachel." He swallowed and he could hear the snow coming down, soft as feathers on the roof and windshield of the car. In the two beams of the headlights the road was dense and white as an iced cake, and in the reflected snow-light Rachel's face was a beautiful greenish color, as if they were underwater. He felt as if he were dreaming. "Will you marry me anyway? I don't know how you want me to choose."

"No."

"Why not?" They had reached the farm; he turned the car into driveway, and stopped. "You've had a pretty good life so far, haven't you?" she said.

"Not too bad," he said sullenly.

"When you walk down the street," Rachel said, "do you ever find pennies?"

"Yes," he said.

"Are they heads or tails?"

"Heads, usually," he said.

"Do you get good grades?"

"A's and B's," he said.

"Do you have to study hard? Have you ever broken a mirror? When you lose things," she said, "do you find them again?"

"What is this, an interview?"

Rachel looked at him. It was hard to read her expression, but she sounded resigned. "Have you ever even broken a bone? Do you ever have to stop for red lights?"

"Okay, okay," he snapped. "My life is pretty easy. I've gotten everything I ever wanted for Christmas, too. And I want you to marry me, so of course you're going to say yes."

He reached out, put his arms around her. She sat brittle and stiff in the circle of his embrace, with her face turned into his jacket. "Rachel..."

"My mother says I shouldn't marry you," she said. "She says I don't really know you, that you're feckless, that you've never lost anything that you cared about, that you're the wrong sort to be marrying into a family like ours."

"Is your mother some kind of oracle, because she has a wooden leg?"

"My mother knows about losing things," Rachel said, pushing at him. "She says it'll hurt, but I'll get over you."

"So tell me, how hard has your life been?" Carroll said. "You've got your nose, and both your legs. What do you know about losing things?"

"I haven't told you everything," Rachel said and slipped out of the car. "You don't know everything about me." Then she slammed the car door. He watched her cross the driveway and go upwards, into the snow.

Carroll called in sick all the next week. The heating unit in his apartment wasn't working, and the cold made him sluggish. He thought about going in to the library, just to be warm, but instead he spent most of his time under the quilt that Mrs. Rook had made, hoping to dream about Rachel. He dreamed instead about being devoured by dogs, about drowning in icy black water. He lay in his dark room, under the weight of the scarlet quilt, when he wasn't asleep, and held long conversations in his head with Rachel, about love and water. He told her stories about his childhood; she almost seemed to be listening. He asked her about the baby, and she told him she was going to name it Ellen if it was a girl. When he took his own temperature on Wednesday, the thermometer said he had a fever of 103, so he climbed back into bed.

When he woke up on Thursday morning, he found short black hairs covering the quilt, which he knew must mean that he was hallucinating. He fell back asleep and dreamed that Mr. Rook came to see him. Mr. Rook was a Black Lab wearing a plastic Groucho Marx nose. He and Carroll stood beside the black lake that was on the third floor of the library. The dog said, "You and I are a lot alike, Carroll."

"I suppose," Carroll said.

"No, really," the dog insisted. It laid its head on Carroll's knee, still looking up at him. "We like to look on the bright side of things. You have to do that, you know."

"Rachel doesn't love me anymore," Carroll said. "Nobody likes me." He scratched behind Mr. Rook's silky ear.

"Now is that looking on the bright side of things?" said the dog. "Scratch a little to the right. Rachel has a hard time, like her mother. Be patient with her."

"So which would you choose," Carroll said. "love or water?"

TIPTREE

"Who says anyone gets to choose anything? You said you picked water, but there's good water and there's bad water. Did you ever think about that?" the dog said. "I have a much better question for you. Are you a good dog or a bad dog?"

"Good dog!" Carroll yelled, and woke himself up.

He called the farmhouse in the morning, and when Rachel answered, he said "This is Carroll. I'm coming to talk to you."

But when he got there, no one was there. The sight of the leftover Christmas trees, tall and gawky as green geese, made him feel homesick. Little clumps of snow like white flowers were melting in the gravel driveway. The dogs were not in the barn, and he hoped that Mrs. Rook had taken them down to the pond.

He walked up to the house, and knocked on the door. If either of Rachel's parents came to the door, he would stand his ground and demand to see their daughter. He knocked again, but no one came. The house, shuttered against the snow, had an expectant air, as if it was waiting for him to say something. So he whispered, "Rachel? Where are you?" The house was silent. "Rachel, I love you. Please come out and talk to me. Let's get married — we'll elope. You steal your mother's leg, and by the time your father carves her a new one, we'll be in Canada. We could go to Niagara Falls for our honeymoon — we could take your mother's leg with us, if you want — Ellen, I mean — we'll take Ellen with us!"

Carroll heard a delicate cough behind him, as if someone were clearing their throat. He turned and saw Flower and Acorn and their six enormous children sitting on the gravel by the barn, next to his car. Their fur was spiky and wet, and they curled their black lips at him. Someone in the house laughed. Or perhaps it was the echo of a splash, down at the pond.

One of the dogs lifted its head and bayed at him. "Hey," he said. "Good dog! Good Flower, good Acorn! Rachel, help!"

She had been hiding behind the front door. She slammed it open, and came out onto the porch. "My mother said I should just let the dogs eat you," she said. "If you came."

She looked tired; she wore a shapeless wool dress that looked like one of her mother's. If she really was pregnant, Carroll couldn't see any evidence yet. "Do you always listen to your mother?" he said. "Don't you love me?"

"When I was born," she said. "I was a twin. My sister's name was Ellen. When we were seven years old, she drowned in the pond — I lost her. Don't you see? People start out losing small things, like noses. Pretty soon you start losing other things too. It's sort of an accidental leprosy. If we got married, you'd find out."

Carroll heard someone coming up the path from the pond, up through the thin ranks of Christmas trees. The dogs pricked up their ears, but their black eyes stayed fastened to Carroll. "You'd better hurry," Rachel said. She escorted him past the dogs, to his car.

"I'm going to come back."

"That's not a good idea," she said. The dogs watched him leave, crowding close around her, their black tails whipping excitedly. He went home and in a very bad temper, he picked up the quilt to inspect it. He was looking for the black hairs he had seen during his fever. But of course there weren't any.

The next day he went back to the library. He was lifting books out of the overnight collection box, when he felt something that was neither rectangular nor flat. It was covered in velvety fur, and damp: he felt warm breath steaming on his hand. It twisted away when he tried to pick it up, and when he reached out for it again, it snarled at him.

He backed away from the collection box, and a long black dog wriggled out of the box after him. Two students stopped to watch what was happening. "Go get Mr. Cassatti, please," Carroll said to one of them. "His office is around the corner."

The dog approached him. Its ears were laid back flat against its skull, and its neck moved like a snake. "Good dog?" Carroll said, and held out his hand. "Flower?" The dog lunged forward, and snapping his jaws shut, bit off his pinky just below the fingernail.

The student screamed. Carroll stood still and looked down at his right hand, which was slowly leaking blood. The sound that the dog's jaw had made as it severed his finger had been crisp and businesslike: now the dog stared at Carroll in a way that reminded him of Rachel's stare. "Give me back my finger," Carroll said.

The dog growled and backed away. "We have to catch it," the student said. "So they can reattach your finger. My god, what if it has rabies?"

Mr. Cassatti appeared, carrying a large flat atlas, extended like a shield. "Someone said that there was a dog in the library," he said.

"In the corner over there," Carroll said. "It bit off my finger." He held up his hand for Mr. Cassatti to see, but Mr. Cassatti was looking towards the corner and shaking his head.

He said, "I don't see a dog."

The two students went to where the dog had been, loudly insisting that they had both seen the dog a moment ago, while Mr. Cassatti tended to Carroll. The floor in the corner was sticky and wet, as if someone had spilled a Coke. There was no sign of the dog.

Mr. Cassatti took Carroll to the hospital, where the doctor at the hospital gave him a shot of codeine, and tried to convince him that it would be a simple matter to reattach the fingertip. "How?" Mr. Cassatti said. "He says the dog ran away with it."

"What dog?" the doctor asked.

"It was bitten off by a dog," Carroll said.

The doctor raised his eyebrows. "A dog in a library? The wound is too smooth — an animal bite would be jagged. This looks like he stuck his finger under a papercutter. Didn't anyone bring the finger?"

"The dog ate it," Carroll said. "Mrs. Rook said the dog would eat me, but it stopped. I don't think it liked the way I tasted."

Mr. Cassatti and the doctor went out into the hall to discuss something. Carroll stood at the door, and waited until they had turned towards the nurses' station. He opened the door and snuck down the hallway in the opposite direction and out of the hospital. It was a little hard, walking on the ground — the codeine seemed to affect gravity. When he walked, he bounced. He considered attempting to fly, but on second thought, he hailed a taxi and gave the driver the address of the Rook farm.

His hand didn't hurt at all; he tried to remember this, so he could tell Rachel. They had bound up his hand in white gauze bandages, and it looked like someone else's hand entirely. Under the white bandages, his hand was pleasantly warm. His skin felt stretched, tight and thin as a rubber glove. He felt much lighter: it might take a while, but he thought he could get the hang of losing things; it seemed to come as easily to him as everything else did.

Carroll thought maybe Rachel and he would get married down by the pond, beneath the new leaves of the six o'clock oak tree. Mr. Rook could wear his most festive nose, the one with rose-velvet lining, or perhaps the one painted with flowers. Carroll remembered the little grave at the top of the path that led to the pond: not the pond, he decided, they should be married in a church. Maybe in a library.

"Just drop me off here," he told the taxi driver at the top of the driveway.

"Are you sure you'll be okay?" the driver said. Carroll shook his head, yes, he was sure. He watched the taxi drive away, waving the hand with the abbreviated finger.

Mrs. Rook could make her daughter a high-waisted wedding dress, satin and silk and lace, moth-pale, and there would be a cake with eight laughing dogs made out of white frosting, white as snow. For some reason he had a hard time making the church come out right. It kept changing, church into library, library into black pond. The windows were high and narrow, and the walls were wet like the inside of a well. The aisle kept changing, the walls getting closer, becoming stacks of books; dark, velvety waves. He imagined standing at the altar with Rachel — black water came up to their ankles, as if their feet had been severed. He thought of the white cake again: if he sliced into it, darkness would gush out like ink.

He shook his head, listening. There was a heavy dragging noise, coming up the side of the hill through the Christmas trees. It would be a beautiful wedding, and he considered it a lucky thing that he had lost his pinky, and not his ring finger. You had to look on the bright side, after all. He went down towards the pond, to tell Rachel this.

TIPTREE

Never Mind The Bullocks, Here's The Ever-Popular Adjudication Panel Of The James M. Tiptree Jr. Memorial Award!

TIPTREE

by Elizabeth Hand

Greetings, Comrades! Another year, yet another award for genre fiction that addresses gender issues —

No, wait — make that the *only* genre award that addresses gender issues (although attention must be paid to the Lambda Award, which has a category recognizing SF and fantasy that grapples with gay themes). And, I must say, an award which generates much excitement and not a few exchanges of verbal brickbats, just by virtue of what it *is* — an acknowledgement that gender issues matter; that there are differences (and, perhaps even more amazingly, similarities) between us: male and female, straight, gay, and bisexual, parents and non-parents. O, what a tangled web we weave, when we first aspire to achieve.

My previous experiences in this sort of thing — as a judge for the Philip K. Dick Award and several short fiction contests — occurred before the advent of email. In those days, we did things the old-fashioned way: we read the books in relative solitude, over the course of a year, and then at decision-time argued about them over the telephone, via conference call. This was quite thrilling in itself: one was not always sure who was talking on the other lines, and so one was never positive whose literary taste was being insulted, by the refusal of her fellow judges to acknowledge the literary merits of *Varblek!: The Doomsday Interstices*, or the latest installment in Marjorie Rhiannon Jones' *Starbonk Chronicles.* Yet somehow we all managed to agree to disagree (everyone hated X's first novel, everyone loved Y's) and the award was received, presumably with tears of joy in keeping with the occasion, by Z.

This year, the process of choosing a Tiptree book was more protracted, and far more pleasureable. There was none of the Five Blind Judges And The Elephant experience that I associate with telephone polls. Instead, everyone was able to comment instantaneously upon a novel they loved (or hated). For me, the running commentary was quite fascinating to read, and reread, at least until my hard disk crashed and all those brilliant emails joined the Celestial Email Choir. I then had a good few months of attempting to catch up with the other judges, until the ice storm of mid-January (here in Maine) knocked my power out for ten days.

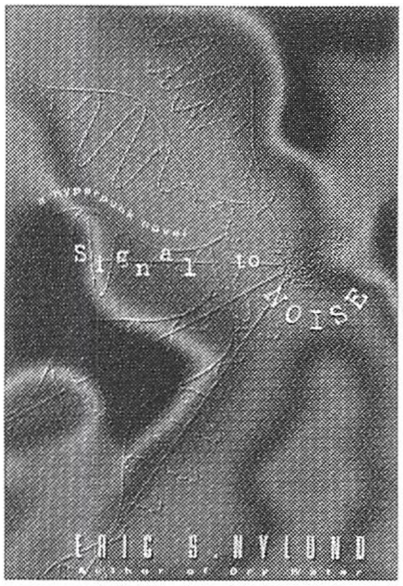
Those of us in the front lines of literature — readers, writers, critics, editors — are all too familiar with the horrors of battle. The diminishing number of serious readers; the diminishing number of serious books; the diminishing number of venues for Fiction itself, which is starting to resemble certain species of amphibian in its imperiled status (and its thin skin). An unexpected joy of being a judge for the Tiptree Award lay in discovering just how many truly exceptional books made it into print this year. Those that didn't end up on the shortlist were not disaqualified by a lack of literary merit, but by the fact that ultimately they were not quite, in the Judges' scientific coinage, Tiptreeable.

Ah! one may well ask, but what precisely *is* this quality of Tiptreeability? A difficult question to answer, but I'll try.

First, it's no longer enough to employ mere Gender Switching — i.e., "Female Serial Killer Pilots Spaceship Solo" or "Masculine Clones Fail To Nurture Offspring, Slay Selves." This is a good thing, I think: we're no longer shocked (in fiction, at least) to find a man helping with the housework, or an older woman grappling with issues of sexuality, nurture, political awareness. Nor are we automatically inclined to burst into applause when an openly gay character enters the room. *Ellen* may have come out last year, but in the genre, gays and lesbians have been kicking down closet doors for several decades now.

No, the ineffable quality that makes a Tiptree Book is more challenging to find, and even harder to define. And ultimately, once you get past all the roadblocks (bad or mediocre or just not-good-enough prose, gender/racial/ageist stereotypes, rehashed themes, well-travelled plotlines), I think it comes down to something which is often perceived as a dirty word, in these days of market-driven books and corporate buyouts: passion. An overwhelming, perhaps even disturbing, *belief* that Gender Matters; that for good or ill, we're tied to our sexuality, our bodies, our romantic and emo-

S u m m e r

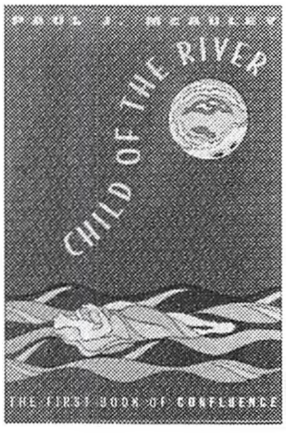


A VR network in the next century. An encrypted signal within cosmic background noise. A **message from another world** that could change this one.

SIGNAL TO NOISE
Eric S. Nylund

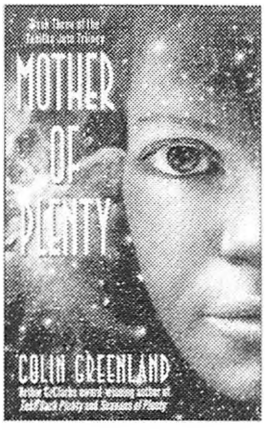
The mage has returned to Gallic to live as a healer. But once again she must confront the seductive **world of demons** The compelling sequel to *Mage Heart*.

FIRE ANGELS
Jane Routley



An artificial world **ten million years hence**. A multitude of alien races in fragile balance. The beginning of a mighty sf epic as audacious as *Hyperion*. **Special $14.00 price**

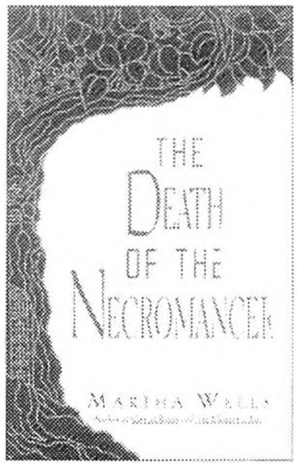
CHILD OF THE RIVER: THE FIRST BOOK OF CONFLUENCE / Paul J. McAuley



Plenty is a ship as **big as a planet**. The Guardians rule it. The Seraphim want it. And if they are to survive, humans must reclaim it.

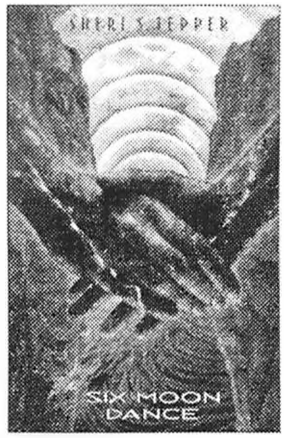
MOTHER OF PLENTY:
BOOK THREE OF THE TABITHA JUTE TRILOGY
Colin Greenland

E O S



In the kingdom of Ile-Rein, **spells are common** and sorcerers excited. But an ancient and awesome evil now rises. And even the greatest sorcery may not be enough to battle it.

THE DEATH OF THE NECROMANCER
Martha Wells



The world of Newholme is shaking with volcanic eruptions. The Great Questioner has arrived to investigate. But there is an even more frightening secret buried in the past — the fate of the **first settlers from Earth**.

SIX MOON DANCE
Sheri S. Tepper

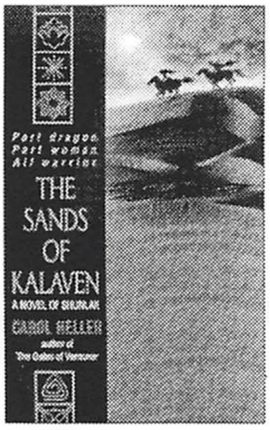
All this and more.

AVON EOS TITLES ON SALE IN APRIL: **SIGNAL TO NOISE** by Eric S. Nylund (hardcover), $23.00 / $30.00 Can.; **THE FAMILY TREE** by Sheri S. Tepper, $6.99 / $8.99; **EINSTEIN'S BRIDGE** by John Cramer, $3.99 / $5.99; **SEMPER MARS: BOOK ONE OF THE HERITAGE TRILOGY** by Ian Douglas, $5.99 / $7.99; and **CHALLENGES: BOOK THREE OF THE BLENDING** by Sharon Green, $5.99 / $7.99. ON SALE IN MAY: **CHILD OF THE RIVER: THE FIRST BOOK OF CONFLUENCE** by Paul L. McAuley (hc), $24.00 / $31.00; **FIRE ANGELS** by Jane Routley (mass paperback), $3.99 / $4.99; **GRAIL** by Stephen R. Lawhead, $6.99 / $8.99; **DAYS OF CAIN** by J.R. Dunn, $3.99 / $5.99; **MOTHER OF PLENTY: BOOK THREE OF THE TABITHA JUTE TRILOGY** by Colin Greenland, $5.99 / $7.99; and **NIGHT OF GLORY: BOOK 3 OF THE ELVEN WAYS** by Scott Ciencin, $5.99 / $7.99. ON SALE IN JUNE: **THE DEATH OF THE NECROMANCER** by Martha Wells (hc), $23.00 / $30.00; **CYBERWEB** by Lisa Mason (hc), $12.00 / $16.00; **KEEPERS OF THE HIDDEN WAYS, BOOK TWO: THE SILVER STONE** by Joel Rosenberg, $5.99 / $7.99; **I WHO HAVE NEVER KNOWN MEN** by Jacqueline Harpman, $5.99 / $8.99; **THE SANDS OF KALAVEN: A NOVEL OF SHUNLAR** by Carol Heller, $5.99 / $7.99; and **ARTIFACT** by Gregory Benford, $6.99 / $8.99. ON SALE IN JULY: **SIX MOON DANCE** by Sheri S. Tepper (hc), $23.00 / $30.00; **FULL TIDE OF NIGHT** by J.R. Dunn (hc), $14.00 / $19.00; **DONNERJACK** by Roger Zelazny and Jane Lindskold, $6.99 / $8.99; **THE PHYSIOGNOMY** by Jeffrey Ford, $3.99 / $5.99; **TWICE SEVEN** by Ben Bova, $6.50 / $8.50; and **JUPITER PROJECT** by Gregory Benford, $5.99 / $7.99.

AVON BOOKS
The Hearst Corporation

A **brave woman warrior** has defeated an evil sorcerer. Now she journeys to the Valley of Great Trees, the homeland of her parents. Here she will undergo a strange metamorphosis. And confront the darkest secrets of her own past.

THE SANDS OF KALAVEN: A NOVEL OF SHUNLAR
Carol Heller



The tormentors of men forsook their bodies, then destroyed all that was left behind. Only **one starship escaped** the holocaust. But now, the tormentors may have followed...

Special $14.00 price

FULL TIDE OF NIGHT
J.R. Dunn

AVON EOS

http://www.AvonBooks.com/Eos

TIPTREE

tional and familial and environmental attachments.

Sometimes these bounds need to be literally broken, as happens in Candas Jane Dorsey's *Black Wine* or Paul Witcover's *Waking Beauty*. Sometimes they need to be strengthened, as in M. John *Harrison's Signs Of Life*. And sometimes the knots need to be carefully and humorously unravelled, as in the reivsionist fairy tales in Kelly Link's "Travels With the Snow Queen" and Emma Donoghue's *Kissing The Witch*; and then just as carefully re-tied, in sublime new ways.

People occasionally ask why an award like this one is necessary. I think we need it precisely because we *are* linked, a long daisy-chain of men and women who sometimes seem to have nothing in common at all, save the history that binds us. The Tiptree Award is a way of honoring those who can envision a Way Out and another Way In, and those who can show us how to revel in what divides — and joins — us.

Tip[Ping] The Balance: Judging The 1997 Tiptree Awards

by Nalo Hopkinson

I can't say when I first became aware of the Tiptree Award. I probably started devouring feminist speculative fiction at about the time I started devouring all feminist texts I could get my hands on, so the work of writers such as Alice Sheldon, Samuel Delany, and Kate Wilhelm were part of my formative reading. In 1995, I heard Karen Joy Fowler, co-founding mother of the Tiptree Award, humorously describe how she and Pat Murphy came up with the idea of the Tiptree Award, in part as a foil to other sf awards out there that at the time were predominantly male-juried and presented mostly to male writers ("Awards with boy-sounding names like 'Dick' and 'Hugo'..."). In 1996 for the first time I attended WisCon, the 20th anniversary of a literary feminist sf con. It was a joyous blast. I met some of the women writers in the field whose work has been nourishment and goad to me. I enjoyed Theodore Roszak's bemused delight at winning an award he hadn't known existed, in honour of his novel *The Memoirs of Elizabeth Frankenstein*. I saw Ursula LeGuin take a chomp out of the chocolate typewriter she received as a Tiptree Retrospective Award. And in 1997, Karen invited me to be a Tiptree juror. I was thrilled. Free books for a year! Feminist writing! And we'd get to give someone a wad of dough for the piece we liked the most! Of course I said yes, and now, a year later, I'm exhausted and I've had to get myself a new bookshelf to house all the novels, novelettes and short stories that arrived at my apartment.

It's been a treat being part of an adjudication process with Jerry Kaufman, Jim Kelly, Terry Garey and Elizabeth Hand. I work as a grants officer for an arts council. I facilitate grant adjudications made up of panels of artists, so I knew what to expect from the adjudication process itself. We read the work, we opined, sometimes we argued. We challenged each other, and we enthused over work that blew us away. And eventually we came to a consensus over which work we wanted to honour, given that we could only pick one or two.

What I didn't expect was how much the reading would touch our lives. Paul di Filippo's story "Alice, Alfie, Ted and the Aliens" put one juror painfully in mind of Theodore Sturgeon's dying. And there was the afternoon I found myself sitting in a restaurant, reading Molly Gloss's *The Dazzle of the Day*, and weeping openly over her description of a close-knit community's shock when one of its members commits suicide. As jurors, we had to keep the adjudication process going through illness, overwork, crisped hard drives and ice storms that downed communication lines.

I didn't expect, but probably should have, the level of animosity directed at the award from some members of the sf community. The jury panel usually comprises four women and one man ("To balance," Karen says, "all those other panels where female presence is minimal"). 1997 was an exception, with two men and three women. The Tiptree is not an award solely for women, but it comes out of a clear feminist politic. I guess that efforts to shift an imbalance will always push buttons.

I didn't expect some of the odd choices of work that got sent our way. It started to feel like, "Hey, the protagonist is a chick, let's send it to the Tiptree jury." In the course of the year, I've heard

one or two people say that they weren't really sure what the Tiptree Award is about, what kind of work might excite its juries. But for all the diversity of our opinions on this last jury, all five of us knew a Tiptree contender when we saw one. Did it challenge our thinking about gender role expectations? Was it speculative fiction? Was it well-written? Bingo! Add it to the pile. But the confusion I was hearing from other people did make me realise how much more gender equality has been infused into sf writing over the years. Time was that a progressive gender-bender would have been a story about a man as primary caretaker of his children, or a woman captaining a spaceship. Now, however, the capable woman and the nurturing man are becoming tropes of the genre, and new writing pushes at the boundaries of biological gender itself — witness Scott Westerfeld's imaginative first novel, *Polymorph*, or Yann Martel's gender-wandering protagonist in *Self*, or the unflinching Capobianco/Barton collaboration *Alpha Centauri*. As ever, reality develops more slowly than our imaginations, but that's why I think that awards such as the Tiptree (and the Dick, and the Hugo) are important. Awards lay down a challenge: think the next thought, top this. And if humans can imagine it, we can often find a way to do it. Not always a comforting thought, granted. But many human accomplishments were first imagined as someone's flight of fancy. If the Tiptree Award continues to encourage writers to imagine harder, it's a good thing.

TIPTREE

James Tiptree, Jr. Seventh Annual Award

Winners

Candas Jane Dorsey
Black Wine, Tor, 1997

Kelly Link
"Travels with the Snow Queen," *Lady Churchill's Rosebud Wristlet*, Winter, volume 1, issue 1

Short List – Short Fiction

Storm Constantine
"The Oracle Lips," *The Frontline Teller*, ed. Lawrence Schimel & Martin H. Greenberg, Daw Books, 1997

Paul DiFilippo
"Alice, Alfie, Ted and the Aliens," *Interzone*, March 1997

L. Timmel Duchamp
"The Apprenticeship of Isabetta di Pietro Cavazzi," *Asimov's*, September 1997

Gwyneth Jones
"Balinese Dancer," *Asimov's*, September 1997

Salman Rushdie
"The Firebird's Nest," *New Yorker*, June 23, 30, 1997

Short List – Novels

Emma Donoghue
Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins, Harper Collins, 1997

Molly Gloss
The Dazzle of the Day, Tor, 1997

M. John Harrison
Signs of Life, St. Martin's Press, 1997

Ian McDonald
Sacrifice of Fools, Victor Gollancz, 1996

Vonda N. McIntyre
The Moon and the Sun, Pocket Books, 1997

Shani Mootoo
Cereus Blooms at Night, Press Gang Publishers, 1996

Paul Witcover
Waking Beauty, HarperPrism, 1997

Ten Years of Readercon

On the day in 1985 that Readercon's original Gang Of Four (myself and co-founders Eric Van, Kathei Logue, and Spike McPhee) got together for our first committee meeting (at the legendary Elsie's in Harvard Square), I doubt that any of us would have wagered more than the cost of our lunches that the fruit of that meeting would outlast Elsie's itself. Somehow it managed to do just that.

When thinking about how to describe our early history, I realized that the introduction I wrote a few years back for the *Monochrome* anthology (from Broken Mirrors Press) did a better job than I would probably be able to do now, so we're reprinting it here. Nowadays my free hours are mostly taken up trying to apply some of the things I learned from the Readercon experience to a new conference for aficionados of typography and the book arts (if you're interested, look us up at http://tjup.truman.edu/sota). To date, however, Readercon remains the only one of my crazy ideas to truly take root and flourish. Most people start families, I (with the help and forbearance of many) did this instead, and it's not all that different an experience in the end.

One of the more dispiriting aspects of pop culture is the tendency of successful ventures to lose much of their distinctiveness in a never-ending quest to extend their success by becoming More Things To More People, until they eventually become All Things To All People (which in my opinion is not all that different from being nothing much to anybody). One of the most personally gratifying aspects of Readercon to me is that it has (thanks to our fabulous and long-suffering committee) managed to retain its particular approach (which has at least as much to do with our point of view towards what we do cover as it does with the things we choose not to). My great wish is that something similar will be said about Readercon 50, whether I'm there to see it or not. If I am, my other great wish is to see some of you there as well!

— Bob Colby, 05/19/98

The Company of Words: Some Notes On the Ostensible Subject

by Robert Colby

Given the realities of small-press publishing, we can say this much; either you've bought this Readercon anthology at a Readercon (and may be wondering how this all got started), or from the catalog or shelves of your favorite bookdealer (and need to know what it's all about, unless of course your "now" is a long time from now (Jan '90), and you've just discovered this book in a box willed to you by your old granddad, in which case you really need some background. So what is a Readercon, that we should have been driven to create it, and the estimable contributors within would agree to lend their names to this here anthology? Well, yes, there is a Readercon story, and having made the whole thing up I suppose it falls to me to tell it to you.

A word of introduction. My name you can see from the top of the page, and I'm what's called the Chairman (Chair, for the Politically Correct). This means I get to make as many decisions as the committee will let me get away with, and generally set policies that try to ensure that we become the kind of thing that I wanted us to be in the first place.

It was that wanting to be a particular thing that is the real heart of all this. After all, there are surely enough conventions, several hundred at last count, and very few weekends when you don't have a choice of many. But what I wanted was a community.

There are, of course, lots of ways to define that term; let's restrict ourselves to the one that emphasizes commonality of interest. When, in the early '80s, I started going back to conventions after a ten-year layoff (the increasing aesthetic conservatism of f a literature I'd started reading during the explosive mid-late '60s had turned me off, but ambitious works like *The Book of the New Sun* and the new Ace Specials were bringing me back), I'd

TEN YEARS

had nearly a decade of experience in a textbook example of such a community; the local rock scene. This was a group of people who sometimes seemed to agree on nothing but the vital importance of what to most people was simply background noise to do something else by.

So what I suppose I was looking for when I returned to cons was a group of people equally passionate about the slightly different form of music that goes on in your mind when you decode a line of black ink into notions, images, and emotions, the whole experience conditioned at least as much by the contents of your own head as that of the author's.

They were there, all right, but trying to find them among the hordes who seemed more interested in a combination of bad movies and trite trinkets wasn't exactly a hoot. Somebody in the audience or behind the table at a table would make a perceptive comment, and the next minute they'd be off with their friends. Later on you might see them across a crowded room or hallway, if you were lucky. And there were people who I didn't see at all, people of wide and ambitious taste in reading (sf and otherwise), who would probably never go to a con because they didn't know about the writers and readers conversing in a corner while the public eye was drawn to the warrior wanna-bes and space cowboys.

Being painfully shy and bone-lazy to boot, I figured it had to be easier to bring all those people to me. And so I gathered some fellow SF lovers from the music scene and a friendly bookstore owner and toddled off to make revolution.

Overall, we (there are 15 of us now) have found that to be both easier and more difficult than we could have imagined. What I thought would be considered heresy by the fan community at large turned out to be what many had been waiting for for a long time. The response of writers and industry people has been all that a bunch of unknowns could have hoped for. And from the beginning we have found people (largely through promotion to bookstores and groups like the Philip K. Dick Society) who were turned off by the average con, and who were willing to travel large distances to experience something different.

Learning how to run an organization has been the hard part, especially with a naturally disorganized person in charge. This involves little things like keeping up with the mail (I know that more than one person reading this will have experienced an inexcusable delay in hearing from or getting something from us), or learning how to get things done *before* the last possible moment. But the internal structures necessary to save us from ourselves are, trust me, taking shape.

Having gotten convention-running almost right, we've begun to think about wider issues. True communities don't get together just for the sake of socializing; generally, they like to get a few things accomplished along the way. A community of readers will want to know where the good books are, for instance. But in a field increasingly driven by the search for the most marketable product, it seems likely in the years ahead that an increasing number of superior, challenging works will simply not be published by mass-market companies (now often owned by megacorporations that would like books to perform as predictably as soap), and will be published by smaller, more innovative presses (much as in the rock scene, in fact). For this reason, we've instituted the Readercon Small Press Awards to serve as a signpost for the discriminating reader such presses desperately need to attract in order to thrive.

We've also begun to chafe at the notion that this type of community should be seen simply as a subset of fandom as it currently exists. One of the interesting aspects of recent non-genre fiction is its increasing use of fantastic elements (as in works such as Mark Helprin's *Winter's Tale* and John Calvin Batchelor's *Birth of the People's Republic of Antarctica*, as well as the school of (mostly) South American writers known as "magic realists"). Many readers of SF and fantasy are becoming aware of this, and we see some intriguing possibilities in a dialog between us and the writers (and readers) of this stuff (for starters, it could lead to a radically different definition of "us" and "them" than that assumed by the term "fan", and that term's indiscriminate embrace of anything that can be described as SF).

Building that wider community of letters is our ultimate goal, one which, if achived at all, will be acheived over the very long term. For now, our goal is to be a place where a certain type of person feels at home, and my hope (if you enjoy a good percentage of the stories within, it is also my expectation) is that you are one of those people. Our first Guest of Honor, Gene Wolfe, described readers' conventions as "our family reunion". We intend to proceed in that spirit, paying back some of the pleasure that words, their company and comfort, have given to us.

My Book

by Gene Wolfe
Guest of Honor, Readercon 1

I have been writing my book for a long time now. In the morning, before anyone else is up, I wake to Mahler on the clock radio, shave, and go to my desk. On weekends, while the others are watching baseball, I am there too, scoring my own hits, my own runs. And in the evenings. "It keeps me off the streets," I say, though only to myself. To my manuscript. At night, when I cannot sleep, I come here too, and that is best of all. I do not hear the cry of the solitary owl; but I wish I did, which is almost as good.

Sometimes—indeed, usually—I do not write. A great deal of time is consumed by research, by planning. I heat water in my yellow electric pot, sharpen pencils, and turn over a thousand old books, most of them quite worthless. They fascinate me. Valuable books are like diamonds, iridescent and unchanging. It is in the ephemeral that I see the changing face of Nature reflected. The day darkens; the very leaves fall.

I mark certain passages in all these books, as Tom Sawyer marked similar passages in Injun Joe's Cave. It is often years before I find them again, with an archaeologist's thrill of rediscovery. No doubt there are many more I never find.

Quite recently, in an essay by Philip Rahv, I came across the passage that began it all. My writing has been influenced by many other passages: "I've progressed, in one sense, rather alarmingly. I'm now thinking of reconstructing the whole thing," by Oliver Onions, and Stout's, "It was nice to know the next step was obvious, but it would have been even nicer to know what it was." But it was this (forgotten now for so many years) that set me off: "Man is now unaware of the real powers that govern his life; insofar as he has any knowledge of divinity it is as of something purely historical." The unreeling of human history is implied, and from that thought I have taken my method. Of every book, there must be a last word as well as a first, and as the last—infinitely, in the scale of mere words, removed from the first—is also infinitely more important, I determined to write it first. I at once discovered that it scarcely mattered what it was. But after long contemplation of the book I had conceived, and somewhat, I admit, in a spirit of jocular defiance, I settled on the word preface.

At once I found that the whole book had changed, shifting like a kaleidoscope to become something novel and strange. The last word decided, it crystallized without solidification. The penultimate word seemed foreordained yet enigmatic: begin. The ending would be pregnant with the origins of things, raveling history to the finish. Everything altered again, as ice shifts upon a river, groaning, cracking in the night. I returned to find the white sheets destroyed, though each was where I had left it. I began the search for the antepenultimate word.

It was will, the word of purpose, the impulse that began the universe.

And then the preantepenultimate word...

And so I have proceeded, step by laborous (delightful) step, chapter by chapter, until soon, perhaps this very year, surely before the coronation, I will begin the preface.

Gene Wolfe: An Appreciation

by Jennifer Stevenson

The dark knight of science fiction is not a bat but a wolf.

Let's set aside for a moment the peculiar facility with languages, the fluid crossings of the science fiction-fantasy border, all those gripping characters. What rings like a bell in Gene Wolfe's fiction is darkness itself.

If the man dressed up like a giant bat were a poet instead of a caricature, he might wish he could write this stuff: nearly every story has at least a whiff of vengeance in it, like a bead of blood welling across the smallest possible cut on a ballerina's leg. *The Book of the New Sun. The Book of the Long Sun. Pandora, By Holly Hollander. Castleview.* "The Island of Dr. Death and Other Stories," and other stories.

What I know about Gene Wolfe. He also has an amazing capacity for forgiveness. Talk to people who live on the fringes of his life and you'll hear about his gruffness, or an occasion where he took offense. Talk to the people closer to him and you'll hear about reconciliation.

He writes movingly about forgiveness: especially of Patera Silk, obliged by his vows to forgive everyone their sins upon performance of rote contrition, who has his heart opened forcibly by the

entry of a god, and learns that neither vengeance nor forgiveness are really his to dispense. This is a peculiar piece of ground, this emotional battlefield of injury, betrayal, vengeance, and grace. We visit it often in Gene Wolfe's work. The familiar qualities are clothed in unfamiliar faces, stories, seasons. Recognition makes it no easier to cross the battlefield.

One of the exceptional texts, dark yes but too odd to classify, is my favorite, *There Are Doors.* Gene has told me that the whole point of the book was to get the main character to start his journey: just to start it. If he hadn't told me so, I don't think I could have verbalized for myself the sensation that built in me as I read it. There was a sense of finishing old business with someone very dear who has become a bit of a problem: sadness, regret, frustration, even the desperate wriggling shifts of the hare seeking to escape the hounds. And at the same time I felt a growing presence, swelling and changing and growing some more, of something about to open. By spending so much time on the intaglio of Green's losses, Wolfe seems to build a huge potentiality for the unrevealed relief. What's being built? Is it this goddess whom Green will meet when finally he arrives in her place? Or is it the space she is meant to occupy, the sacred emptiness that a man creates inside himself as he invites divinity to come in? Beats me. I know I'm lucky to have got one hint out of the author. The rest is up to me, the reader. Gene's enigmatic smile says, You're on your own now.

My second favorite Wolfe novel has to be *Castleview.* It has the feel of a contemporary fantasy-thriller, but without the glossy, frictionless surface of the usual thing: there's too much emotion in it, strange rough textures like the home invasions of a pooka-creature who turns up drunk in the modern Arthur's house, terrorizing Arthur's wife not with violence but with his sheer oddness. The most important achievement in *Castleview* is, in my opinion, the affirmation of the cyclical nature of Arthur's appointment with Morgana's champion. Too many modern writers who work with this material mistake it for a tale of Armageddon, a Final Conflict. It's nothing of the kind; it's cyclical, even seasonal; not an apocalyptic killing but an appointment faithfully kept by the combatants. The combining of this old, old story with the serenity and sylvan charm of a little upstate Illinois town is perfection.

There's been quite a bit of water over the dam since Gene Wolfe was last a guest at Disclave in 1987. One big moment was his receiving the World Fantasy Lifetime Achievement Award at the World Fantasy Convention in Chicago in 1996. The occasion coincided with his and Rosemary's fortieth wedding anniversary, another joyful landmark. He won a World Fantasy Award for *Storeys from the Old Hotel* in 1989. There was a Skylark award at Boskone 26 in 1989; a Daedalus Award in 1987 for Fantasy Novel *Soldier of the Mist*; a Deathrealm Award for best collection of 1994 for *Bibliomen.* At last count, he has published a total of 19 novels and 158 short stories.

Since 1987 we've also received the enormous new tetralogy, *The Book of the Long Sun*, as well as two new treasures. The first of these is *Castle of Days*, a compendium including the stories from the original collection, *Gene Wolfe's Book of Days*, and *Castle of the Otter*, and a new section of collected essays and commentaries. The new section includes letters, brief essays, remarks on writing—many remarks on writing—Gene writes about his own work almost as much as Howard Waldrop writes about his, proportionally speaking—public addresses from various occasions, commentaries on other important writers' work (such as Nancy Kress and Algis Budrys), and the priceless "Words Weird and Wonderful," a skimpy but irresistible boon to everyone who has puzzled through *The Book of the New Sun* with dictionary useless in hand.

The second treasure isn't properly speaking by Gene Wolfe, although the work is illuminated thereby: Michael André Driussi's indispensable *Lexicon Urthus*, a concordance of definitions of all the weird and wonderful words in the first mighty tetralogy. I can't imagine that there are no copies to the dealer's room here; look for it.

Rosemary and Gene both tell this story, and, amazingly, tell it more or less the same. Here's Rosemary's version: "When the kids were starting to grade school, they needed clothing for school. He got a check for 50 or 60 dollars for a story he sold, and he gave it to me to spend on their clothing. In those days, that was a lot of money, too. A little while later he was fixing one of the old dining room chairs which he now uses for his desk downstairs—it was coming apart, and he was putting leather on the seats—and I guess I said, 'Shouldn't you be writing?'" They both laugh when they tell that one. Rosemary adds, "As if he isn't always working. He's always working. If he

isn't with the books he's doing things around the house, like painting, mowing, shoveling, whatever needs to be done."

I've seen Gene throwing knives and hatchets at a human-size target in his back yard. ("In my hands I have a broad axe, so called because I throw it at broads," he laughs.) I've seen him blowing soap bubbles with four-year-old boys. I've seen him sitting through nine hundred snapshots of the Holy Land and trading etymological small talk on Coptic and Hebrew terms. He talks to animals—one of his regular buddies, 'til he moved away, was Maxie, a neighbor's rottweiler—and gets answers. He stands in his back yard and watches herons from the nearby waterbird sanctuary fly over the house like flights of Boeing 747s, creatures from an alien planet.

While it is his output that stuns us and captures us, it's this mode of Gene Wolfe's that I like to think about just now: Gene standing open-mouthed in his back yard, staring upward, the handle of the lawnmower forgotten in his hand, while great gray birds with eight-foot wingspans drag their feet across his roof, oaring from one secret place to another, leaving an indelible mark in the Wolfe imagination. From whence in time it comes to us.

This tribute was written for for Disclave 1998, where Gene Wolfe was to be Guest of Honor. Special thanks to Joe Mayhew for allowing us to print it following the convention's cancellation.

Goobye, Vincent

by Philip K. Dick
Past Master
Readercon 1

The other day I was walking over toward the college and a guy in a fairly new Mustang gave me a ride. Neither of us had much to say for a while— you know how the universe is — and then, noticing a little cute plastic doll he had sitting on the transmission tunnel beside him, I struck up one of those formless conversations, the sort designed to go nowhere but just to keep the silence away. I asked him about the doll. It was a chick doll, with short dark hair, fully warm friendly face, pretty, sweet, wearing a short miniskirt— the doll had long legs, a sexy doll, the sort girls buy different sets of clothes for to dress like this or that. The sort of stylish fashion-type doll that preoccupies them all day, while they sit on the floor in front of the TV.

"That's a Linda doll," the guy said. "Made by Levy. You've probably seen their building alongside the freeway up near L. A. They're second only to Mattell, and eventually they'll surpass them. This doll has a lot more character on its face than Barbie."

"I'd like to meet a real chick that looks like her," I said. "I mean, in real life. Not a little doll like this. You know?"

"That time is over," the guy said somberly as he drove his Mustang. "Maybe once, if what they say is true. About the origins of the Linda doll. You might have met her once, if you were really lucky, but not now. Those must have been wonderful times, from what I hear. There really was a Linda. That's the legend, anyhow. What the Levy let on, though, may not be all of the truth; you sort of have to figure it out from the hints they release on their PR stuff from time to time, usually in answer to letters kids write in. Anyhow, evidently there was this girl Linda—actually, in real life, like us— and the Levy people got hold of a snapshot of her or somebody at the Levy factory knew her... originally they manufactured used cars, or something; I forget. So see, this actual girl Linda was foxy. Like the doll. Only more so. You can't really build in all the subtle nuances into a doll that you find in real life."

That's sure true."

"People used to see her wandering around, lost and sad, but with the goddam funniest little smile. Little dark eyes sparkling. Full of zest and elan and like that, really bouncy and alert, saying funny things, zipping around town and on the freeway in her Camaro."

"What was the Camaro named?"

"George."

"Did it have a father?"

"Of course. George's father was—well, you wouldn't believe it. So I'll skip over that. It's probably myth, anyhow. But anyhow, Linda believed in life and living, but she was very original... nobody ever knew what she was going to say or do next. She wasn't predictable. When she answered her phone—the Levy people say she was a switchboard operator sometimes— she'd say weird, trippy things. And the person calling would half the time freak out and hang up. Or maybe laugh. According to whether he had a sense of humor or

not. According to whether he, too, was alive or not."

"Yeah, it depends on where your own head is at as to how you react to another person being super alive."

"Yeah, that's what it was about her; she was super alive. She was always running around doing things, like a little electron. But gradually she got very tired. She began to wear herself out. Now, a doll you can replace. There's always more rolling off the assembly line day after day. But with a person, there's only the one. That's how it is. That's, I guess, why the Levy people were so anxious to duplicate her, to keep her from—"

"There's a red light ahead."

"Thank you." The guy slowed his Mustang to a stop, behind a blue VW van. "So she got very tired and she began to feel pain at night, and she had there in her room all these dolls, and she asked them for help."

"What did her dolls do?"

"They did what they could. They tried to help. Nobody knows for sure, outside of her; she was the only one there in the room with them at night."

"Didn't anyone else help her? Didn't she know anybody? That loved her and gave a goddam about her and worried about her and thought about how she was now and then?"

"That part is blurred by legend and myth. Sometimes the Levy people's brochures seem to imply a lot of various assorted individuals loved her. But she had so many worries. Like going without her bra."

"Pardon?"

"According to one brochure, she drove an ambulance or something—anyhow, she was driving her ambulance one day, without her bra, and the L. A. cops busted her. I forget the exact charge. 'Operating an emergency vehicle without proper respect,' or something. And one time she was caught selling tickets to an autopsy. Five cents watchee, ten cents touchee—and so forth. In some respects, Linda was a little odd. But people loved her. She had a funny little wistful shriek, they say. When you put your arms around her she shrieked in the most captivating, charming way. Although it was a lease-breaker, they say."

"It sounds like she wasn't too happy, though."

"She sure tried to be. She kept on trying, no matter what happened. When she got drunk—"

"Oh, she drank?"

"Whenever possible. On every occasion. Except of course at her job. In particular her last job, which she took very seriously. Polishing gravestones."

"Really?

"She was given a little kit, with pumice and a rag and like that. And every day at Happy Valley One-Way-Trip Green Pastures she would do her thing, dabbing pumice on the gravestones and then scouring and rubbing and buffing industriously so that, day by day, she polished them so they looked older and older. It was Linda's great ambition to age all the gravestones all over the world, starting in the L. A. area and working north."

"And that's how she went?"

"That's how she went. Polishing her way north, hitting all the professional cemeteries and graveyards and also getting the headstones behind the Chevron stations and behind the Pizza Huts, wherever she could find them. Linda did a good job; Linda always did a good job at whatever she attempted. Sometimes, though, her wild wit got the better of her and she'd like slap a label on the grave after she finished aging the tombstone, such as, 'U.S.D.A. Choice.' But that got her into trouble with the Department of Agriculture, so after that she'd now and then whip out a gummed sticker reading, 'Fragile. Handle with care.' And glue that on the grave. It became her trademark, finally. Indicating that Linda had been there. You could follow her tracks across California, that way, and finally into Oregon and points north. Somewhere along the line, evidently, she ran out of labels. Anyhow, the trail stopped.

"And now the gravestones have stopped getting older."

Making a right turn, the driver of the Mustang coasted into a parking spot at the curb and brought the car and us to a halt. He sat for a moment, then reached down and picked up the little Linda doll resting beside him. "I think," he said, "she's still around somewhere. We hope so, every one of us who owns one of the Levy people's Linda dolls. And hell, there are millions of us... although I guess most of us are kids. Which is okay. She sure is cute, isn't she?" He held up the doll and we both looked at it.

"Hello, Linda," I said.

"Hello, Vincent," the Linda doll said.

"'Vincent,'" I protested. "My name's Phil, not Vincent."

"The Linda doll calls everyone that," the driver of the Mustang said as he reached past me to open my door. "Here's the college. Good luck. Nobody knows why the Levy people programmed their doll to address everyone as 'Vincent.' It's one of

those mysteries you can't ever get to the bottom of, I guess. Maybe there was a Vincent in the real Linda's life. Or maybe that song—"

"She looks sad," I said as I got out of the car.

"When Barbie is withdrawn from the market she'll feel better," the driver of the Mustang said. "She's looking forward to that. Say goodbye to Phil, Linda."

"Goodbye, Vincent," the Linda doll said.

Excerpted from The Dark-Haired Girl

The Desert of Time

by Samuel R. Delany
Guest of Honor
Readercon 2

As time machines go—" she sniffed, allowing the first fragment of an expression not pure misery to show through the tears, the sobs, the hysterics she had ground him down with for what seemed hours and hours now— "it's very—how do you says—user friendly." Although, back in Utah, he had friends in the Computer Science Department who said things like "user friendly," it wasn't a term he was prone to say at all.

The expression was on the left side of her mouth and over her right eyebrow. Where she sat on the iron-frame day bed, looking down at her hands that had gotten red from twisting and wringing at one other. It was already breaking up on her face. Though it was not quite a smile, in the hot air reaching from the sandy wastes outside into the whitewashed room that held them in its silence, he tried to grasp it, hold to it, wondering desperately (as he did each time she seemed, for a moment, somehow closer to what he could recognize as logic and ordinary sense) how he might bring it into a smile and then on into flowing and liquid laughter. She could laugh so beautifully. But now, it was so long since he'd seen it. "What you're trying to tell me is that I'm not a very lucky tourist on a fluke vacation from a wife, two kids, and a graduate teaching assistantship in the Painting Department at the University of Utah; and *you're* not from that kibbutz you keep telling me isn't in Israel. But rather—now let me get this straight—you're a time traveler from a different planet who—"

But the tears and the noise of her crying smashed out again at him and she huddled back on the day bed (even in an inexpensive guest house forty kilometers outside Marrakesh, he had hoped for better beds), with a violence that made something in his chest knot to pain, that made a kind of ache pulse low in his throat to a rhythm that was not his heart. When it had begun, he'd really thought it was some sort of joke, which is why he'd even bothered to go into it. But now, so much later, she was still sitting there, sobbing—and he was still standing there, lost in the ugly vacuity of her crying and, yes, craziness. A beautiful, black-haired girl, he thought, an artist like himself, intelligent, fun—and a five-day affair that, he was sure they were *both* sure, would have no repercussions once she took off to Zimbabwe and later that same afternoon he caught the bus to take him to the ferry that would get him across to Sicily to meet up with Nancy—only now, it seemed, she was crazy!

This woman with the perfect English and the charming accent was starkly, ravingly institutionalizable, complete with little green men and time machines and flying saucers.

Then his legs began to shake. So he sat down, a little harder than he intended, on the rug by the low teak table with the tarnished brass tray.

She was saying (between the hiccups that had repeatedly come and gone throughout her upset), "A whole different dimensional matrix," or something like it. And then: "You fool—you *fool*!"

"I thought," he countered again (he'd said it many too many times, already), "you'd like it—that you'd be pleased. Really. I didn't know it would upset you so." He was sweating: The neck of his lightweight cotton shirt was soaked, and the cloth clung, too, to the small of his back—though the single sentence he'd repeated in each of the letters and postcards he'd written that week had explained how, because of the dry heat here, you hardly perspired at all.

He looked at her some more, because under the onslaught of her tears, after he'd grown used to feeling helpless, that was all there was to do. Her black hair, fluffy around the little cap she always wore, he'd thought quite lovely: It was still... lovely. He knew she didn't pluck her fine eyebrows—because, back at home, Nancy did. (Whatever little problems there'd been with Nancy, stalled three years now on her master's thesis, not to mention the kids, there'd never been anything like *this*. It was supposed to have been so easy. He really wanted to get back; it seemed absolutely forever since

he'd seen her. But he was not *with* Nancy now. He was here. With... her. He took a breath.) Her rather long face was—yes, intelligent was the word. Not beautiful. Intelligent. Only, now it was puffed and teary, from what, he gathered, checking the ludicrously ornate quartz clock the guesthouse manager had hung on the back wall. was about ten minutes into the *next* hour of hysterics.

But. again, she was a little quieter He thought: I can only try once more "Darling," he said. He'd started calling her darling because it sounded kind of thirties, and he was really into *noir* and stuff; then it had become habit, the easiest thing to repeat. "I'm an artist. You showed me those pictures you said you'd made—and I thought *you* were an artist, too. An artist likes to have his— or her—pictures seen by people. You said you would like to be famous and known throughout the world—you said it would be fun. You had two sets. You said I could look through one. Well, I have this friend who works at one of those slick, fancy American magazines in New York... with all the advertising? That beautiful self-portrait you did, of you looking at the picture—I just thought I'd take it and send it to her.

She might want to see that one. They pay quite well, and everyone can use a little money... ? It's just the kind of thing they'd like. Really But that's all. Look, if she writes you that she wants to use it, you can *always* say no. Or that someone else has already bought it. Or that it was a mistake. Or—"

"A whole different dimensional matrix..." she was repeating, shaking her head.

"Look," he said, suddenly, "this business about time machines and the pictures being part of it—you look at this one or that one, say the right magic word, and suddenly that's where you are—that's wonderfully imaginative, darling. But it's also crazy. That's... just not how time machines work! They have... dials, and levers and things. Strange chairs inside ornate cabinets that you have to climb into. Test tubes, I think. And bus bars: Time machines are very old fashioned, you know—"

But she was leaning forward, clapping her hands (again and again) in a desperately imploring manner. "I wasn't going to Zimbabwe, when I left here," she cried, almost like someone not crying. "I was going to Delft. Seventeenth Century Delft—but that doesn't matter. How many times have I told you that. I m *not* an artist—I'm just very interested in the art of this very strange, odd and bizarre, bizarre, terribly bizarre world. Oh, *please* try to understand. The two sets—those from one set get me there. I look at it, say the—yes, right magic words, that's what it would seem like to you. And I arrive. Then the second set allows me to leave. Some different words this time. Time machines *aren't* old fashioned! They employ a very delicate, very sophisticated technology. But it's the reproduction: If the pictures are ever reproduced, all the energy gets—"

Only here, because it really *was* crazy what she was saying, he stood up suddenly, turned, and walked into the next room, thinking: I can't take this any more, I can't take this, I can't, the words coursing through his mind again and again and again. In was not the first time he'd found himself having to flee her logic *or* her tears.

But—in the other room—she kept on, trying to explain, once again, her voice low (because she didn't want the hysterics to overtake her once more; really, she didn't): "—the energy is dissipated. That self-portrait was *me*, leaving *here*. If it's ever reproduced, in hundreds, in thousands of copies, even in the future, as long as it's in the same time line, then the releasing energy is cut by hundreds, by thousands of percent; and I—and you and everything around me—get trapped in the bit of time I was visiting *between* the two pictures, don't you see, just going around and around, never able to leave it, going through the same time, just before the picture, again and all over again. And we never get out. Oh, I know it sounds impossible. But it is true. It is! Oh, how many hundreds and thousands and millions of times do I have to *tell* you it's true—" at which point the full terror of it burst in on her... again.

And—again—she cried and shook and howled and huddled like some mad desert creature caught in the imported iron jaws of a trap from a wholly alien northern clime and culture.

And again in the front room, he took a breath, in his soaking shirt, sat down at the desk (again), and wrote his seven billionth letter explaining that in the dry heat here you did not sweat. And his twenty-eight billionth post card Then—again—he went back in to talk to her.

First published in Omni, *May 1992.*

The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart

by John Crowley
Guest of Honor
Readercon 3

I take my somewhat peculiar title from a short book written in 1623 by a once very well known thinker named Jan Andreas Komensky, known by the Latin version of his name as Comenius.

Comenius was a native of Bohemia, which was once a real country, part of what is now Czechoslovakia. He belonged to a mild and ecumenical sect called the Brethren, which was suppressed by the Catholic rulers of Czechoslovakia; Comenius spent his last years wandering from country to country attempting to advance his radical ideas of universal reform.

Comenius—like many of his contemporaries—was addicted to a pursuit that has claimed an inordinate amount of the mental effort of many of Western civilization's strongest minds; I don't think it occurs in other civilizations, but in the West it forms a long and strange tradition. I'm talking about the imagining of utopias: new and better ways of organizing human life and society, different civilizations, without the flaws and limitations of the one the writer happens to live in, and more pleasing to its citizens or to God. Comenius called his own imagined possible civilization Pansophia, and all his life he projected plans for it: how its educational system might work, what its science and religion might be like, how it would foster the flowering of human abilities and human happiness.

At the same time, Comenius was fascinated by another mode of thinking, equally popular at various junctures in Western history: the possibility that civilization—the world as it is, society, the human ecology—might be rotten to the core and about to come to an end altogether. When Christians like Comenius hold views, or feel feelings of this kind, they are called *millenarians:* because in Christian dogma when God brings this wicked world (that is, our human society) to an end, it will be succeeded by a millennium in which Christ will rule over a perfected earth and reformed humankind.

What I would like to do in the time given to me here is to renew some what on these different impulses which Comenius felt—that there is a possible civilization to be built, far better than the one we know, in which human beings can live fully, happily, and at peace, and, on the other hand, that the world which human beings have so far managed to make is hopeless, that it can't survive, that it is even now on its last legs and foundering.

Our topic is civilization—but not the civilizations we have built, or even the idea of civilization as such; our topic might be described as the dream of civilization. In Comenius's terms, the real civilization we have built—human society as it is—is the labyrinth of the world: the sad, meaningless, hurtful failure we have made out of our common life, to which we can owe no allegiance, and which in any case can't last long. At the center of this labyrinth is the paradise of the heart, the solitude where better worlds can be conceived, and where the happy certainty is born that they can be achieved as well.

These two images, which Comenius has opposed so beautifully have been a constant in our imagination for centuries. The fact that no utopian system, no new plan for civilization, has ever been able to be established as its projectors imagined it, doesn't keep people from continuing to imagine new ones; the fact that our rotten old world never does quite collapse or come to an end, but just goes on building on its past, has not stopped people from imagining its imminent and total breakdown. Millenarian and utopian ideas are such a permanent fixture of our thinking about ourselves and our civilization that, if they were the obsessions of an individual, a psychoanalyst would suspect that they mean more than they seem, that they express deep and unacknowledged needs and fears. I think they do. I think that the opposed realms of Comenius's little book—the labyrinth of the world and the paradise of the heart—are not truly opposed; I think they are simply two aspects of a single undertaking, or attempt: the attempt to cancel out the complexities and ambiguities of the civilizations we are born with, and to live, instead, in simpler possibilities.

The one thing everyone knows about Utopia is that it was a place imagined by Thomas More, and that its name is a subtle pun in Greek: utopias is derived from the Greek word for "place," and the "u" in front of it might mean "not"—not-a-place,

Noplace—or it might be "eu," meaning "good," as in euthanasia and eugenics: Goodplace. An imaginary good place, then; an island that doesn't exist but whose mode of life is the best that Thomas More could imagine—a model for how we all might live.

The other thing that most modern people who know about Thomas More's invented place are sure of is that they would not want to live there. Life in Utopia seems to us today horribly restricted programmed, unfree; the authorities are intolerably bossy and interfering; there is work and satisfaction but not much fun. Everyone is happy wearing the same sensible clothes, eating communal meals, participating in the state religion. Marriages are arranged, and childrearing is closely prescribed.

Thomas More seemed to think—this is my feeling, anyway—that mankind's most basic needs are for safety, control, and regularity. Maybe this is not surprising when we consider the society in which More was living, the society described in J. K. Huizinga's wonderful book *The Waning of the Middle Ages*: a time of extremes—terrible cruelties and wild outbursts of religious enthusiasm, extremes of poverty and costly display, tyranny and neglect, people of every social condition in harm's way most of the time. Remember, Thomas More himself was to be executed by King Henry VIII after a dispute about religion.

So Thomas More evidently had a very different idea of what human fulfillment was about than we would today And the same is true of most of the hundreds, possibly thousands, of Utopias that have succeeded More's. The fact is that to imagine a Utopia—a good place where any and all human beings would be glad to live—is actually to make a statement about what human beings are like. To construct a Utopia, you define human beings in a certain way, and then invent a setting appropriate for them.

When people find a Utopian scheme convincing or intriguing, what they are actually convinced by is the picture of humankind that it presents; when the general picture we have of what humankind is like changes, or deepens, or lightens or darkens, the old Utopias designed to contain and satisfy the old humankind cease to be convincing. In the hundred years between the appearance of More's little book and the appearance of Comenius's, the conception of humankind and the place of human beings in the universe changed radically, and so did the utopias which radical thinkers designed for them. If Thomas More's Utopia would be unpleasant for modern people to live in, the wild utopias imagined by the Baroque projectors are impossible to imagine living in at all. This is because they mostly depended on systems of magical sympathies in order to work—just as a utopia imagined today might depend on nuclear energy.

People who are given to designing utopias are often people who are easily swept up in big notions that explain the basic connections of the universe in a new way. They glimpse the possibility that if human societies could somehow also be connected in those basic ways, if human society could be properly aligned with the physical universe, then societies would work just as the universe does, spontaneously and perfectly. A modern thinker who held that view and whom you will have heard of is Buckminster Fuller. In the sixteenth century, the big notion that intrigued the designers of utopias was the notion that man—the basic human being—is a microcosm of the universe at large; that the same forces that operate in the universe, that make the planets revolve, that cause the plants to grow and the sun to burn, operate also within the human body and soul, and produce the same effects. The forces and principles which excited them, and which they thought were the operative ones in the universe, were a very peculiar collection indeed, entirely different from the forces and principles we might consider basic.

There were, first of all, the stars—not the stars we know about, but the starry principles of astrology, the twelve signs of the Zodiac and the characters of the seven planets that traveled within them. The influence of the heavens was thought to permeate totally the physical earth and the body and mind of human beings. Then there was the geometry of the solar system—which as far as these thinkers knew was the entire universe, with the distant background of the other stars. They believed that the circles, angular motions, geometrical relations, that obtained among the heavenly bodies had to be regular—that is, reducible to perfect circles, squares, triangles, and so on—and that those same geometrical regularities also obtained within the microcosm—the human mind and spirit. It was thought that the human mind had a special affinity for such figures, a natural disposition.

So these utopias were very different from the plain-style utopia of Thomas More. They were designed to reflect the whole universe in small. Their microcosm men and women were to be

housed in cities or palaces that had the geometrical regularities of the solar system, which means they were often conceived as pyramids, or spheres, or pyramidal towers within square walls within circular walls. They were often designed to be bathed altenately in different colors of lights appropriate to the good planetary and stellar influences the designer wanted to attract. Their religions were not the mild civil religion of Thomas More's island but extravagant, colorful affairs usually combining mystical Christianity with invocations of the stars through music, geometrical dance and so on. Something of what they may have been intended to look like can be seen today at Versailles, for the designers of that astonishing palace were influenced by the thinking of these utopians.

Another thing that distinguishes these thinkers of the Baroque age—which is also the age of Comenius—from Thomas More is their ambitions. More's island of Utopia might have been meant as an example, a good idea, a model of how a good community might work; but the thinkers of Comenius's period thought always of universal, world-wide total reform—which is exactly the title of a trct put out in those years by writers calling themselves Rosicrucians: *The Universal Reformation of the Whole Wide World.*

This utopian ambition for total renewal continues from then on throughout our intellectual history. When the Baroque combination of geometrical regularities, astral powers, and mystical Christianity gets old, utopian thinkers take up other big ideas. Universal language, new science, industrial power, technology, personal fulfillment, sexual freedom, evolution, all have been seized on by thinkers who see in them new programs for reorganizing human society more successfully. But always this conviction animates them, that nothing less than Real renewal will do; the whole of past human culture has been a mistake, and has to be cleared out of the way, or overgrown, or supplanted— human society as it stands is a total failure, it will collapse of its own contradictions very soon and the new form of civilization had better be ready.

This seems to me to be an important distinction to make within the whole utopian tradition: between the modest proposals and the total programs. People who design model communities, or plan the redesign of cities to be more humane or more convenient or more beautiful, or think of ways to combine a work environment with a living environment, are often called utopian; but they aren't the son of utopian that interests me. The ones who interest me are the ones like those of the age of Comenius, who could entertain nothing less than a total renewal of society, a wholly other civilization arising out of the husk of the abandoned and collapsed old civilization. It is this *total* aspect of utopian thinking that puzzles, intrigues, annoys me, makes me laugh, makes me marvel. The philosopher Henri Bergson defined the comic as arising from the imposition of geometrical form on the formless contents of consciousness—and maybe that's what my utopians are attempting to do, and it may be why their visions, universal and total though they attempt to be, so often seem to be so comically limited, and inhabited by cartoon figures or stick men and not real people.

All utopias differ from real human societies or civilizations in containing less than real societies do. Real societies are like immense and tangled forests, young trees climbing out of the mulch of dead ones, a bewildering and unnecessary profusion of leaves, vines, bushes, animals, flourishing growth and sickly growth and deadwood; nothing is cleaned away or tidied up, because every part of it is too busy being alive and striving for a bit of light. Utopias tend to put a premium on tidiness; if you are going to construct a forest from scratch, the temptation is to plant the trees in regular rows, like the pine plantations around reservoirs, and to keep the undergrowth down. Utopias tend to have fewer possibilities for both good and bad—less vice and crime and suffering, less waste, less tragedy; but also, typically, fewer trivial amusements, fewer fads and fashions, fewer ways of making a living or gaining social power or winning love, fewer institutions in general.

In fact, the more highly detailed and complete a thinker's plans are, the less his projected utopia seems to have in it. And this thinness is even more evident when it comes to the people whom the utopia is supposed to contain, who are supposed to flourish there: the more their daily lives are described, the more satisfactions and occupations they are described as having, the more unreal they seem to be. Remember, the projector of a utopia is in fact making a statement about what human beings are like; the more detailed his statement, the more incomplete it seems as a description of the human beings we in fact know, including ourselves. Whoever these happy, thriving folks are, singing on their way to work, joyfully participating in the social rituals the author has thought up—whoever they are, we think, they aren't me, or anyone I know or want to know. They are fictions: in

other words they are deliberately—though not always consciously— made simpler than real people, more easily describable and graspable, more easily satisfied. And therein, I think, lies the appeal of utopias: the appeal not for readers, or for society, which has always been unwilling to go very far toward establishing them, but for those who think them up.

A poignant example of this which I have studied is the spectacle presented by the New York World's Fair of 1939, which was consciously intended by its designers to be a kind of utopia—a place in which visitors could experience a possible world of the future, a good place that could be built by science, social engineering, and human cooperation. All the new technologies that could be deployed in making this new world were on display, and the great hopes for them asserted as facts: there was television, and synthetic fabrics like rayon, and plastics in many forms, and streamlined trains and planes and dirigibles—in fact everything was streamlined, whether it moved or didn't. At the heart of this fair, with its geometrical theme center, was presented a model city of the future—Democracity—a rationally planned metropolis with satellite suburbs, a modern port, skyscrapers, landing fields for autogiros and Zeppelins, no slums, no sleazy strip, no abandoned inner city. In fact, the most noticeable thing about Democracity was that the past—that is, the present of those who came to look at it—had vanished entirely, swept away by the clean bright future coming into being. Who was to live in Democracity? All around the model city were projected the figures of the citizens of the future—the workers, the farmers, the managers, the wives and children—and their voices were heard, cheerful and strong, talking about the cooperation and honest hard work that would have to go into making a decent world for themselves and their kids.

The World's Fair was not all utopian; there was an honest and not contemptible effort by its designers to understand the technological future which was really coming, and to prepare fairgoers to be able to live in it. But the extravagant hopefulness of it, the confident expectation of a scientific wonderland where nothing is impossible and society is continually reshaped by new machines, new discoveries, new techniques, and robots or nuclear energy or computers do all the work and provide for all human needs, and simple-m inded human beings are endlessly willing to discard the past and endlessly delighted with more and faster ways of travelling—this is what people at the time were struck by; and it descends to us, of course, in the form of science fiction. When people who don't read very much science fiction refer to "a science fiction sort of world" they generally mean those towering Buck Rogers cities entwined in elevated highways and swarming minijets that were on view at the Fair.

Well, it's easy to laugh at the World's Fair of 1939, at the General Motors "Futurama" for instance, a 1939 vision of the wonderful world of 1960, full too of clean cities, huge highways, new cars, friendly happy people, the past having vanished; it's impossible not to feel that the future the Fair predicted was not only not ever possible but never really desired either, even though the fictional farmers in overalls, workers in coveralls, wives in shirtwaist dresses, seem deliriously happy to be there.

But think now of the real world in which this vision was presented. 1939: the longest economic depression in history had not yet entirely lifted; America had been stalled for a long time, and social injustice remained entrenched and intractable; slums, infant mortality, poverty, danger of a degree that would appall a modern American, were facts of life. In Europe irrational and violent social movements, Nazism, Fascism, utopian visions of a different and potent kind, were forcing the world into a war that could only be more catastrophic, more destructive, than the Great War that had ended only twenty years before. In fact that new war began the year the fair opened.

The world was a dark labyrinth in 1939; if there was ever a year in which millenarian fears were justified—fears that the world, the world as we knew it, was coming to an end—it was that year. And in that year was built this imaginary good place, geometrical and rational, the World of Tomorrow as they called it, which strikes us now as comically limited and very unlikely, but which can also be men as a paradise of the heart, not really a *proposal* at all but simply a longing: for cleanliness and health and safety and a little ease in a world that did not offer them generously.

Do we have a clue here to the motive force in utopian thinking? Let's look again at the world in which Jan Andreas Comenius lived, the world in which he conceived his Pansophia, in which he wrote his *Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart.* I said he was a Czech, a native of Bohemia, which was a primarily Protestant country, but a part of the Holy Roman Empire, a Catholic institution. The crown of Bohemia was

elective—that is, the Czechs could decide who they wanted to be king, though the list of possible candidates was pretty short and in fact the Emperor was almost always chosen King of Bohemia as well. But in 1620, fearful that the rights of the Protestant majority were about to be taken away, the Czechs rebelled; their electors refused to give the crown to the Emperor, and instead elected a Protestant prince from far west along the Rhine. When the Emperor's representatives came to Prague to protest, the Czechs threw several of them out a high window—a historical event known ever since as the Defenestration of Prague.

At that time the terrible Protestant-Catholic conflicts which had torn apart Christian civilization in the previous century had abated momentarily, though the struggle for what we might call hearts and minds went on furiously; neither the Catholic powers nor the Protestant ones were willing to live in a divided Christendom, and were armed to the teeth and convinced of the sanctity of their cause. In this charged atmosphere dozens of schemes were being put forward for reuniting Christian civilization; many of the Baroque utopian schemes I have talked about were at bottom attempts to reestablish Christendom and spread it around the world in a revitalized form. Among the most bizarre were the alchemical fantasies of a group of Protestant writers and thinkers—they attached the name "Rosicrucian" to their early manifestoes—who served the Protestant prince whom the Czechs so boldly elected their king.

Now a prime requisite for a Baroque utopia was that it had to win the support of some powerful prince in order to have any hope of succeeding. Comenius, for instance, was always trying to get one monarch or another interested in his schemes. Remember this is the age described in your history texts as the Age of Absolutism; kings were gathering huge autocratic powers, and this was seen as a good thing by most thinkers. The Rosicrucian utopians could suppose that the new King of Bohemia would be such a monarch; that after restoring the rights of the Czechs he might go on to become Emperor himself, and perhaps—if the right cosmic powers and true religious impulses could be combined in him and his servants—be the means by which a Christian utopia could be established.

It was not to be. If Bergson is right that comedy results from the imposition of geometric form on the formless contents of consciousness, then it might be equally true to say that tragedy results from the attempted imposition of utopian perfection on the formless contents of history. The new King of Bohemia proved to be both feckless and inflexible, and his support, cosmic and otherwise, quickly evaporated. The Catholic Emperor, supported by the Pope, mobilized against him, and easily defeated him in a single battle in 1620. The Bohemian Protestant church was not only deprived of its former rights, it was ruthlessly crushed and expunged, its adherents exiled, executed, imprisoned. A harsh Catholic supremacy was imposed on the Czechs that would last for centuries. The destruction of free Bohemia was the opening act in a Europe-wide war that that would last for thirty years and be more terrible, more disruptive of civilian life and economy, more corrosive to humane values—more destructive of whatever we mean by civilization—than any war up until the twentieth century. Comenius and his fellow-Protestants were only a handful among the refugees and casualties it engendered.

It was in the years of that defeat that Comenius wrote his book *The Labynnth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart.* The hero of that little book, wandering in the labyrinth of failing civilization, is offered books full of formulas for the magic restoration of society, boxes of alchemical prescriptions for happiness, Rosicrucian secrets: but the wanderer finds that all the books and boxes are empty. So Comenius understood just how much false hopes for renewal are part of the labyrinth, part of the problem; but his own utopian schemes, which he never abandoned, were still, in his view, the solution. What we have to ask is how much the utopian impulse itself contributed to the harm done civilization by the Thirty Years' War. We have to ask whether the utopian impulse itself, in its desire to simplify society and escape from the ambiguities of history and human nature, not only does no good, but does active harm as well.

I think, in this connection, again, of 1939, and that huge silly sad World's Pair, which was to promote world peace through scientific and technological progress. The Czechs had a pavilion at the World's Fair, but by the time the Fair opened, free Czechoslovakia had already been overrun by another absolutist power, the German Nazi empire. The Czech pavilion at the Fair stood as a sort of dumb reminder to the happy fairgoers visiting the utopian World of Tomorrow: a reminder of the power of history, and the intractability of human nature, and the realities of power. On its walls was carved a prophecy: "After the tempest of wrath has passed, the rule of thy country will

return to thee, O Czech people." The words were written by Jan Andreas Comenius, three hundred years before.

History, James Joyce said, is a nightmare from which I am trying to awaken. The utopian thinker imagines himself to be shouting *Wake up!* to a sleeping world; the utopian—however impossible his schemes are—usually considers himself in the nature of a critic, seeing up a standard of human possibility against which the failures of actual civilized life can be measured. Even if his schemes can never be realized, they can stand as a reproach, a spur toward betterment on the part of those who are able to change things in a more limited way. But it seems to me that something different actually animates the imaginers of utopias.

I said that the millenarian impulse—the sense that history is a nightmare, and we are all about to awaken—is not different from the utopian one, that they are both aspects of the same attempt, the attempt to escape from the ambiguities of history and human nature into simpler possibilities. What I mean is this: if history is a nightmare, if the world—our human world—really is a labyrinth with no exits, if the civilization we have made is a total failure and about to be written off, by God, by technological innovation, by revolution—then we are under no obligation to try to make it better in a practical or day-to-day way; we are under no obligation to be engaged as citizens of the society we live in; in fact, we are under a negative obligation to distance ourselves from it, and bend our minds on the new world that is to come.

So millenarian fantasies are justifications for utopian ones: if you can convince yourself that this civilization is washed up, finished, a nightmare of meaningless suffering, then you are justified in entertaining the total renovation of a utopia. You can elaborate your new world endlessly in the quiet of your head and still feel that you are criticizing society in a useful way and helping to change it. But what I think you are doing is something different. I think you are creating a fiction.

More than social criticism, more than proposals for change or philosophies of human happiness, the great utopian projects are enormous and highly original fictions, usually unconstrained by plots or "character development" or the twists and turns of the standard fiction of the age in which they are written. The great utopian projectors of the 17th and 18th and 19th centuries are engaged in something which writers of literary fiction have only dared to do in the modernist 20th century: refashioning the world into fiction, replacing it with imagined worlds of their own, and peopling them with adams and eves who could exist nowhere else. I think the impulse to create utopias is not different from the impulse to create new worlds within fiction; both are aspects of a human need that is not open recognized, but which in my opinion is basic to our natures, like the need for order and for love: I mean the need for possibility. In the labyrinth of the world there is constant change—meaningless flux, one damned thing after another; it's in the paradise of the heart that possibilities are realized.

I know something about the impulse to create fictions, especially of that total kind; I have often been surprised by the intensity of my need for other possibilities, for worlds different in their nature from the one I live within. The readers and writers of science fiction and fantasy stories gather periodically in big conventions, and I have sometimes attended them and found myself in the company of people with whom I seem to share very little except this need, as though I were at an AA meeting or a revival. I imagine that in such company the utopian projectors of the past would feel quite comfortable.

For the utopian impulse, as I noted, descends into science fiction; in science fiction novels is an endless array of other possibilities, *Worlds of If* as the old sf magazine title put it. There is the old-fashioned World-of-Tomorrow sort of future—funny to think of a future as old-fashioned, but there it is—and there is a huge number of negative or antiutopias as well. It is to the credit of science fiction writers that they have seen the contradiction in utopias—that the more totally imagined they are, the less they seem to contain, and that to live in one as a whole human being and not a utopian's stick figure would not be paradise but hell. Science fiction has come up with a term to describe these imagined societies, where everyone is compelled to be happy and no one is; they are called dystopias—*dys* meaning bad or wrong in Greek, so Badplace or Wrongplace. The term lacks the neat pun of the original, but it will do. AIdous Huxley's *Brave New World* was one of the earliest, and best, of these visions; thousands have followed.

The millenarian impulse also descends to science fiction, of course; science fiction novels are so often set in collapsed, failed, brutal, bombed-out societies, societies riven by awful plagues or destructive wars or environmental poisons, that

the destroyed or failed world has become a trope, a commonplace, a cliche, like the shepherds and oak trees of a pastoral romance. You know the kind of thing I mean: the *Mad Max* movies, *Blade Runner*. Science fiction, like the utopian literature it descends from, often seems to be warning us against these dangers, or satirizing the failings of our society or our human nature, or teaching us how to be different; but I think that such fiction is chiefly indulging in possibilities for their own sakes. It's interesting to observe that the modem consumers of utopias—the readers of science fiction—seem not to care whether they are of the u- or the dys- form, or of the millenarian kind, so long as there are lots of them. Possibilities are what is desired, not necessarily either good or bad, only different from what is.

What use, then, is this yen for possibility, that is unsatisfied by other countries, other peoples, other times and places, and needs whole new worlds to satisfy it, worlds complete (or seemingly complete) in every detail? Is it truly a human trait, or is it the ordinary human—even mammalian—taste for novelty and for new experience, simply exacerbated, distended, a bad habit, a neurotic symptom?

I was once asked by someone who had read my books why the futures I imagined in them were all bad—that is why the societies I pictured were all failed or failing ones. I didn't have an answer; I had not consciously created only failed societies for my fictions to take place in. I began to ponder the fact. I saw that there was another trait which all of them seemed to share: that within the failed or shattered society I pictured there was the germ of a renewal, an unexpected hope, a chance for a new world, a new world growing unexpectedly at the center of the old one, like a bird within a spotted egg. As I have gone on working I have felt myself over and over again drawn to this double picture, of an old and dying world, and a new world within it trying to be born; and I found the same double impulse not only in the utopian projects I have described and in the fictions of other writers like myself but in religious imagery and ritual and in potent political visions as well.

It's my belief—I am not able to prove it, or even about to try, and since I am not really a scholar or a historian I don't have to; making suggestive remarks is more my job—it's my belief that there are historical moments, moments when change seems inevitable but somehow refuses to happen, when the nature of humanity seems to be expanding with incredible rapidity, like an infant in a spun of growth, finding new powers, coming out of a shell; when the irrational cruelties and stupidities of our society seem to have grown insupportable, and there is the euphoric certainty that they must bring society itself to an end. And I think that such moments might excite the utopian faculty, so to speak, in name the organ, if there is one, that makes new worlds. I know that the late 1960s seemed to be such a time, that was the time when I discovered in myself the euphoria of new-world-making and old-world-destroying (on paper, of course); that was the time too, I often remember, when Czechoslovakia once again glimpsed the possibility of freedom, of self-realization, of humane independence, only to be suppressed again by an enormous armed empire, which was concerned only with the realities of power.

But what is most important to remember is that the ruthless empire that suppressed the Prague Spring of 1968—the Soviet Union—was itself born out of a utopian impulse in 1917. So was the Third Reich of Adolf Hitler, a utopia which if it had not been tried out by force on living people would seem to us among the most ridiculously limited and unreal of all utopias. For that matter, the Holy Roman Empire that crushed the Czechs in 1620 had begun as a utopian dream; it was to be the wicked old Roman Empire reborn and baptized and perfected.

I approach the very tentative conclusions I am able to reach: that the utopian impulse is not social criticism but the furthest reach of the impulse to construct fictions; that it is therefore most appropriately employed when, as in science fiction, it is restricted to the imaginary and kept from being imposed like a grid or a griddle on the living flesh of human beings; that we may never learn to restrict it in that way, and so will I have to suffer the consequences, which consequences are called by us the history of our civilization—its empires and dream empires and gospels; and that, when all is said and done, we could probably not construct civilizations at all if our minds and hearts were not the sort to create the anti-civilizations called utopias as well.

The utopian dreamer rejects the world, it is a dark labyrinth; he finds in the paradise of the heart a new and better world. If today we look into his old schemes, re-experience his dream-world, we cannot help imagining his surprise if he could see the old world still in existence centuries on, still claiming at least some of the love and alle-

giance of its citizens, ourselves; he would be even more surprised to find that his own dream world has become a cherished part of the heritage of our civilization, our mixed-up and untamed civilization, that hurtful imperfect civilization he could not abide.

This essay originally appeared in The New York Review of Science Fiction *#15, November 1989.*

The Persistence of Desire

by Thomas M. Disch Special Guest Readercon 3

"No more shall Walls of Clay or Mud,
Nor Ceilings made of Wood,
Nor Crystal Windows bound my Sight
But rather shall admit Delight."

Thomas Traherne

It was a new building, set amid other new buildings. The sill on which her hands rested was a strip of maple. The clear varnished grain was flecked by a single drop of white paint, from when they had painted the ceiling. The sun warmed the sore flesh. Sometimes a breeze breathed across the fingers. It was as though the sill were some strange kind of keyboard, and the silence of the room was the music she created, masterpiece after masterpiece, prodigal as Schubert.

The view was satisfactory, with lots of sky. She liked the weather, but not the trees. On Tuesday the 11th, and again on Tuesday the 18th, it rained. Only, that second Tuesday, intermittently; but even so, the women, before they entered the supermarket, had to pause a moment at the door to furl their umbrellas. She was grateful for such weather, and the way the tires hissed on the wet pavements, the way the concrete ledge beyond the sill slowly changed to a darker, but still nameless gray.

In the sunlight she imagined the men in overalls slopping through their work. Their laughter, their indifference. A radio blaring, probably. Droplets flung from the bristles of the brush pattered on the stiff canvas spread across the floor. All but this single droplet: she scraped at it with the tip of a nail, but it clung resolutely to the wood.

In June they took out her telephone. Too many long-distance calls. When the man came it was embarrassing. She pushed some of the clothes under the bed, threw some in the bathtub, and drew the plastic curtain of black sea horses and golden bubbles. It must have seemed peculiar to him, coming to such a building as this to take out a phone. She wondered if the super had found out. An Irish name, beginning in O. Not that it mattered, really. Her rent was taken care of automatically

The turtle lived in a rectangular box of clear plastic. Initially she was aware only of layers of light that vanished as she approached, of shards of rock rising from the shallow water, of the persistence of desire and brief lightning flashes of understanding and despair. The second, supervenient consciousness overlapped the usual view from the bedroom window, sometimes quite sharply, but more often so faintly as to pass unheeded, like the sounds of unseen traffic. Passing the same shop window at different hours of the day, one is at times more aware of what is on display, at other times of one's own reflection in the glass, and there are moments when the two worlds seem to hang in the balance.

She looked at her hand. The torn cuticles. The white, cracked flesh about the knuckles. The skin flaking from the reddened fingers. She blamed the Lysol, or the glove, but of course it was her own fault, for mixing so strong a solution, for going on with the work after she'd felt the leak. She was afraid to touch her face with the raw, red hand, as though it had become a source of infection.

It rested in the sunlight and her will focused, ineffectually, on returning it to health.

As a girl (she recalled) she had tried to start a fire in the woods with a small plastic magnifying glass, creating a series of crisp, black pockmarks on the leaves and occasional wisps of smoke, but never a fire. The glass was too weak.

Then, with the hand still before her, and her attention focused on that hand, and the full force of her will, she saw the turtle itself. With a slight shiver she realized that this was the animal whose narrow world she had caught glimpses of these many days. She closed her eyes; the turtle remained, a green oval ornamented with irregular hexagons, the dull ache of its hunger. It seemed to be three feet below her, or two feet. There was no

object in the plastic box by which to gauge its absolute size.

A fetid smell hung over the water. The turtle's wastes and tiny, rotted shrimp. All the rocks here were polished to such a degree of smoothness that no amount of scrabbling up and down would scrape off the filaments of slime that clung to its hind claws and tail.

The turtle was real. It lived somewhere in the building. She was not imagining it. It lived here, and it was dying. Though it might hold on for weeks, or months.

She was aware, approaching the park, of the hunger of the trees pressing upward past the shadows of the buildings, of the other trees. She was aware, in their branches, of the more conscious and insatiate hungers of birds and squirrels. She felt their hurts and diseases in her own body, sudden implacable lusts, endless fear, rages, and a vague sense, like a film of oil shimmering on water and killing the life below, of wrongness.

Eventually she stopped going out on the street. Anything she needed could be delivered to the door of the apartment.

The first thing she had done, moving in, was to take all the plants from the window boxes. Out to the stairwell where she dropped them, clay pots and all, down the incinerator chute. Two of them, a philodendron and a waist-high rubber plant, were too big for the chute. They rode up and down in the elevator all day. The sickly rubber plant lost half its leaves, but it was not, after all, her responsibility. At five o'clock they were gone. Perhaps someone had adopted them, the way sentimental girls take pity on sick kittens or birds that have fallen from their nests. More likely the super had thrown them in a garbage can.

He was an ugly man. Irish, with an alcoholic, Irish nose like some unpleasant, supposedly edible tuber. A bachelor, he kept cats. Forbidden to go outside, they would sit daylong beside the plate-glass windows, staring out, feeling, as she could, what other creatures felt. But knowing only their fear, never their pain. Fear was a kind of food to them. The cats, though they disliked and avoided her, reluctantly accepted her as an equal.

The turtle's shell was going soft. It no longer attempted the Sisyphean task of scaling the sheer plastic walls of its box, its cage, its tomb. Warm and dry and nearly as stripped of sensation as the scrap of carved stone on which it lay, the turtle became a part of thc larger silence of the room. No food was dropped into the water. The water vanished.

She would have been grateful had these absences been allowed to grow, ripen, and drop from the branch, making the silence whole. But just as the pain would subside to utter nescience, the owner would remember. Fingers would clamp down on the yielding shell, and the turtle would find itself swirling in a dazzle of porcelain. Food would appear on rocks that once again were moist. It would be reawakened to the pain of its dying. Braced against the smooth rocks, it tried to climb up the wall its eyes could not see toward the ledge its claws could not reach.

Her hand grasping the sill, she listened to a noise of human voices. The street below had faded to unintelligibility. As though the angle of thc light made it impossible to see, through the shop window, whatever lay behind, the bric-a-brac and pretty nothings. There was only the reflection of her face, her cotton dress, a parked car, and behind it a blur of traffic in the street.

Her fingernail was broken from overmuch picking at the speck of paint that marred the wood of the sill. It was still there. Sometimes the muscles of her neck would tense and she would feel a fleeting urge to lean forward and attack the speck of paint with her teeth, with the entire strength of her jaw.

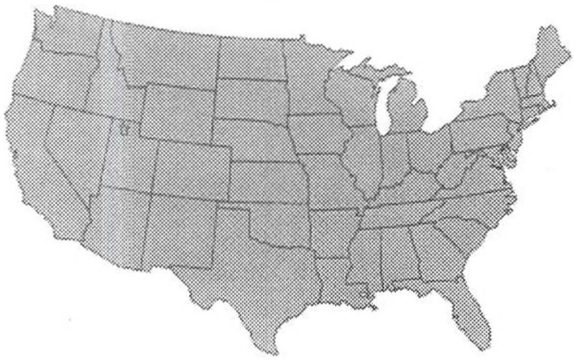
The red tones seemed to have become more vivid, other colors having, in proportion, diminished. So that it looked like meat. It lay there, some two or three feet away, in the sunlight. Throbbing. Full of blood. More like some autonomous creature than a part of her.

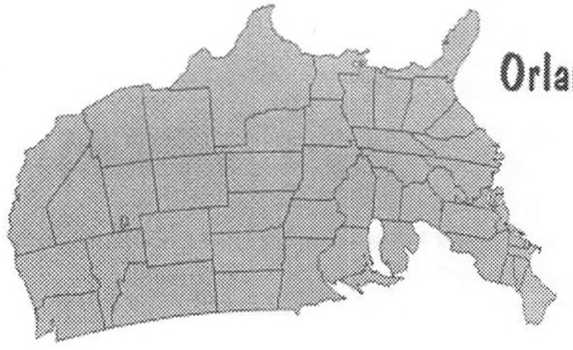
Weakly it pulled itself toward the speck of paint. Weakly claws scrabbled at the smoothness of the maple.

The hand in the box waited to be fed. It curled round the sun-warmed stone, as though to press from it the secret of its happiness, its warmth, its beauty. Then its grasp slackened, its attention wandered.

Slowly it crawled across the rocks, trying to escape the world of substances, desiring a world of light.

Sometimes, a Worldcon bid is all a matter of perspective.





Orlando in 2001

The bid formerly known as Noreascon 4.

Incredible facilities.
Disney. Epcot. MGM.
Kennedy Space Center.
Affordable prices.
And all for you.

The (Boston) Committee
for Orlando in 2001
invites you to
the Worldcon
of the Millennium

Pre-support $10
Pre-oppose $20.01
Friends $60

Write us at:
Orlando in 2001/MCFI
P.O. Box 1010
Framingham, MA 01701
info@mcfi.org

http://www.mcfi.org

Understanding Entropy

by Barry N. Malzberg
Guest of Honor
Readercon 4

So I go to Martin Donner's bedside in the room they have staked out for him in Florida, and I ask him the crucial question: If you had known? I say, if you had known that it would end this way, that you would be dying of a hundred wounds, of the tuberculosis, of the pneumocystitis, of the parasites and the kidney breakdown and the hepatitis, the jaundice, the venerium and the shattering of the pancreas, if you had known that five years after the positive diagnosis and three years after the first episode of the pneumonia you would be lying here, eighty-two pounds, filled with

Seventeen, I say. Seventeen years and not all of them will be happy. Your daughters will weep and one of them will hate you, there will be many betrayals, also other illnesses, earlier illnesses, small and larger betrayals, a terrible bout with hepatitis. Disgraceful venereal conditions. I don't care, he says, seventeen years is a good time. In seventeen years here, lying here, sneaking around, pounding myself into myself, I will be dead, I will have killed myself anyway. No, he says, there is no question, there is no argument. I have made my choice. He closes his eyes, smiles, thinking evidently that he is dreaming. Such dialogues are common inside Martin in this crucial time; he thinks that he is constructing a worst case venue but is nonetheless being firm. Yes, he says, I will do this. His breathing, irregular, levels out. As I withdraw, he thinks that he is making passage into dreamless slumber. As he recedes he feels, I know, some kind of imminence, and perhaps it is my question, no less than anything else, which has led him to this resolution. Or perhaps not. It is difficult to work within such difficult and speculative borders without being overwhelmed by my own relative helplessness and stupor.

But of course this is in only partial quest of verification. I move through the channels of recorded (and possible) time, asking Martin Donner this question at various places within the continuum. I discuss this with him at Cherry Grove in 1978 at a tea dance while it is hanging shyly against the walls, yes, he says, of course it is worth it; I ask him this in 1986 when, thunderously, the implications of the positive diagnosis begin to come through to him and he closes his eyes as I make the forced pictures in his head, showing him what it would be like: I don't know, he says, I don't know, I am in shock, I am in agony here, I can't give you a false or a real answer, can take no position, how can I tell? Maybe I shouldn't have done it, I don't know, I don't know. Take the question to him in Chicago two years later; he is attending a class reunion with his lover, partial remission, he feels in control of himself, some benignity, perhaps illusory but the moment can be extended, he feels, as so many other moments have been extended. I would have done it again, he says, knowing what I know, I would have wanted it this way still; I would not have treated it differently, I would not exchange these years for anything.

Ask him and ask him, up and down the line, sometimes an enthusiastic, desperate yes, other times more tentative, a no at the end and tracking back from that no mostly for the six to eight months before this special, spectacular extended agony; his position then is not fixed any more than it might have been twenty, thirty years ago when Martin refused to respond to the messages flicking like trap shots from the basement of his sensibility. Nothing is sure, nothing is firm. Mostly yes, an occasional no, more no as the end is approached, but even then at some of the moments in between the moments of the worst anguish, a soft, insistent yes. It is not fixed, nothing is fixed, the human condition is not fixed. The price we will pay for fully expressing what we are does seem indeterminate then. It resonates, this confusion, against my own uncertainty, and I understand then, staring at and through all of this, that there can be no answers from Martin, none at all. If Martin is the voice and tensor of all possibility, then there is no possibility, no singularity.

Understanding this does not surprise me but fills me with a desperate and irreparable weakness; I would not have had it this way, I would have wanted surer answers. Everyone wants answers if not *the* answer, even I. I return to my old antagonist on the desert and hand him the helmet and the simulating device and the other armaments of our translation, our bargain, our possibility. I have wrestled and wrestled, I say, I have wrestled you through all the avenues of this life and I do not know, I am stunned and pinned, dislocated and

shattered. Martin is not the answer; he can provide me with no firm basis at all.

Of course, my old antagonist says. His ruddy skin glows with sympathy or perhaps it is only health. Or vindication. You see, he says, you are left with it just as I said, you are left with all of this on your own. You must decide what price to pay and whether that is correct and no one can know. He backs away from me, horns a rapier, fine eyes glints of purpose in the night. Now, he says, now you must decide. You, not Martin Donner, who is only a paradox or a metaphor, you must make that decision. It is the fortieth day, he says. Soon it will be the fortieth night. You must now turn in the way you must, and there will be no returning.

Yes, I say, yes, I understand that. Before me, closing my eyes like Martin in the hallucinatory daze, I see the traps, the sights, the

visions of my own circumstance: the donkey, the cobblestones, the crowds, Pilate's smooth and terrible judgment, the hanging and the darkness. I see and I see and I see and in the iron spikes of the sun of Gologotha, alone and under the darkness, I see too the expanding and necessitous heart of God.

For the Lady of a Physicist

by Michael Bishop
Guest of Honor
Readercon 5

for Andrew Marvell

Although Bekenstein's hypothesis that black holes have a finite entropy requires for its consistency that black holes should radiate thermally, at first it seems a complete miracle that the detailed quantum-mechanical calculations of particle creation should give rise to emission with a thermal spectrum. The explanation is that the emitted particles tunnel out of the black hole from a region of which an external observer has no knowledge other than its mass, angular momentum, and electric charge. This means that all combinations or configurations of emitted particles are equally probable. Indeed, it is possible that the black hole could emit a television set or the works of Proust in ten leather-bound volumes.

— Steven Hawking

If I with her could only join
In rapturous dance, loin to loin,
Deep space itself would soon discern
Galactic rhythm in our burn.
Our bodies stars, our debts all void,
Then would we waltz, and thus employed,
Inflate with megacosmic thrust
Through night and death and sifting dust.
Godlike lovers, we would hang
Beyond the cosmos whose Big Bang
All the mad millennia past,
Was but a popgun to our slow blast.
And as we reeled with raw elan,
Pulsing plasma in vast pavane,
We would shame the Pleiades,
Relume the Magellanic Seas,
Deliver all our Milky Way,
Ionic flux too fierce to stay,
In supernova, and so rehearse
Our own expanding universe.

But my small body is no star,
Albeit something similar:
A blind pool vacuuming into it
All the lambency it's not fit
To redirect and render rife.
The woman I would take to wife
Sees only blackness in my eyes,
Rapacious ebon, hungry skies,
An O-gape gravid with desire
To aggrandize itself in fire;
And so her light sweeps down the hole
That is the maelstrom of my soul.

Therefore, I have become for her
A dark, entropic murderer,
Whose chiefest virtue is his pull.
Then, while my strength is at its full,
Let me draw her to my embrace,
Collapse her will and show my face.
With her my Beatrician guide,
We'd tunnel with the termal tide
Into the arms of Betelgeuse-
With Quasar sets and Marcel Proust
Emergent with us, glory-bound,
Detritus of God's Lost & Found.
Thus, though we cannot create light
From love, yet we will vanquish night.

Of Ten Years

A Richard Powers Appreciation

by Rick Lieder with Kathe Koja Special Guests Readercon 5

The first real book I can remember reading—not a children's book but a book for adults—was Wells' *The Time Machine.* It was a Berkley edition, and the cover pictured the time traveler watching the death throes of the earth after stepping out of his machine, the machine itself a construct of light and lines, capturing for me exactly the feel of the book, the way it made me feel. It was the first cover by Richard Powers I had ever seen. I was nine years old.

I don't know when I began to read—in the womb, I suppose, but there was a lot of darkness in there, it was hard to really see but I managed—ask my mom some time. After my emergence, the reading that I did—and the taste I developed as a result—was influenced to a very great degree by Powers, as I began to recognize and buy books with his covers. At this time he was doing a lot of work for Ballantine, basically given carte blanche to create the look of their science fiction line, doing covers for books by people like Kuttner, Simak, Ted Sturgeon, Richard Wilson, books like Clarke's *Reach For Tomorrow*, Farmer's *The Alley God*, *The Purple Cloud* by M.P. Shiel, *Cycle of Fire* by Hal Clement, *Out of the Deeps* by John Wyndham, *3 From Out There* (edited by Leo Margulies)—all special favorites of mine, all covers by Powers. They all shared one characteristic—they represented things in a way I had never seen before: the wonderfully alien, the different, the unique. It was a way of seeing, as well as a particular style, that influenced me—at that time unconsciously—in my own career as an artist, which did not begin till many years later.

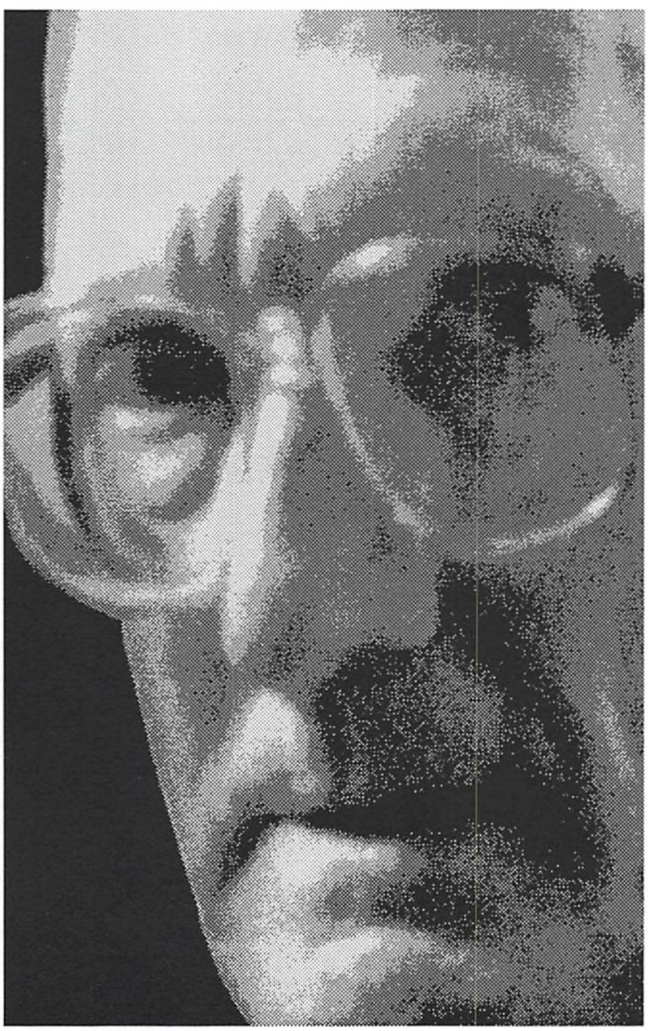


photo by Ray Hoopes, manipulated by Alicia Jaffe

Powers' surrealism was another powerful factor in this attraction. I am also fascinated by Surrealism, by the element of chance that is its heart. Learning more about Surrealism led me to other artists, other approaches to art, and in the learning discovered where Powers' own influences lay: people like Yves Tanguy, Roberto Matta, Arshile Gorky, and finally led to my becoming an artist myself. But the trail begins, I think, with Powers, and that cover that meant *The Time Machine* to me.

Powers' influence on the field has been enormous, but in some ways unappreciated. Much of what is wrong with the work seen today on book covers, in all its vapid banality and paucity of adventure as well as taste, is that no one is willing to take artistic chances, to reach as Powers reached—there is no chance involved, no risks taken. Some of this is the fault of the art directors (and behind them the huge maw that is marketing, which is determined to grind out the same product for Book B as it did for Book A, since Book A sold a requisite amount of copies) but surely much is the fault of the artists themselves, caught by a vicious chicken-egg circle in which Powers has never participated. He is seeing with those alien eyes, still trying to do what he wants to do and make it work within the confines of the publishing world. For an artist like Powers, his commercial work is not so far removed from his fine art (some of which is in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art) in that the sensibilities it reflects, and the avenues it uses to achieve its expression, are the same. "Commercial" need not be a dirty

TEN YEARS

word—it can, and in Powers' work obviously does, transcend the aspect of commercialism, of product. If the people involved care enough about the ultimate consumer —the reader—the work will be presented in a way which respects that reader's intelligence. Just because the cover art is there to sell the book there is no real reason why the artist must illustrate that book with a slavish rendering of a particular scene, rather than do what an artist does best and use the visual medium to give to the reader—in another way—what they hope to find between the book's covers. Powers is a perfect example of this—while his covers can be representational, they are never there as mere tools and always serve to enlarge the experience of the book.

The more I learned about Powers, how he worked, and what he was trying to do with his art, the different mediums in which he worked—he was never afraid to mix mediums, using collage, and sculpture, as well as painting to create something new—the more I saw the chances he took, and the more I observed other artists who were equally unafraid of risk, the more I took chances in my own work. Although his style and mine are not at all alike, it is his approach to being an artist that has influenced me the most. Which is one of the reasons why I'm so pleased to see Powers being honored this way by Readercon, the first convention to really devote a major part of its programming and focus to him. I feel that more people need to be exposed to Powers, not only to enjoy his art, but also to realize how influential he has been within this field in particular and the larger art community in general.

I remember encountering his work for the first time at a convention art show—it was in 1977, and I remember being really shocked to find his paintings there, and shocked somehow too to realize that I could afford one of his pieces—that I could own it and take it home. From then on I began collecting his work.

Richard Powers has set, by his permanent excellence, a standard which should be used as a high-water mark by all artists both in the field and out of it. He has demonstrated that commercial art can be both—that the words are not mutually exclusive. And I would like to personally thank him here for all the pleasure he has given me through his art, through the years, and for the inspiration that led me to begin creating on my own.

Richard Powers was the Artist Guest of Honor at Readercon 5.

The Servant Problem

by Brian Aldiss
Guest of Honor
Readercon 6

Of course, things aren't too bad now. Not as bad as they were, I should voc. I can't complain. Used to routine and the confines.

I only have to work a five-hour day, four days a week, so that's not so bad, like what it was when I was a little girl. I work a compondur, and I've got it set up by my transpar, in a good light. All I have to do is produce six hundred exacts a day. Well, I know it's not a lot. Carrie Climp III in the next clonex has to produce eight hundred supexacts a day.

Of course I get lonely. Can't deny that. Oh, I like the realiter, have it on most nights. Tuned to the smut band, I'm not ashamed to voc. Always take a shower after, though. We get hot water in Dupclonex 10 three hours every day. Quite enough for all ordinary needs.

Beavis and I used to smut together. I miss him, don't I, Beav? When I was a young girl, people weren't ashamed to go together. "In love," they called it. Well, sometimes ideas die and perhaps it's for the better. Like the old notion of people living in separate "houses" to themselves. I was brought up in a house. You can't help laughing. I suppose love went out with houses. It's done away with a lot of squalor. Everything's in recyc mode here. Has to be. We've got years to go yet.

Doesn't stop me missing Beavis. We used to enjoy an old-fashioned and all. I told that to Carrie Climp once and she was real shoved. Didn't voc anything, but you could see. "It's dillies for me," she voced, "Contrafeubral." I daresay, but that's how it was in the past. Interpersonally, frigidity's the straight way here.

"Go out, take your mind off things, Grace," Climp voced. "Do a corridor." She's not unfriendly. It's that visulator on her phys all the time that does it as far as I'm concerned. I do corridor occasionally but you look at people these days and think they aren't scanning what it's all about.

Get yourself classified Zomb Category and you're looked after for life. Then you have to live in a mega-clonex with other Zombs. That's not for me. Let me tell you, Beav, I stick in here most times, conched. When I stamp my chunk and go out, I generally take ASMOV with me.

He makes such a row when he peds it, does ASMOV. I make him ped behinder me. But he is company of a kind.

Beavis left me ASMOV when he went to recondition. It's a mixed costing. ASMOV was a sample of advancetech in his time, but the silver plating wears off. He stands about five feet high, almost my height. Lexi's model is four, which is better. Also plasmic, which is quieter. ASMOV moves so unpleasantly. When he peds it, you hear every click of his ankle, knee and thigh joints.

Once I apped him to the technopractor clinic. All they could voc was to advice an upgrade. There's not much you can maccy with a Mk.AM II. ASMOV already has memplants and accelerrs clamped to his head. To be honest, ASMOV's O/B. I tell him that.

"MANY YEARX HAVE I OF GOOD XERVIX TO YOU YET, GRAX," he vocs. Lenses me in a pathos mode.

"How many years is that?"

"AX MANY YEARX AX I AM XERVIX TO YOU, GRAX."

The speech facility glitches in him.

He stands by when I shower, and towels me afterwards in affect mode. When I order him to tell me a story he gacks in routine channel.

"ONX WAX A XMALL BOY AND GIRL LIVE IN OCEAN ON PLANET. CITY MANY FATHOMX DIP. BOTH BOY AND GIRL COME TOGETHER FROM NATALIUM. BOY AND GIRL ARE FRENX AND NO SMUT BETWEEN. ALSO MAKE FRENX WITH WHAT THEY SCAN IX WHALE. BOY AND GIRL CLIMB OVER WHALE AND GO FOR RIDX XUR-HIM. BUT WHALE IX NOT MAMMAL. INXTED IX HUGE XUBWEAPON FROM CONTINENT WAR. XO ONE DAY -"

Dry and impatient, I voc ASMOV, "I tell you every time, reaccess your fiction program. Indent for upgrade. You give the point of that stupid story away too early, so when the whale splodes it's no surprise."

He vocs, "XINCE YOU KNOW THIX XTORY WELL, GRAX, WHEREVER POINT OF XTORY IX PUT IT CANNOT XURPRIXE YOU. I HAVE RECITED THIX XTORY TO YOU 351 TIMEX. IT CONXIXTX OF 1266 WORDX. YOU MUXT REMEMBER THEM ALL."

His logichip annoys me. I annoy him. I voc, "I am going to sleep now, ASMOV.."

TEN YEARS

I can sleep. He cannot sleep. Even this years novdels cannot sleep merely close their lens and pretend.

While I hang in bed, ASMOV peds it to his plug, stands rigid against the partit, shuts down. He recharges all dim out.

I'm coze, hanging there in my bedsuit. But through the night from ASMOV come many clinks and elsie-dees as his overHAW continues checking every relay and cansion-MAR in his carapack. And always hinder that, the aircond and throb of ship as the lightyers brush past its forcers.

If you got a servant, you're never free. I know I shouldn't complain. Well I'm not complaining. I'm only stating facts. When the andspector comes tomorrow, I shall tell him straight, if you got a servant, you're never free.

Thirty years on, all automates are up to Full Scratch. As Dawntime peds in, along prog the deckspectors. Cleaning, checking, mainting, upgring, millening, nothing skipped. All us comopondurops scanned for full eyequeue and health status in nakidity. I don't shun that, Beav, honest Nakidity nothing to electronurses. Organs, hair, seepage - mere data to Big Biofeed.

My Class is Servant. Of that I m proud. Serv II's "Must Keep Cortex Okay," as old song vocs it. That's me.

I just hope andspector doesn't decide to recyle ASMOV. Then I'd be really alone. I'd even miss the WHALE XTORY.

Always the suspic they'll reclassify me as a Zomb. Once you get to vocing "Time was," you're on someone's O/B listing.

Maybe keep producing exacts quota you printout Alpha.

Auction Pit

by Judith Merill
Guest of Honor
Readercon 6

Prologue

Striped shirt or morning pants, white tie or none,
Smooth-shaven some, others strong of shoulder,
Men jostle lightly, push up to the platform,
With intricate courtesy, Queensbury rites, in the pit
Where the women are auctioned.

In the old days,
Till they stripped off the superstructure,
Hoopskirted ladies were trained to a gentler strain, spirit
Unlikely as limb was to show through the swaddling.
Then there were auctioneers, mothers and maiden aunts,
And elder sisters.

Streamlining, sequin sheath, and strictly divided
Breast-moulding bathing suit, have done for the body
What the unparallelled
High-educational fine opportunities
Offered by charm mags,
Moom-pitcher palaces, as well as success schools,
Business schools, sororities, and secretaryships
Have done for the mind and soul.

The girls cry their own wares now,
With style and strident art, full worthy
The masters of the antique trade.

Procession

This first in line today, she knows her points:
Displays the supple limbs and arching back.
This girl can be had for money, advertise
The swing of hips-and sway of short fur
Chubby on her shoulders.
Here is no art nor artifice. She sells
Nothing but flesh for the bare bottom price of cash.

That slender piece back there, the one
The price for this must offer more than money.
Bid your attention, Gentlemen,
The soft voice sibilates:
I am not strong,
But I am sweet; I shall need all your care;
I'm woman weak, and chill seeps from me
Through the flesh and spirit;
But for the warmth you give, I'll flower-worship
You as my sun, and thank you prettily
For all you pay.

This other is rounder and firm of step:
She would scorn money, needs no lingering care.
Her face is pretty, and sweet with love.
She sells simplicity; her body
Is built to a biologic frame; she'll take

Her pay in kind, from the strong-shouldered
man:
The seed to form large noisy children;
The arm to build a wall against the world.
She wants no more.
For a man of simple and sturdy ways
She is cheap at the price, and the salt of
The earth; many will want her, but bidding
Is likely to go high. She understands
No art of contract, and her needs are
Elementary, and the truth is
There are quite enough of her to go around.

They pass; they come and go.
The girl-child, dimpling, asks indulgence; and the
Spinster, cased in starch, shaped in her dress by
an
Imperious iron, flat as a board, disdains affec-
tion.
Asks security.
And many more: this one in tweeds wants family;
and that
In chiffon asks a lover's eyes to follow her eter-
nally without
Results. Each on goes by. From time to time
A single bid, offered in ignorance, or out of pas-
sion,
Is seized upon, and then the crowd cries:
"Love—A marriage made in heaven,"
And the two depart, leaving the rest with sadness
In their hearts. But for the most,
The price runs high and low through the fleshy
procession.
From one shape to the next across the boards,
small choice
Except as fancy stretches with the purse.

Distinction

White Tie, eyeing the trading from an advanced
Position of disinterest to one side, straightens
His stance at the sound of a crisper cry
Than has been heard yet from the crowded stalls.
This straight proud woman mounts the steps,
To sale, and displays
Indifference quite elaborate as his own. She cries
no price,
But stipulates just that the bidding be precise.
This is not mother, daughter, whore, nor wife,
But courtesan; she has no choice, most feminine
of women,
But to mould her rich
Endowment of nuance to what price buys her.

She sells suggestion:
of cleverness to carry off
The chic complexity of social stipend.
intelligence to build a sounding
Board, if she accept the bid of brain-prestige.
self-centered grace to shower on black
and silver service in a rich man's home.
of sensual calculation to fulfill
Desire, if admiration is her wage

Love, money, home, adventure, intellect,
Society, fine clothes, fine words or eminence...
Some few or all of these White Tie must bid...
And heavily, for now the price runs high.
All things to all these men, she waits to learn
What butcher, bravo, prince, or puritan
Will top the offers and command
Her being. A chimera, she changes shape to suit
Each bid, and as the price soars so her charms
increase.

White Tie, impatient at the boorish crowd,
Spurning the men unworthy of this creature,
Always a spender and a self-willed man,
Each bid with casual grace and smiling scorn.
She will be his; she was ordained for him.

Epilogue:

Off in a corner of the market place
a curious creature stands
in some confusion at the furious trading:
nor buyer, nor seller,
not engage in commerce:
clearly untrained to perform although
just as clearly in the shape of woman

Men brushing by, stop,
finding it beautiful
and passing among them.

From time to time the curious creature
falls into conversation with such men
—timid or haughty, too poor or too rich
to buy hastily—as bid infrequently
and can enjoy such strangely-neutral
entertainment while they wait
for an appropriate enticing cry
to prick them back to business from the auction
block.

Some kindly souls,
instinctively protective-masculine,
stop to direct—or help—

it to the crowded stalls:
a woman lost should be
returned to cover:
this one, in proper form,
might be a piece worth bidding
high and paying pretty for.

A few rude fellows rub against it now and then,
thinking, a woman-body for the asking:
but these are frightened easily by conversation
and stumble off pulling their pockets for the
price
of something satisfying to a man's desires

A curious creature:
not for sale;
yet not free,
Nor can it understand why,
being already among the men,
it must depart and make
a journey back on some one
single arm: selected,
signed and sealed—and delivered?

The men are wiser:
they are familiar
with profit as a function of possession: happiness
surely lies in what they call
their own.

The curious creature mingling
in their midst will not
be owned

They fondle it in passing,
smile and speak perhaps, pass by:
press forward to complete their bids
for proper women on the auction block

Spike the Canon

1989 Pilgrim Award Acceptance Speech

by Ursula K. Le Guin Guest of Honor Readercon 7

I wish I could be with you to receive and thank you for this award, which puts me in such good company with all the people who have been Pilgrims before me, and all the crew of SFRA who (as it were) built and supplied and sail the Mayflower. May our voyage continue to prosper, and may we have thanksgivings together on many New Worlds In the future!

A short talk is traditional on this occasion, and since I could not come to bore you in person, please consider Liz Cummins as being obliged to read you a letter from your Mad Great-Aunt Ursula in Oregon. Thus:

My Dear Nieces and Nephews:

I wonder if it seems to you, as it does to me, that lately in s.f. journals and courses we have plenty of studies of individual books and authors, but less general discussion than we used to have ten or fifteen years ago — discussion about what s.f. is and does, or of the difference between what it is and how it is perceived, or of the status of s.f. as a subject in academe or as a genre or mode of fiction. I see descriptions of many trees, but not many maps of the forest.

Feminist literary theory has both clarified and complicated my own understanding of what "genre" is (though nothing will ever make it a word one can really pronounce comfortably in English). I was brought up of course to believe that the Canon of English Literature — what they taught in English courses — was the best fiction and poetry in our language. Uppity women have induced me to see that Canon as a selection from the best — a group of works passed through a filter designed to admit only certain kinds of writing by certain kinds of writer, and to exclude the rest as inferior, minor, secondary, of political interest, of historical Interest, of interest to women, for children, or otherwise qualified. Here then in the curricular flask we have the distillate, the Great Tradition, the pure quintessence; and over there somewhere in a lot of little bottles and old Mason jars is all the other stuff, including all genre fiction.

Those who use the canonical filter maintain that it is an aesthetic one, that it ranks artistic merit. Those of us who have stopped using it did so because we consider it to be less aesthetic than political, and do not like its politics.

I first thought about this issue of genrification not as a woman writer but as a writer of science fiction, fantasy, children's books, and young adult books — four fictional modes categorized by both publishers and academics as genres, and thereby, by the simple designation, excluded from serious criticism and consideration as literature.

(Yes, there are exceptions; there are always exceptions: there are battered husbands; there is Jane Austen; there is *Alice in Wonderland*; a critic here and there includes Tolkien among the "major writers." I am happy to discuss exceptions as long as they are not being dragged in as red herrings to lead us away from the fact that, as 95% of battered spouses are women, 95% of canonical authors are white men writing realism for adults.)

Having been myself so thoroughly genrified, I was quite ready to accept the feminist perception of the construction of Literature as essentially political, an issue of power and control. The exclusion of women from the literary canon is an aspect of the exclusion of women from public authority and power; one need hardly inquire to whose advantage. But what about the genres, such as kiddilit or s.f.? Who profits, whose power and control is reinforced, when they are excluded or trivialized?

There are people in the s.f. community with a ready answer to that question The Literary Establishment! they say. The Mainstream! they say. The damned elitist snobs (some of them say) who write for the damned elitist *New Yorker* and the fancy quarterlies and get reviewed in the damned elitist *New York Times Book Review* and the fancy quarterlies and eat quiche. While us good ole boys and gals write good ole honest entertainment and compete for the good ole honest fans' beer money, so get off our backs with that fancy litterchoor shit cuz we just work in the baloney factory and we're damned proud of it.

I can't buy all that, and not only because I've worked in the quiche factory on and off. I can't buy it because I see absolutely no opposition between *art* and *entertainment*; and I can't see science fiction as a brave little hero (with some half-million-dollar advances in his slingshot) up against a giant bully Mainstream, defending Yaddo, I suppose.

If the mainstream definably exists, then I think it is itself a genre; one among many ways of writing fiction — one of the many modes I myself work in. What's important to me is not setting up these polarities and rivalries, but getting free of them. I want us to be unquestionably free to work without penalty in any mode or genre of fiction we want, and to cross from one to another, and to crossbreed them, too. I believe that a lively literature is nourished not by purity but by promiscuity.

Categorization and the ranking of classes In a hierarchy is a useful and necessary intellectual activity, in its place. Misused, it serves not understanding, but authority. I want to say — very carefully, because I love the idea of the university and of universal education, the bedrock of political freedom — I want to say that I think the teaching of literature in the universities perpetuates a false ranking, a pernicious hierarchy of values.

Fifteen years ago I believed things were changing fast, and talked about the walls falling, the ghettoes opening, the streams mingling. I thought the English departments were ready to accept the full wealth and diversity of modern literature; I thought the defensive territorialism of the Canoneers was weakening, so that research and teaching in the so-called genres wouldn't keep meeting resistance or being shoved off into sidelines and backwaters. How naive was I? There has certainly been some advance or at least consolidation, and I should like to know from you who do the research and teaching whether, and how much, you think we have gained. It seems to me that s.f. studies have not been integrated into literature any more than women's studies have, or black studies: they all remain exceptions, marginalized, genrified. If I am wrong in this I will truly welcome hearing so!

I may be wrong in laying so much responsibility at the academic door; but then I consider academics to be particularly responsible people. Writers are responsible for what they write, publishers for what they print and sell, editors and critics for what gets reviewed and how, and the judges and juries are responsible for who gets the grants and awards that are now so enormously important to scholars. But all these people were trained in the schools and universities. Literary judgment is formed in the schools; the curriculum is what continues to be read, and therefore forms the standard against which all works are judged. The politics of the curriculum is central.

As I understand it, the s.f. teacher and critic has two general options or directions. One is to accept and foster s.f. as a genre — to teach separate courses in s.f. and defend its unique virtues. To do so is to admit the dominance of the exclusionary canon, either as an aesthetic fact or as *force majeure*. The other option is to refuse to genrify, and to try to spike the canon. This is done by accepting only appropriate aesthetic criteria in choosing what is to be taught, while refusing the agenda which distorts artistic values in order to support certain vested interests; or by identifying the vested interests as such and using other criteria — equally but differently political — to choose and to judge literature by. The pure aesthetic criterion is quixotic, and the alternate political criterion is difficult, because it challenges the defenders of the canon directly.

I was very pleased to find a brother of mine, who has mostly dwelt on the misty moors of British Romanticism and in the scary Badlands of Native American writing, come and make himself at home this year in s.f. criticism. I hope there will be many more such crossovers. I hope they will take place out of, as well as into, s.f. studies — comparisons, studies of influence, demystifications of genre, and some useful definitions. (Somebody has got to do some serious thinking about fantasy — some *informed* thinking — so that fakes like Todorov don't keep clogging up the scene!) I hope that obstinate genre-busting and large-scale, radical questioning will begin to have a good effect, not perhaps on minds that closed down years ago, but on the younger minds, among whom, after all, lurk the future chairpersons and members of Curriculum Committees, as well as the editors, publishers, librarians, critics, readers, and writers of books.

So, my dear and courageous nieces and nephews, I close with the hope that you will be dismayed neither by the Giant Mainstream, nor by the ogre Grantless Project in the Slough of Disapprobation, but will slog cheerily on, singing with me our song:

Then Fancies flee away!
I'll fear not what men say,
I'll labour night and day
To be a Pilgrim!

Your loving and grateful Auntie,
— Ursula

Travels through Brittany

by Terri Windling
Guest of Honor
Readercon 7

A storm was coming, but the winds were still, and in the wild woods of Broceliande, before an oak, so hollow, huge and old it look'd a tower of ivied masonwork, at Merlin's feet the wily Vivien lay, wrote Victorian poet Alfred, Lord Tennyson in *Idylls of the King*. Drawing upon Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* and older Arthurian sources, Tennyson created his epic poem of Arthur, Merlin and Camelot — including the story of Merlin's fatal seduction by a fairy enchantress. In Tennyson's version of the tale, Merlin is a grey-bearded old man seeking solitude from Arthur's court in the forest of Broceliande. Vivien (in other versions called Nimue) is the beautiful fairy who follows him there, intent on doing the old man harm and "fancying that her glory would be great according to the greatness whom she quenched." Tennyson's Vivien is a wicked creature who succeeds in trapping Merlin within a tower built of his own strong spells — not because he ever quite succumbs to her erotic charms, but because he is old, tired, underestimating the danger she presents.

There's a very different version of the tale that comes from Broceliande itself, an ancient forest that still exists in the Brittany region of France. According to this legend, Vivien is the daughter of a fairy and a Breton lord: lovely and intelligent, with her mother's penchant for magic. Merlin meets her by the fairy fountain in the forest and is charmed by her beauty and her wit. They spend a year and a day together, then Merlin returns to Arthur's court. But he is a prophet; he knows it is his fate to end his days imprisoned by love. In resignation he goes back across the English Channel to the Breton wildwood. Once again in Vivien's arms, his passion is rekindled, and he teaches her the spell that will bind them together forever at the heart of the forest.

British author Robert Holdstock has taken inspiration from Tennyson's more sinister version of the tale in *Merlin's Wood*, a contemporary novel that weaves together Arthurian lore with older Celtic legends. Setting his story on a present-day farm near the Forest of Paimpont (on the site of Broceliande), he creates a haunting picture of the timeless struggle between enchanter and enchantress — and its effect on all who live too close to the shadows of the wood. A.S. Byatt is another modern writer who works with ancient Breton tales in her extraordinary novel *Possession*, winner of the Booker Prize. The novel makes use of the legend of Melusine, and of the Drowned City of Is, but it also touches on the Merlin story and its place in Breton tradition.

"Today the storytelling begins," writes Byatt (in the voice of Sabine de Kercoz, a young woman in an isolated village on the coast of Finistere). "Everywhere in Brittany the storytelling begins at Toussaint [November], in the Black Month. It goes on through December, the Very Black Month, as far as the Christmas story. My father told the tale of Merlin and Vivien. The two characters are never the same in successive years. Merlin is always old and wise, and clearsighted about his doom. Vivien is always beautiful, and various and dangerous. The end is always the same. But my father, within this framework, has many stories. Sometimes the fairy and the magician are true lovers. Sometimes he is old and tired and ready to lay down his burden and she is a tormenting daemon. Sometimes it is a battle of wits, in which she is all passionate emulation, a daemonic will to overcome him, and he is wise beyond belief and impotent with it. Tonight he was not so decrepit, nor yet so clever — he was ruefully courteous, knowing that her time had come, and ready to take pleasure in his eternal swoon, or dream or contemplation."

Reading *Possession* and *Merlin's Wood*, as well as the older tales they draw upon, gave me the strong desire to see the land of "Little Britain" myself (as the early Celts called Brittany) — particularly as it lies just a ferry ride away from my Devon home. I phoned Rob Holdstock in London for advice, remembering that he had travelled there in preparation for writing Merlin's Wood. "Broceliande will disappoint you," he warned. "There's not much of it left anymore. Go if you must, but then head south to Carnac, for the standing stones. And west to Finistere — that's where you'll find enchanted forests." I filled my old car with books of Breton tales, sketch pads, paints, Celtic music tapes, and caught a late-night ferry from the south of England to St. Malo in Bretagne.

By morning, my travelling companion and I were on the road to the Forest of Paimpont, a forest of twenty-seven square miles that is all that remains of legendary Broceliande. In December, the oak and hawthorne were leafless; the winter sky the silver-white of old pearls. Rob had been right. Unlike the vast forest he'd conjured in his novel, the actual remaining wood of Broceliande was not particularly impressive; it seemed small, thin and spindly compared to the deep, tangled woodland of Dartmoor back home. And yet... it was a haunted place. Quiet and still in the morning light. I thought of the tales I had heard of this wood: White deer who were fairy women in disguise; to hunt them was to court one's own death. Infants brought to the fountain in the wood to seek the fairies' blessing. Sir Roland of Brittany had vowed not to touch a woman's lips with his own — until he came across a strange chateau in the depths of Broceliande. A lady of dazzling beauty invited the knight to come and rest till dawn. She enticed him with food, wine, and music, until finally he could resist no more — but as he bent down to kiss her lips, the sun came over the woodland. The chateau transformed into an oak grove, its furnishings into moss-covered rocks, the lady into a hideous hag, furious at losing her prey.

The Chateau de Comper still sits at the edge of the forest, partially inhabited and partially in ruins. This was where Vivien is said to have been born, and where she raised Sir Lancelot, and where she gave Arthur his sword (in her guise as Lady of the Lake). Not far from there is Merlin's Tomb, two slabs of stone in a holly grove where the old enchanter's body still lies imprisoned, according to some legends — or asleep with Vivien faithfully at his side according to others. The Val sans Retour (Valley of No Return) is one of the sites most steeped in magic. A footpath leads to a small hidden lake, beautifully set in the folds of the hills. It is said that on certain moonlit nights the waters will reflect the face of the man or woman whom one is destined to love. Morgana, Arthur's sorceress sister, enraged by the faithless love of a knight, once cast this valley under a spell preventing anyone who had done wrong from finding their way out again. Indeed, the whole of the Forest of Paimpont seems to be under a subtle spell, an

eerie, misty timelessness. We found ourselves driving in circles, although the wood was small and our map well marked — lost despite my companion's usual infallible sense of direction...

Finding our way out of Merlin's wood, we headed south for the Morbihan coast, which contains some of the most mysterious pagan monuments to be found anywhere in the world. Brittany is a Celtic land where pagan traditions lie just beneath, or entwined with, the Christian ones that followed after. Celts arrived in the area sometime before the 5th century BC, naming the country Armorica (country of the sea). With the coming of Caesar in 56 BC, the land fell under Roman rule; later, in the 5th to 7th centuries, a new Celtic population arrived. They came from Wales, Devon and Cornwall (primarily the latter, judging by the similarities between the Breton and Cornish languages), driven from their own countries by the Angles and the Saxons. Although the independent Duchy of Brittany has long since been swallowed up by greater France, the Breton people still retain a language and customs all their own — and the land remains a vital stronghold of Celtic storytelling, music and traditions.

The famous megaliths of Brittany are thought to be pre-Celtic, but (like Britain's Stonehenge) their origin is not precisely known. Although megaliths can be found throughout the Breton countryside in astonishing numbers, the Morbihan gulf holds the greatest concentration of menhirs, cromlechs, dolmen and tumuli. The district around the village of Carnac alone contains more than three thousand standing stones, arranged in westerly parallel lines ending in a semi-circle surrounding the hamlet of Menec. Some legends say the stones were erected by the Korrigans — a dwarf-like creature common to Breton folktales. Others say they were used for pagan astronomy, rites, or divination. A local Christian tale attributes the stones to Carnac's patron Saint Cornely: Attempting to convert a pagan tribe, he found himself faced by an angry mob. Calling upon heaven for aid, the pagans were instantly turned to stone, and still stand guard on Carnac's coast against the old religion's return. The effectiveness of this guardianship seems dubious when we look at the local practice, still extant in this century, of rubbing one's flesh against certain stones, at certain times of the waning and waxing moon, to aid fertility, childbirth, or to cure any number of ills. One night a year (generally Christmas night) these enormous stones walk down to the sea to bathe, dance and refresh themselves — but great misfortune falls on anyone who would dare to witness the scene. They say there is treasure under the stones, but those who succeed at plundering it are dead by morning, or find that it turns to dust and leaves in their hand.

From Carnac we travelled west along the coast, past reedy shores, through fishing villages, and up through the old Forest of Carnoet. This wood too was full of legends — of saints, supernatural ferrymen, werewolves and spectral huntsmen. Here was the castle of the Bluebeard of Cornouaille, who put his first four wives to death, for he had heard a prophesy that he would die by his child's hand. When his fifth wife gave birth, she was able to save her child's life with the aid of the murdered women's ghosts. The cruel man eventually found his son and had him beheaded, but the boy tucked his head under his arm, threw a handful of dirt at the castle walls, and the castle collapsed, burying his bloodthirsty father alive. Also in Carnoet was the ruins of a tower where once a tragic young woman was imprisoned, walled up by the wealthy and jealous old man to whom she'd been given in marriage. She did not conceive an heir, to the old man's great frustration, and her beauty faded as she pined away. One night a hawk flew to her window, and turned into a beautiful young man — a lord of Cornouaille, drawn to the tower by the sound of her sad songs. He returned to visit her nightly and the two soon became lovers... until her husband discovered all and had the window hung with swords and knives. The hawk, mortally wounded, returned to his own castle to die. Pregnant now, cast out by her husband, she followed a trail of blood to her lover's home. With his dying breath he gave her the ring by which their son, when he grew to manhood, could claim his father's throne.

Marie de France elaborates this tale in her popular lais of the 12th or 13th centuries (the date depending on which account you read). Born in France, Marie spent the greater part of her life with the English court, where she became famous as a poetess composing chivalric romances — many of them set in Brittany, and drawn from Breton sources. Also dating from the 12th century is the romance *Tristan in Brittany*, written by "Thomas the Anglo-Norman" and available in an excellent edition translated by Dorothy L. Sayers (better known for her mystery novels). The story

is part of the Arthurian tradition and most of it takes place across the English Channel in Cornwall; but Tristan himself (whose name means "child of sorrow") is Breton-born, and it is to Brittany he returns in the end. There, he marries Iseult of the White Hand although his heart still longs for the other Iseult, married to his uncle, the Cornish king. Ile Tristan (Tristan Island) lies off the western coast near the town of Douarnenez; it is here Tristan is said to be buried in one grave with Iseult of Cornwall.

The Ile de Sein in the Baie des Trepasses is another island with legendary associations. It is believed to have been the high seat of the Celtic religion, and a place of oracular magic. Nine druid priestesses, known as the Gallicenae, inhabited the island, with the power to raise the wind and sea, to turn themselves into animals, to cure wounds and diseases, and to see into the future. In Celtic times, the dead were sent to the women of the Ile de Sein; from there they travelled on to the summer lands of an Earthly Paradise. The Baie des Trepasses is one of the many locations given for the famous Drowned City of Is (also called Ys, or Ker-Ys in Breton tales). According to legend, Is was the capital of Cornouaille — a city so beautiful it inspired the name of Paris (Par-Is, "like Is"). Built by the sea, the city was protected by a dike, locked with a golden key. The king of Is had a daughter, Dahut — headstrong, proud, and wild. Dahut was seduced by a daemon or a fairy, who took the form of a beautiful young man. As proof of her love, he asked her to open the seagate at night to let him in. She stole the key while her father slept, opened the gates, and the sea flooded in. They say on certain moonlit nights you can still hear the bells of Is ringing from far under the waves.

Being a coastal nation with treacherous waters that have cost many lives, a great number of Breton tales involve fairy creatures who live in the waves, seducing human men and women, luring them to their deaths. The Morgans of Finistere were sea fairies who lived in the shallows and seaside caves; it was unluckly to walk the shore alone at night lest a Morgan be encountered. Many Morgans were sirens who particularly liked young, strong fishermen, pulling them under the waves to live lives of ease in palaces of coral. The famous Fairy Melusine was part sea-serpent and part woman. She was happily married to a human nobleman, and even bore him several sons — until he spied the fairy at her bath in her true, half-serpent guise. Off the Pointe des Espangnols near Brest a fisherman was given a cup of sweet-smelling nectar by a mermaid. In it was a magic potion that would cause him to forget his sweetheart back on land, and follow the mermaid forever. Just as he brought it to his lips, he heard the sound of the church bell toll and he dashed the cup into the sea. The love potion spread over the waves, which is why the sea tastes salty today.

Inland from Brest is a moorland region that reminded me of Dartmoor back home — an empty land of windswept hills, blanketed with heather, crowned with granite tors. This region had its fairies too: Korrigans, and ghostly Nightwashers (similar to Irish banshees), and household Lutins who helped or hindered with the chores according to their whim. Many Breton supernatural tales concern the doleful, wandering souls of the dead, travelling the earth doing penance for any harm they caused in life. The story of the Ankou was one of the most pervasive throughout Brittany. He was the spirit of death: tall, white-haired, in a black flat hat and a long black coat, dragging or riding a wooden cart in which he gathered his crop of souls. To hear the terrible creak of the Ankou's cart was a warning that death was near — as was the knock of an owl at the window, a magpie on the roof, or a crow at the door.

In Morlaix, a beautiful old town of the region, Korrigans lived underground where they hoarded stolen coins, beat noisily on basins, and were generally a terrible nuisance. More sinister were the Teurst, who appeared in Morlaix in the guise of domestic animals. They delighted in doing wicked deeds, causing household arguments, and shrieking so horribly the sound curdled milk and turned beer sour. We heard neither Teursts nor banging Korrigans on the night we spent in the town of Morlaix, but listened instead to Breton music in a bar where an open pit fire threw heat onto ancient walls of cob and timber. Breton folk music is a form of Celtic music, similar to that of the Irish and Scots, but it has a distinctive sound of its own in the droning pipes, the Celtic harp, the lyrics sung in old Breton and French. Like Irish music, it has seen a strong revival in the last two decades, and many good recordings are available in the World Music sections of well-stocked stores. (Look for Alan Stivell's classic *Renaissance de la Harpe Celtique*, as well as recordings by guitarist Dan Ar Braz and the bands Kornog, Tri Yann, An

Triskell, and Lyonesse.) The sound is stirring and primal, evoking the old Celtic spirit of the land.

Our journey ended at Tregastel-Plage, where pink granite boulders tumbled onto the beach and piled into islands out to sea. The rocks were magical, carved by the wind into faces, figures, fantastical shapes. In the shelter of these rocks lived the Margot-la-Fee, peaceable fairies who spent their time raising children, tending herds of fairy cattle and sheep, and sunning themselves on the broad pink stones. If you asked them politely for bread or wool or milk, they were more than likely to oblige you. They were heard more often than seen, for they were shy of human eyes.

As the sun set over Trestle, the sea became a sheet of silver. The tide turned and the winter wind swept long pink clouds across the sky. I fancied I could almost see the isle of Avalon on the horizon, where Arthur slept, attended by Morgana and her court of fairy maidens. The Bretons say that Avalon lies off the coast just off Tregastel-Plage. Sitting there, the line between story and fact seemed as vaporous as the clouds. It was indeed an enchanted land, enchanted by its natural beauty as much as by many centuries of stories — passed from mouth to mouth, family to family, enduring as the rocks. The sun sank low and I despaired, knowing no words of mine could conjure a fraction of the magic to be found in the simple lines of sand, sea and stone. Nor, in just a few column pages, could I begin to convey the wealth of tales to be found at the heart of the Breton folk tradition: tales of saints, sirens, and sinners; of tricksters and devils; of wisemen and fools... Far better to send you to the tales themselves, and some modern adaptations of them:

Folktales of Brittany by W. Branch Johnson and *Legends and Romances of Brittany* by Lewis Spence are two excellent English-language sources, while Katherine Briggs, Thomas Keightley, W.Y. Evan Wentz, and Nora Chadwick all include sections of Breton material in their various works on Celtic fairy lore and mythology. Modern fiction based on Breton tales includes the Holdstock and Byatt books mentioned above, Jack Vance's epic novel *Lyonesse*, the "Broceliande" stories in Sylvia Townsend Warner's *Kingdoms of Elvin*, and Evangeline Walton's beautiful story "The Judgement of St. Ives" (published in *Elsewhere*, Vol. I). Dorothy Sayer's translation of *Tristan in Brittany* can still be found in good libraries, and *The Lais of Marie de France* are available in several editions.

As we left Tregastel, heading for the ferry that would take us back to England again, I decided that I was inclined to prefer the second version of the Merlin story — the one where Merlin voluntarily gave Vivien the spell to entrap him forever. I could easily believe he would choose to spend eternity in these dream-haunted hills. I'd favor the hills of Brittany myself, if I had to make such a choice.

With thanks to PPR for sharing a magical winter's journey.

Golden the Ship Was — Oh! Oh! Oh!

by Cordwainer Smith
Past Master
Readercon 7

Aggression started very far away.

War with Raumsog came about twenty years after the great cat scandal which, for a while, threatened to cut the entire planet Earth from the desperately essential santaclara drug. It was a short war and a bitter one

Corrupt, wise, weary old Earth fought with masked weapons. since only hidden weapons could maintain so ancient a sovereignty—sovereignty which had long since lapsed into a titular paramountcy among the communities of mankind. Earth won and the others lost, because the leaders of Earth never put other considerations ahead of survival. And this time, they thought, they were finally and really threatened.

The Raumsog war was never known to the general public except for the revival of wild old legends about golden ships.

I

On Earth the Lords of the Instrumentality met. The presiding chairman looked about and said,

"Well, gentlemen, all of us have been bribed by Raumsog. We have all been paid off individually. I myself received six ounces of stroon in pure form. Will the rest of you show better bargains?"

Around the room, the councilors announced the amounts of their bribes.

The chairman turned to the secretary. "Enter the bribes in the record and then mark the record off-the record."

The others nodded gravely.

"Now we must fight. Bribery is not enough. Raumsog has been threatening to attack Earth. It's been cheap enough to let him threaten, but obviously we don't mean to let him do it."

"How are you going to stop him, Lord Chairman?" growled a gloomy old member. "Get out the golden ships?"

"Exactly that." The chairman looked deadly serious.

There was a murmurous sigh around the room. The golden ships had been used against an inhuman life-form many centuries before. They were hidden somewhere in nonspace and only a few officials of Earth knew how much reality there was to them. Even at the level of the Lords of the Instrumentality the council did not know precisely what they were.

"One ship," said the chairman of the Lords of the Instrumentality, "will be enough."

It was.

II

The dictator Lord Raumsog on his planet knew the difference some weeks later.

"You can't mean that," he said. "You can't mean it. There is no such ship that size. The golden ships are just a story. No one ever saw a picture of one."

"Here is a picture, my Lord," said the subordinate.

Raumsog looked at it. "It's a trick. Some piece of trick photography. They distorted the size. The dimensions are wrong. Nobody has a ship that size. You could not build it, or if you did build it, you could not operate it. There just is not any such thing—" He babbled on for a few more sentences before he realized that his men were looking at the picture and not at him.

He calmed down.

The boldest of the officers resumed speaking. "That one ship is ninety million miles long, Your Highness. It shimmers like fire, but moves so fast that we cannot approach it. But it came into the center of our fleet almost touching our ships, stayed there twenty or thirty thousandths of a second. There it was, we thought. We saw the evidence of life on board: light beams waved; they examined us and then, of course, it lapsed back into nonspace. Ninety million miles, Your Highness. Old Earth has some stings yet and we do not know what the ship is doing."

The officers stared with anxious confidence at their overlord

Raumsog sighed. "If we must fight, we'll fight. We can destroy that too. After all, what is size in the spaces between the stars? What difference does it make whether it is nine miles or nine million or ninety million?" He sighed again. "Yet I must say ninety million miles is an awful big size for a ship. I don't know what they are going to do with it."

He did not.

III

It is strange—strange and even fearful—what the love of Earth can do to men. Tedesco, for example.

Tedesco's reputation was far-flung. Even among the Go-Captains whose thoughts were rarely on such matters, Tedesco was known for his raiment, the foppish arrangement of his mantle of office. and his bejeweled badges of authority. Tedesco was known too for his languid manner and his luxurious sybaritic living. When the message came, it found Tedesco in his usual character.

He was lying on the air-draft with his brain pleasure centers plugged into the triggering current. So deeply lost in pleasure was he that the food, the women, the clothing, the books of his apartments were completely neglected and forgotten. All pleasure save the pleasure of electricity acting on the brain was forgotten.

So great was the pleasure that Tedesco had been plugged into the current for twenty hours without interruption—a manifest disobedience of the rule which set six hours as maximum pleasure.

And yet, when the message came—relayed to Tedesco's brain by the infinitesimal crystal set there for the transmittal of messages so secret that even thought was too vulnerable to interception—when the message came Tedesco struggled through layer after layer of bliss and unconsciousness

The ships of gold—the golden ships—for Earth is in danger.

Tedesco struggled. *Earth is in danger.* With a sigh of bliss he made the effort to press the button which turned off the current. And with a sigh of

cold reality he took a look at the world about him and turned to the job at hand. Quickly he prepared to wait upon the Lords of the Instrumentality.

The chairman of the Lords of the Instrumentality sent out the Lord Admiral Tedesco to command the golden ship. The ship itself. Larger than most stars, was an incredible monstrosity. Centuries before it had frightened away nonhuman aggressors from a forgotten corner of the galaxies.

The Lord Admiral walked back and forth on his bridge. The cabin was small, twenty feet by thirty. The control area of the ship measured nothing over a hundred feet. All the rest was a golden bubble of the feinting ship, nothing more than thin and incredibly rigid foam with tiny wires cast across it so as to give the illusion of a hard metal and strong defenses.

The ninety million miles of length were right. Nothing else was.

The ship was a gigantic dummy, the largest scarecrow ever conceived by the human mind.

Century after century it had rested in nonspace between the stars, waiting for use. Now it proceeded helpless and defenseless against a militant and crazy dictator Raumsog and his horde of hard-fighting and very real ships.

Raumsog had broken the disciplines of space. He had killed the pinlighters. He had emprisoned the Go-captains. He had used renegades and apprentices to pillage the immense interstellar ships and had armed the captive vessels to the teeth. In a system which had not known real war, and least of all war against Earth, he had planned well.

He had bribed, he had swindled, he had propagandized. He expected Earth to fall before the threat itself. Then he launched his attack.

With the launching of the attack, Earth itself changed. Corrupt rascals became what they were in title: the leaders and the defenders of mankind.

Tedesco himself had been an elegant fop. War changed him into an aggressive captain, swinging the largest vessel of all time as though it were a tennis bat.

He cut in on the Raumsog fleet hard and fast.

Tedesco shifted his ship right, north, up, over.

He appeared before the enemy and eluded them—down, forward, right, over.

He appeared before the enemy again. One successful shot from them could destroy an illusion on which the safety of mankind itself depended. It war his business not to allow them that shot.

Tedesco was not a fool. He was fighting his own strange kind of war, but he could not help wondering where the real war was proceeding.

IV

Prince Lovaduck had obtained his odd name because he had had a Chinesian ancestor who did love ducks, ducks in their Peking form— succulent duck skins brought forth to him ancestral dreams of culinary ecstasy.

His ancestress, an English lady, had said, "Lord Lovaduck, that fits you!"—and the name had been proudly taken as a family name. Lord Lovaduck had a small ship. The ship was tiny and had a very simple and threatening name: *Anybody.*

The ship was not listed in the space register and he himself was not in the Ministry of Space Defense. The craft was attached only to the Office of Statistics and Investigation—under the listing, "vehicle" — for the Earth treasury. He had very elementary defenses. With him on the ship went one chronopathic idiot essential to his final and vital maneuvers.

With him also went a monitor. The monitor, as always, sat rigid, catatonic, unthinking, unaware—except for the tape recorder of his living mind which unconsciously noted every imminent mechanical movement of the ship and was prepared to destroy Lovaduck, the chronopathic idiot and the ship itself should they attempt to escape the authority of Earth or should they turn against Earth. The life of a monitor was a difficult one but was far better than execution for crime, its usual alternative. The monitor made no trouble. Lovaduck also had a very small collection of weapons, weapons selected with exquisite care for the atmosphere, the climate, and the precise conditions of Raumsog's planet.

He also had a psionic talent, a poor crazy little girl who wept, and whom the Lords of the Instrumentality had cruelly refused to heal. because her talents were better in unshielded form than they would have been had she been brought into the full community of mankind. She was a class-three etiological interference.

V

Lovaduck brought his tiny ship near the atmosphere of Raumsog's planet. He had paid good

money for his captaincy to this ship and he meant to recover it. Recover it he would, and handsomely, if he succeeded in his adventurous mission.

The Lords of the Instrumentality were the corrupt rulers of a corrupt world. but they had learned to make corruption serve their civil and military ends, and they were in no mind to put up with failures. If Lovaduck failed he might as well not come back at all. No bribery could save him from this condition. No monitor could let him escape. If he succeeded, he might be almost as rich as an Old North Australian or a stroon merchant.

Lovaduck materialized his ship just long enough to hit the planet by radio. He walked across the cabin and slapped the girl. The girl became frantically excited. At the height of her excitement he slapped a helmet on her head, plugged in the ship's communication system, and flung her own peculiar emotional psionic radiations over the entire planet.

She was a luck-changer. She succeeded: for a few moments, at every place on that planet, under the water and on it, in the sky and in the air, luck went wrong just a little. Quarrels did occur, accidents did happen, mischances moved just within the limits of sheer probability. They all occurred within the same minute. The uproar was reported just as Lovaduck moved his ship to another position. This was the most critical time of all. He dropped down into the atmosphere. He was immediately detected. Ravening weapons reached for him, weapons sharp enough to scorch the very air and to bring every living being on the planet into a condition of screaming alert.

No weapons possessed by Earth could defend against such an attack.

Lovaduck did not defend. He seized the shoulders of his chronopathic idiot. He pinched the poor defective; the idiot fled, taking the ship with him. The ship moved back three, four seconds in time to a period slightly earlier than the first detection. All the instruments on Raumsog's planet went off. There was nothing on which they could act.

Lovaduck was ready. He discharged the weapons. The weapons were not noble.

The Lords of the Instrumentality played at being chivalrous and did love money, but when life and death were at stake, they no longer cared much about money, or credit, or even about honor. They fought like the animals of Earth's ancient past—they fought to kill. Lovaduck had discharged a combination of organic and inorganic poisons with a high dispersion rate. Seventeen million people, nine hundred and fifty thousandths of the entire population, were to die within that night.

He slapped the chronopathic idiot again. The poor freak whimpered. The ship moved back two more seconds in time.

As he unloaded more poison, he could feel the mechanical relays reach for him.

He moved to the other side of the planet, moving backward one last time, dropped a final discharge of virulent carcinogens, and snapped his ship into nonspace, into the outer reaches of nothing. Here he was far beyond the reach of Raumsog.

VI

Tedesco's golden ship moved serenely toward the dying planet, Raumsog's fighters closing on it. They fired—it evaded, surprisingly agile for so immense a craft, a ship larger than any sun seen in the heavens of that pan of space. But while the ships closed in their radios reported:

"The capital has blanked out."

"Raumsog himself is dead."

"There is no response from the north."

"People are dying in the relay stations."

The fleet moved, intercommunicated, and began to surrender. The golden ship appeared once more and then it disappeared, apparently forever.

VII

The Lord Tedesco returned to his apartments and to the current for plugging into the centers of pleasure in his brain. But as he arranged himself on the air-jet his hand stopped on its mission to press the button which would start the current. He realized, suddenly, that he had pleasure. The contemplation of the golden ship and of what he had accomplished — alone, deceptive, without the praise of all the worlds for his solitary daring—gave even greater pleasure than that of the electric current. And he sank back on the jet of air and thought of the golden ship, and his pleasure w as greater than any he had ever experienced before.

VIII

On Earth, the Lords of the Instrumentality gracefully acknowledged that the golden ship had destroyed all life on Raumsog's planet. Homage was paid to them by the many worlds of mankind. Lovaduck, his idiot, his little girl, and the monitor

were taken to hospitals. Their minds were erased of all recollection of their accomplishments.

Lovaduck himself appeared before the Lords of the Instrumentality. He felt that he had served on the golden ship and he did not remember what he had done. He knew nothing of a chronopathic idiot. And he remembered nothing of his little "vehicle." Tears poured down his face when the Lords of the Instrumentality gave him their highest decorations and paid him an immense sum of money. They said: "You have served well and you are discharged. The blessings and the thanks of mankind will forever rest upon you..."

Lovaduck went back to his estates wondering that his service should have been so great. He wondered, too, in the centuries of the rest of his life, how any man—such as himself—could be so tremendous a hero and never quite remember how it was accomplished.

IX

On a very remote planet, the survivors of a Raumsog cruiser were released from internment. By special orders, direct from Earth, their memories had been discoordinated so that they would not reveal the pattern of defeat. An obstinate reporter kept after one spaceman. After many hours of hard drinking the survivor's answer was still the same:

"Golden the ship was—oh! oh! oh! Golden the ship was—oh! oh! oh!"

Doing Television

by William Gibson
Guest of Honor
Readercon 8

Santa Ana winds suck at the Soviet UV film Kelsey's mother tapes over the windows of their hotel room.

The wind finds other ways to enter the building; it hums in the dry shafts and corridors, sifting falls of pale dust from the ceiling tiles. Through the trembling membrane of Russian plastic, Kelsey sees the city burning gold in the brown air, the tall frayed stumps of dead palms receding along the avenue.

Behind her, on the floor, Trev does television, grunting softly as the dull black vest strapped across his chest thumps him in a fight scene. He does television all day, hogs the vest, the gloves, the black glasses, looping the same show over and over, Gladiator Skull. Kelsey hates Gladiator Skull, hates the way the vibrotactile vest punches you in the ribs if you let them get you. They always do.

She has a show called Natureland she loops sometimes; you ride a horse along a beach. Natureland doesn't punch you in the ribs. The sun can't even hurt you in Natureland.

In the park at the end of the avenue she can see prone figures wrapped in silvery reflective plastic, people with nowhere else to go.

Trev grunts again, his lips move. He talks to himself when he does television but she doesn't try to make out what he says. He probably doesn't know she can hear him.

He's probably forgotten they're moving to the Darwin Free Trade Zone in three days—the DFT, her mother called it, looping a travel show; Kelsey put on the black glasses and walked the length of a mall like any other mall, intercut with exterior shots of orange cargo helicopters lowering white housing-modules to a plain of raw earth, the young Chinese announcer's broad Australian vowels in her head.

She runs a fingernail down the UV film, leaving the lightest possible scratch.

She likes it better when they live in Moscow, warm soup-smells and subways like old palaces, but they live where the company wants her mother. Her mother has a job but Kelsey doesn't know what it is. Something like doing television with numbers. When her mother talks about the company, Kelsey imagines a big animal. Her mother laughs, says that's right. Says the company has offices in all the big cities but it doesn't live anywhere, not in L. A. or Moscow or Singapore; says that cities and companies mater now, not countries.

Kelsey isn't sure what countries are. Lines on a map. Colors. A concept dim as aristocracy.

Kelsey has two passports, one issued by the United States of America, the other by her mother's company. The men in airports who look at passports only care about which company. Her mother's other passport is from a country called Quebec.

Kelsey looks out at the dead palms. Something spread up the coast from Mexico and killed them all. She's seen live ones in Natureland.

The windowless black bulk of a police helicopter lumbers past in the gold-brown distance, level with Kelsey's eyes, its belly studded with sensors and weapons. At night she can hear shelling to the east. Flashes in the sky. The sound of helicopters.

The hotel flatscreen tells her the police are fighting the gangs. It's about drugs. These are drugs, the flatscreen says, showing her milky pale beads, bright green powder, something blood-brown and lumpy in a little plastic tube. Don't do these drugs, the flatscreen says. Trev knows the names: ice, dancer, brown.

The flatscreen flicks to the weather, to sero-analysis averages for California-Oregon, a factoid on EBV mutation rates, specific translocations at the breakpoint near the c-myc oncogene.

She tunes out. She hangs on the sound of the wind blowing west from the desert.

Closing her eyes, she sees Shibuya at night, the crowds under the lights, her father there, her biological father, the face she knows from pictures, reaching down to take her hand, explaining that her mother is her genetic mother, not biological, that Trev's biological was someone else, another surrogate; that he and her mother are separated now but the contracts remain in effect.

Eyes still closed, screwed up tight, she wills her mother's return from the mirrored towers, from the blank walls at street level, the guards, the patient chopping of the eyeless gunships. From the city of burning gold.

Her brother curses softly, mechanically, losing his game, and she wishes she were already in Darwin, walking the miles of mall.

Like every mall everywhere.

Like doing television.

TEN YEARS

The Desrt of the Real: The Cyberpunk Controversy

by Larry McCaffery
Guest of Honor
Readercon 8

The mass of men serve the State thus, not as men, mainly, but as machines with their bodies
— Henry David Thoreau, "Civil Disobedience"

It is the real, and not the map, whose vestiges subsist here and there, in the deserts which are no longer those of the Empire, but our own. The desert of the real itself.
— Jean Baudrilliard,
"The Precession of Simulcara"

i haven't fucked much with the past but i've fucked plenty with the future
— Patti Smith, "babelogue"

The significance of the "Cyberpunk Controversy," to which this special issue of the *Mississippi Review* is devoted, is really of two natures: first, the relatively narrow significance of the role cyberpunk has played (and continues to play) in the recent evolution of science fiction into a literary genre of considerable formal ingenuity and thematic significance; secondly, the broader significance of c-p's relationship to the complex set of radical ruptures—both within a dominant culture and aesthetic and also within the new social and economic media system (or "postindustrial society") in which we live—that are associated with postmodernism, as that term is being used by critics such as Jean-Francois Lyotard, Ihab Hassan, Jean Baudrilliard, David Bell, Gilles Delueuze, and others. The latter topic is at once enormously exciting and dauntingly complex (for a good overview of some of these wider concerns, see Istvan Csicsery-Ronay's fine overview essay, "C-P and Neoromanticism").

But I would like to underscore at the outset of this necessarily brief introduction my conviction that cyberpunk represents not only a sort of apotheosis of postmodernism but that it is also currently producing some of the most important art of our times. And features of cyberpunk have been turning up outside fiction in movies (*Blade Runner* and *Videodrone* being early cyberpunk classics; *Brazil, Thc Hidden* and *RoboCop* are more recent examples), television (Max Headroom, R.I.P.), music (Laurie Anderson, Devo, Bowie in his Ziggy Stardust pose, Skinny Puppy, a whole host of MadMaxish, heavy-metal rockers), MTV, poetry and theater (see the enclosed works by Rob Hardin and Dave Porush), and numerous as yet unclassified forms (as with the industrial performance-art of Mark Pauline and the Survival Research Laboratories).

It is no accident, of course, that cyberpunk art is becoming so prominent at precisely this particular juncture of the 20th century. As with the emergence of any significant artistic movement, cyberpunk has found a means to mirror its era's central motifs, obsessions, and desires (and render these concretely, through the dominant cultural imagery). The aura of urgency and energy surrounding cyberpunk also results from the failure of most of the other arts to acknowledge the massive changes (many of them technological in nature) taking place around us daily. These changes are not only altering the relationships of human beings to machines (and to information and economics and to each other) but are altering the basic concepts through which Western Europeans have viewed themselves since the time of the ancient Greeks. These are concepts as fundamental as the nature of "consciousness," "artifice," "life," and "death." In a sense, all cyberpunk asks the same questions—"What's it mean to be human in today's world? what's stayed the same and what's changed? and what does all this suggest about the future we will inhabit?"

These are obviously important questions that not only have no simple answers but that are difficult (maybe impossible) to formulate in conventional artistic terms (if my suspicions are right, this is why science fiction and SF-related forms are going to continue to play an increasingly dominant role in the arts: it is a relatively new form of great elasticity whose central motifs and stylistic conventions are evolving now in response to what is happening now). And the fact is that cyberpunk seems to be the only art systematically dealing with the most crucial political, philosophical, moral, and cultural issues of our day. These issues include: the far-reaching implications of the breakthroughs being made recently in cybernetic and genetic engineering, in organ transplants, and

artificial intelligence research; the equally significant developments having to do with information storage—and in particular, the ways that computerized data, microstorage and developments of data banks are controlled and owned by multinationals (in short, the increasing monopolization by private business of information, and the ways this monopolization is used for the purpose of wielding power and control over nation-states and individuals); the social, psychic, political, and behavioral impact resulting from the shift that has taken place since WWII away from the older industrial technologies to the newer informational and cybernetic ones; the massive expansion of the "culture industry," an industry indiscriminately seeking profits from the sale of everything from lite beer to Presidential images, detox centers, famine relief, invasion and salvation; the assistance given to this expansion by technology's greater facility to introduce media images, print and other informational sources directly into our cars, homes, and offices—and, consequently, into the most intimate reaches of our imaginations, our self-definitions, our desires; the resulting "precession of simulacra" (Baudrilliard's term) has been described by Fredric Jameson as a "penetration of commodity fetishism into those realms of the imagination and the psyche which had, since classical German philosophy, always been taken as some last impregnable stronghold against the instrumental logic of capitalism."

Issues such as these which are so massive, troubling, and profoundly disruptive cannot be dealt with by mainstream writers, in part because these issues challenge the normative bedrock upon which the fantasies of "realism" are grounded. Thus, with only a handful of exceptions (Ted Mooney's *Easy Travel to Other Planets*, Joe McElroy's various encyclopedic novels, Don DeLillo's *The Names* and *White Noise*, the works of Pynchon, Delany, and cyberpunk's Godfather, Wllliam Burroughs), most contemporary American authors continue to write novels as if these enormous shifts in our world had never occurred. With the gap between the future and the present narrowing every day—and, paradoxically, with the growing recognition that if we move even "twenty minutes into the future," a la Max Headroom, we will encounter a world almost unimaginably transformed—the potential importance of SF in general and c-p in particular becomes obvious: here we have a form whose maximal level of artifice and focus on the future permit it to jettison the familiar, the "correct," images, narratives, and implications that combine to produce the realistic illusions projected in most fiction. Freed from the requirements of "realism," and sensitive to the ways in which "the real" and "the true" are being systematically replaced by (excluded by) the "hyperreal" of images, statistics, and other abstractions whose role is to "stand in for" reality, c-p authors have already produced a number of works of startling originality: Lucius Shepard's *Life During Wartime*, Marc Laidlaw's *Dad's Nuke*, Rudy Rucker's *Software*, Bruce Sterling's *Schismatrix*, John Shirley's *Eclipse*, and William Gibson's *Neuromancer* and *Count Zero*. Readers unfamiliar with the complex interactions that have been occurring within SF during the past twenty years will probably not recognize the new directions (and subtle reworkings) being taken by c-p pioneers. A good starting point for such uninitiates is the Forum section of this current issue, where many of the key combatants in the "C-P Controversy" attempt to attack, defend, and define the territory.

As the replies in the Forum section indicate, c-p's arrival onto the SF scene in the mid-1980s—signaled by the publication of William Gibson's remarkable first novel, *Neuromancer*, and by the numerous public pronouncements by c-p's self-styled apologists (notably John Shirley and Bruce Sterling)— has generated a lot of spirited debate within the field. Thus, the discussions found here (as with those aired in countless panel discussions at recent SF meetings and conventions) continually circle around issues that are revealingly parochial: is c-p a legitimate category or merely an arbitrary marketing strategy? was it produced in response to the banality of most SF written in the 70s and early 80s? was most SF in that period banal? is c-p innovative, formally or thematically, and if so, how do these innovations differ from the innovations associated with SF's last major "revolution" (the "New Wave" period of the mid-1960s)? One can also perhaps detect in these commentaries some echoes of the hostilities and sense of rivalry and suspicion that I (at least) associate with the encounters I witnessed long ago between two distinctly different sets of alienated, sensitive groups in certain symbolic hallways and in front of other, allegorical hangouts. The one group decked out in Marlon Brando leather jackets, James Dean mirrorshades and duck-tail haircuts, popping white crosses, drinking T-bird and talking about how much they dug cranking Gene Vincent while driving around in their Chevy convertibles; the other group, equally appalled by

what was going down around them, displayed their brand of alienation differently: horned-rimmed glasses, Grateful Dead tee-shirts, jazz and folk music at the coffeehouse scene, an appreciation of the latest books by Sturgeon, Ayn Rand, Harlan Ellison, Heinlein. Maybe the complete merger of these two groups is what c-p is finally all about.

At any rate, the Forum section also contains more general assessments of c-p ranging from positively sublime (as with Istvan Csicsery-Ronay's comments that c-p is postmodernism's "truest and most consistent incarnation bar none... it could easily have the same role in our world that romanticism had at the beginning of the 19th century") to the ridiculously negative (see Harold Jaffe's recommendation to "Discipline and punish the cyberpunks" or the various assertions that c-p is nothing more than a marketing gimmick that has already been consumed). Whichever viewpoint one wishes to take (and as with all issues vital enough to make the people discussing it get angry or defensive, no one seems to want to take a middle ground) it seems obvious that c-p's arrival has been enormously beneficial to SF, if only in that it forced all the combatants to formulate opinions and examine assumptions that perhaps needed more careful consideration all along. Its effect, as Lou Stathis (significantly, a critic of both SF and rock music) notes in his Forum reply, has been analogous to what occurred within rock music in the mid 1970s when punk music rudely and crudely deconstructed nearly everyone's relationship to popular music. When the slam dancers cleared out, and the pieces of amps, guitars, and vocal-sounds were once again rejoined into something that seemed vaguely recognizable, there was a certain sense of sane clarity (or clear insanity) in the air. Happily, though, in the case of both punk and cyberpunk, this sense did not produce a constricting attitude of conformity among ambitious writers and musicians. While you inevitably found artists in both fields blindly mimicking the successful patterns of their more creative counterparts, there was hardly the conclusion being drawn among artists who truly matter that they should now imitate, say, punk and c-p's emphasis on sensationalized, S&M surface textures, its Benzedrine-rush pacings , or its parodically non-conformist stance (the role of parody and playfulness in both punk and c-p has often been overlooked by people who don't know enough of the language to get the punch lines). Rather, the response in both the rock and SF communities has been the feeling that whatever direction these forms were now going to take, they could be reconstructed afresh so that priorities could once again be recognized. With music there was an almost immediate series of healthy mutations, as with The Clash's incorporation of reggae and jazz, the cool, funky minimalism of Talking Heads (who later ventured into more complex arrangements influenced by African rhythms and Brian Eno), the cowpunk sounds of the Meat Puppets (whose name Gibson used as a central motif in *Neuromancer*), and so on.

Similarly, as Marc Laidlaw notes in his Forum reply, cyberpunk writers quickly moved beyond what fits comfortably under the cberpunk label so that, "perhaps it is verging on cyberjazz now... One wonders if there will be a cyberpolka." And in both cases one of the key priorities was reestablishing their respective form's original sense of menace and outrageousness, their power to genuinely move people or make them think, their ability to communicate via rhythms and images that matter to people, not through the familiar, pre-packaged banalities that were being successfully mass-marketed. The c-p controversy, then, fully as much as the punk controversy a dozen years ago, emerges as one of those periodic "revolutions" whose impetus derives from a shared sense among a few talented (but strikingly diverse) artists that their chosen forms have grown complacent, too "safe," and that drastic measures are required if these forms are to regain integrity and relevance.

Readers dipping into the inter-tribal infighting contained in the "Forum Section" are going to encounter hotly contested, revealing insights as to how some of the major figures in SF see themselves and their field; and not surprisingly this occasionally makes for esoteric readings (for a fine summary of the dangers involved facing nonspecialists in making sense of this topic, see Samuel Delany's reply). But as I have already indicated, the cyberpunk controversy is important for reasons lying far outside its impact on the recent direction of SF.

These reasons are related to a series of broad issues pertaining to postmodernist art: the breakdown of genre distinctions, for example, and the increasingly arbitrary separation of pop art from "serious art" (or: art from advertising, image from referent, the natural from the conventionalized, originality from imitation, fiction from criticism, man-made from machine made, live or Memorexed) and to the vital artistic interactions

resulting from these interminglings. But most centrally these reasons have to do with the radical ways in which technology is affecting our lives—and the shared perception among a significant number of postmodern artists that art which doesn't come to grips, formally and thematically, with these changes is irrelevant or (less harshly) out of sync with the times. "Coming to grips" with these technological interventions into our lives need not result specifically in cyberpunk, of course. When a great artist like Frederico Fellini explores many of these same issues, the result can be something like Fred and Ginger (is it my current tunnel vision or does even that movie have a cyberpunk feel to it? cyberpunk is large, I suppose, it contains multitudes...)

Unfortunately, I am aware that most critics and readers, even those most sympathetic to postmodern innovations, are going to remain suspicious and condescending about cyberpunk art—and of the various other forms of vital fiction being written by today's breed of SF authors. It strikes me as ironic indeed that many of my postmodernist friends, who have championed the most radical forms of anti- or ir-realism that have been emerging during the past twenty years, remain so utterly ignorant (and often contemptuously ignorant) about SF. This attitude is bound to change as readers are gradually exposed to "crossover works" like Gibson's *Neuromancer*, Steve Erickson's *Days Between Stations*, Lucius Sheperd's *Life During Wartime*, and Bruce Sterling's *Schismatrix*. As just about any SF author will tell you, the well-meaning intentions of "mainstream" critics attempting to draw comparisons between SF and non-SF works have often had the effect of downplaying what is most distinctive about SF and encouraging critics and readers to make judgments about it based on inappropriate criteria (SF theorists Samuel Delany and Joanna Russ have been particularly articulate about this point). On the other hand, the critical debates spawned by postmodernism during the past twenty years which have emphasized the semiological, conventional bases of all fictional forms (including the "natural" forms of realism) have made it easier to recognize the common aesthetic grounds shared by SF and other highly stylized forms. In this respect, SF's aesthetics can be seen as extending the implications of the surfictionists, metafictionists, and fabulist experiments of the 1960s in using its highly stylized codes and conventions to produce textual "meaning" in a manner fully as distinctive as the linguistic systems that give rise to meaning in a Shakespearian sonnet, a Medieval morality fable, or a postmodernist story by Coover or Barth. Once the complex nuances of these codes and conventions are recognized, however, c-p's narrative strategies can be shown to unfold in a typically "postmodernist" way: mixing together genres, borrowing devices from the cinema, computer systems, and MTV, infusing the rhythms of its prose with those of rock music and television advertising, pastiching prior literary forms and otherwise playing with literary elements, and above all, adopting the familiar postmodernist device of developing familiar "mythic" structures and materials which can be then undercut and subsequently exploited for different purposes.

It is this latter device that has been perhaps the most misunderstood and misrepresented by c-p's critics (along these lines, see the Forum replies by Benford and Brin), who have constantly pointed towards c-p's appropriation of devices associated with other genres—for example, the use of hard-boiled detective formulas in Gibson's *Neuromancer* and *Blade Runner*, the analogous use of gothic horror in Alien and of the cop-formula in *RoboCop* and *The Hidden*—as exhibiting c-p's superficiality and its collective failure of imagination. What such criticism ignores, however, is c-p's postmodernist spirit of free play (jouissance) and collaboration, its delight in creating cut-ups and collages (a la Burroughs) in which familiar objects and motifs are placed in startling, unfamiliar contexts. To take an obvious example, when Gibson relocates hundreds of familiar semiological fragments within the dissolving, surreal electronic nightworld world he invents in his c-p Matrix Trilogy, a new discourse is established, different messages conveyed. Yes, *Neuromancer*'s hero, Case, is a computer "cowboy" and "detective," and his mission is the familiar "Big Heist" with all the plot trappings, and Molly is a "moll" out of a 40's film noir and Case's psychological motives center on his desire to seek revenge against the Forces who fucked him over. But the "messages" here, while occasionally bearing some similarities to what we find in Chandler and Hammett (the hero lost in a soeiety of criminal and impersonal forces, a nostalgic longing for a more authentic, uncorrupted past, etc.) are here transformed into a veritable casebook of c-p concerns: the contrast between human "meat" and metal, the relationship between human memory and computer memory; the increasingly abstract interaction of data and images in late 20th century capitalism; the primacy of information in the "dance of data" that com-

prises so much of life today (a "dance" which Gibson employs as a metaphor for everything from the interaction of subatomic particles to the interactions of multinational corporations); the ongoing angst and paranoia (evident, as well, in the works of Pynchon and DeLillo) that some overarching demiurge is manipulating individuals and international politics; the mystical sense that our creation and re-creation of data and images is producing systems capable of eventually merging with one another into new intelligences; and—the spectre haunting all c-p—the uneasy recognition that our primal urge to replicate our consciousnesses and physical beings (into images, words, machine replicants, computer symbols) is not leading us closer to the dream of immortality but is creating only a pathetic parody, a meta-existence or simulacra of our essences that is supplanting us, literally taking over our physical space and our roles with admirable proficiency and without the drawbacks of human error and waste, without the human emotions of love, anger, ambition, and jealousy that jeopardize the efficiency and predictability of capitalistic exchange—without, in short, the messy, unruly passions which also make the brief movement from conception to death so exhilarating and so frightening. And so human.

Almost twenty years ago now, Jimi Hendrix (who seems to have stepped off the pages of one of c-p's wilder episodes), offered the following recommendation: "Electric woman waits for you and me. So it's time to take a ride." Ready? JACK-IN.

Our Town

by Kim Stanley Robinson
Guest of Honor
Readercon 9

I found my friend Desmond Kean at the northeast corner of the penthouse viewing terrace, assembling a telescope with which to look at the world below. He took a metal cylinder holding a lens and screwed it into the side of the telescope, then put his eye to the lens, the picture of concentrated absorption. How often I had found him like this in recent months! It made me shiver a little; this new obsession of his, so much more intense than the handmade docks, or the stuffed birds, or the geometric proofs, seemed to me a serious malady.

Clearing my throat did nothing to get his attention, so I ventured to say, "Desmond, you're wanted inside."

"Look at this," he replied. "Just look at it!" He stepped back, and I put my eye to his device.

I have never understood how looking through two pieces of curved glass can bring close distant sights; doesn't the same amount of light hit the first lens as would hit a plain circle of glass? And if so, what then could possibly be done to that amount of light within two lenses, to make it reveal so much more? Mystified, I looked down at the lush greenery of Tunisia. There in the shimmery circle of glass was a jumble of wood and thatch in a rice paddy, pale browns on light green. "Amazing," I said.

I directed the telescope to the north. On certain days, as Desmond once explained to me, when the temperature gradients layer the atmosphere in the right way, light is curved through the air (and tell me how that works) so that one can see farther over the horizon than usual. This was one of those strange days, and in the lens wavered a black dot, resting on top of a silver pin that stuck up over the horizon. The black dot was Rome, the silver pin was the top of the graceful spire that holds the Eternal City aloft. My heart leaped to know that I gazed from Carthage to Rome.

"It's beautiful," I said.

"No, no," Desmond exclaimed angrily. "Look down! Look what's below!"

I did as he directed, even leaning a tiny bit over the railing to do so. Our new Carthage has a spire of its own, one every bit the equal of Rome's, or that of any other of the great cities of the world. The spire seemed to the naked eye a silver rope, a thread, a strand of gossamer. But through the telescope I saw the massy base of the spire, a concrete block like all immense blind fortress.

"Stunning," I said.

"No!" He seized the spyglass from me. "Look at the people camped there on the base! Look what they're doing!"

I looked through the glass where he had aimed it. Smoky fires, huts of cardboard, ribs perfectly delineated under taut brown skin... "See," Desmond hissed. "There where the bonfires are set. They keep the fires going for days, then pour water on the concrete. To crack it, do you see?"

I saw, there in the curved glass surface; it was just as he had said.

"At that pace it will take them ten thousand years," Desmond said bitterly.

I stood back from the railing. "Please, Desmond. The world has gotten itself into a sorry state, and it's very distressing, but what can any one person do?"

He took the telescope, looked through it again. For a while I thought he wouldn't answer. But then he said, "I.... I'm not so sure, friend Roarick. It's a good question, isn't it. But I feel that someone with knowledge, with expertise, could make a bit of a difference. Heal the sick, or... give advice about agricultural practices. I've been studying up on that pretty hard. They're wrecking their soil. Or... or just put one more shoulder to the wheel Add one more hand to tend that fire!... I don't know. I don't know! Do we ever know, until we act?"

"But Desmond," I said. "Do you mean down there?"

He looked up at me. "Of course."

I shivered again. Up at our altitude the air stays pretty chill all the time, even in the sun. "Come back inside, Desmond," I said, feeling sorry for him. These obsessions.... 'The exhibition is about to open; and if you're not there for it Cleo will press for the full set of sanctions."

"Now there's something to fear," he said nastily.

"Come on inside. Don't give Cleo the chance. You can return here another day."

With a grimace he put the telescope in the big duffel bag, picked it up and followed me in.

Inside the glass walk jacaranda trees showered the giant curved greenhouse-gallery with purple flowers. All the tableaux of the exhibit were still covered by saffron sheets, but soon after we entered the sheets were raised, all at once. The human form was revealed in all its varied and beauty, frozen in place yet still pulsing with life. I noted a man loping, a pair of women fighting, a diver launched in air, four drunks playing cards, a couple stopped forever at orgasm. I felt the familiar opening-night quiver of excitement, caused partly by the force fields of the tableaux as they kept the living ectogenes stopped in place, but mostly by rapture, by a physical response to art and natural beauty. "At first glance it seems a good year," I said. "I already see three or four pieces of merit."

"Obscene travesties," said Desmond.

"Now, now, it isn't as bad as all that. Some imitation of last year, yes, but no more than usual."

We walked down the hall to see how my entry had been placed. Like Desmond, before he quit sculpting, I was chiefly interested in finding and isolating moments of dance that revealed, by themselves, all the grace of the whole act. This year I had stopped a pair of ballet dancers at the end of a pas de deux, the ballerina just off the base of the display as her partner firmly but delicately returned her to the boards. How long I had worked with the breeders, to get ectogenes with these lean dancers' bodies! How many hours I had spent, programming their unconscious education, and training and choreographing them in their brief waking hours! And then at the end, how very often I had had them dance on the tableau base, and stopped them in the force field, before I caught them in the exact moment that I had envisioned! Yes, I had spent a great deal of time in my sculpting chamber, this year; and now my statue stood before us like the epitome of all that is graceful in the human spirit. —At a proper angle to the viewers, I was pleased to see, and under tolerable lighting, too. On the two faces were expressions that said that for these two, nothing existed but dance; and in this case it was almost literally true. Yes, it was satisfactory.

Desmond only shook his head. "No, Roarick. You don't understand. We can't keep doing this—

"Desmond!" cried Cleo, flowing through the crowd of sculptors and their guests. Her smile was wide, her eyes bright with malice. "Come see my latest, dear absent one!"

Wordlessly Desmond followed her, his face so blank of expression that all his thoughts showed clear. A whole crew followed us discreetly, for Desmond and Cleo's antipathy was legendary. How it had started none remembered, although some said they had once been lovers. If so, it was before I knew them. Others said Desmond hated Cleo for her success in the sculpture competitions, and some of the more sharp-tongued gossips said that this envy explained Desmond's new, morbid interest in the world below—sour grapes, you know. But Desmond had always been interested in things no one else cared about—rediscovering little scientific truths and the like— and to me it was clear that his fascination was simply the result of his temperament, and of what his telescope had newly revealed to him. No, his and Cleo's was a more fundamental hatred, a clash of contrary natures.

Now Desmond stared at Cleo's new statue. It is undeniable that Cleo is a superb artist, especially in facial expressions, those utterly complex projections of unique emotional states; and this work displayed her usual brilliance in that most difficult

medium. It was a solo piece: a red-haired young woman looked back over one shoulder with an expression of intense vulnerability and confusion, pierced by a sharp melancholy. It was exquisite.

The sight of this sculpture snapped some final restraint in Desmond Kean; I saw it happen. His eyes filled with pity and disgust; his lip curled, and he said loudly, "How did you do it, Cleo? What did you do to her in your little bubble world to get that expression out of her?"

Now, this was a question one simply didn't ask. Each artist's arcology was his or her own sovereign ground, a physical projection of the artist's creative unconscious, an entirely private cosmos. What one did to one's material there was one's own business.

But the truth was no one had forgotten the unfortunate Arthur Magister, who had exhibited increasingly peculiar and morbid statues over a period of years, ending with one of a maiden who had had on her face such an expression that no one could bear to look at it. Though the rule of privacy was maintained, there were of course questions muttered; but no one would ever have found out the answers, if Arthur had not blown up himself and his arcology, revealing in the wreckage, among other things, a number of unpleasantly dismembered ectogenes.

So it was a sensitive issue; and when Desmond asked Cleo his brazen question, with its dark implication, she blanched, then reddened with anger. Disdainfully (though I sensed she was afraid, too) she refused to reply. Desmond stared fiercely at us all; were he an ectogene, I would have stopped him at just that instant.

"Little gods," he snarled, and left the room.

That would cost him, in reputation if not in actual sanctions. But the rest of us forgot his distemper, relieved that we could now begin the exhibit's opening reception in earnest. Down at the drink tables champagne corks were already bringing down a fresh shower of jacaranda blooms.

It was just a few hours later, when the reception was a riotous party, that I heard the news, passed from group to group instantly, that someone had broken the locks on the tableaux (this was supposed to be impossible) and turned their force fields off, letting most of the statues free. And it was while we rushed to the far end of the greenhouse-gallery, around the great curve of the perimeter of the penthouse, that I heard that Desmond Kean had been seen, leaving the gallery with Cleo's red-headed ectogene.

Utter scandal. This would cost Desmond more than money, they would exile him to some tedious sector of the city, to scrub walls with robots or teach children or the like: they would make him pay in time. And Cleo! I groaned; he would never live to see the end of her wrath.

Well, a friend can only do so much; but while the rest were rounding up and pacifying the disoriented ectogenes (which included, alas, my two dancers, who were huddled in each other's arms) I went in search of Desmond, to warn him that he had been seen. I knew his haunts well, having shared most of them, and I hurried to them through the uncrowded, vaguely Parisian boulevards of the penthouse's northern quarter.

My first try was the broken planetaria near the baths; I opened the door with the key we had quietly reproduced years before. An indiscretion!—for Desmond and the young ectogene were making love on the dais in the middle of the chamber, Desmond on his back, the woman straddling him, arced as if all the energy of the great spire were flowing up into her... he was breaking all the taboos this night. Immediately I shut the door, but given the situation saw fit to pound loudly on it. "Desmond! It's Roarick! They saw you with the girl, you've got to leave!"

Silence. What to do in such a situation? I had no precedent After a good thirty seconds had passed I opened the door again. No Desmond, no girl.

I, however, was one of those who with Desmond had first discovered the other exit from the planetaria, and I hurried to the central ball of optical fibers which even he could not Ox, and pulled up the trap door beside it. Down the stairs and along the passageway, into one of the penthouse's other infrastructures I ran.

I will not detail my long search, nor my desperate and ludicrous attempts to evade rival search parties. Despite my knowledge of Desmond's ways and my anxious thoroughness, I did not find him until I thought of the place that should have occurred to me first. I returned to the northeast corner of the viewing terrace, right there outside the glass wall of the greenhouse-gallery, where (as it was now dusk) if the artists inside could have seen through their own reflections, they would have looked right at him.

He and the redhead were standing next to Desmond's telescope, their elbows on the railing as they looked over the edge side by side. Desmond had his duffel bag at his feet. Something

in their stance kept me from emerging from the shadows. They looked as though they had just finished the most casual and intimate of conversations—a talk about trivial, inessential things, the kind of talk lovers have together after years of companionship. Such calmness, such resignation... I could only look, at what seemed to me then an unbreakable, eternal tableau.

Desmond sighed and turned to look at her. He took a red curl of her hair between his fingers, watched the gold in it gleam in a band across the middle of the curl. "There are three kinds of red hair," he said sadly. "Red black, red brown, and red gold. And the greatest of these is...."

"Black," said the girl.

"Gold," said Desmond. He fingered the curl....

The woman pointed. "What's all that down there?"

Dusky world below, long since in night: vast dark Africa, the foliage like black fur, sparking with the sooty flares of a thousand bonfires, little pricks of light like yellow stars. "That's the world," Desmond said, voice tightened to a burr. "I suppose you don't know a thing about it. Around those fires down there are people. They are slaves, they live lives even worse than yours, almost"

But his words didn't appear to touch the woman. She turned away, and lifted an empty glass left on the railing. On her face was an expression so... lost—a sudden echo of her expression as statue—that I shivered in the cold wind. She didn't have the slightest idea what was going on.

"Damn," she said. "I wish I'd remembered to bring another drink."

A conversation from another world, resumed here. I saw Desmond Kean's face then, and I know that I did right to interrupt at that moment. "Desmond!" I rushed forward and grasped his arm. "There's no time, you really must get to one of our private rooms and hide! You don't want to find out what sort of sentence they might hand down for this sort of thing!"

A long moment: I shudder to think of the tableau we three made. The world is a cruel sculptor.

"All right," Desmond said at last. "Here, Roarick, take her and get her out of here." He bent over to fumble in his bag. "They'll put her down after all this if they catch her."

"But—but where should I go?" I stammered.

"You know this city as well as I! Try the gallery's service elevator, and get on the underfloor—you know," he insisted, and yet he was about to give me further directions when the far greenhouse door burst open and a whole mob poured out. We were forced to run for it; I took the woman by the hand and sprinted for the closer greenhouse door. The last I saw of Desmond Kean, he was climbing over the railing. *My God,* I thought, *he's going to kill himself!*—but then I saw the purposefully rectangular package strapped to his back.

The Girl in the Bottle

by Algis Budrys
Guest of Honor
Readercon 9

The new man rolled over with a groan and woke up with his face jammed against the corner of a broken brick. He jerked himself upright in his end of the two-man foxhole, and looked at Folley. "Whu — ?"

"Hello," Folley said. "My name's Zach Folley."

The man continued to look numbly up from under the brim of his helmet, which had been blackened and blistered by the countless times it had been used as a cooking pot. His eyes were puffy and threaded with blood. From the way in which he was twitching his lips tentatively, like a fish not sure of being in water, Folley could see the man was still nine-tenths asleep.

A missile went by overhead and the new man shuddered, drawing muddy knees up under his bearded chin, and wriggling his back in against the side of the hole.

"It's all right," Folley pacified him, because he was now afraid that the man was completely battlehappy and might become violent. "They're not after you or me. They don't know we're here. It's just our machines fighting their machines, now. It's all being done by the automatic weapons systems. There's nobody alive in the cities anymore. Not since the nerve gas."

The new man muttered something that sounded like: "...alive in the cities..." and Folley, who thought the man was arguing with him, said:

"No. Not anybody. I know it's hard to believe. But they told me last month, when I was a clerk up at Battalion, before Battalion got smashed up,

there's nobody alive anywhere in the world except around here in North America." Folley's jaw quivered involuntarily, as it always did when he tried to picture the world empty of life, bare of movement except for the dust-fountains where the automatic missiles kept coming in like meteorites hitting the barrenMoon.

"I said," the other man replied with patient distinctness, "I *know* there's nobody left alive in the cities. But I don't care." He fumbled around behind his back and suddenly held up a bottle—a flat, half-pint glass bottle, unbroken, with only mildewed traces of a label but with most of its contents still there. "Not as long as I've still got *her*."

"What do you mean 'her'?" Folley was badly upset, now. The other man had showed up out of nowhere, last night, mumbling and calling softly to find out if anybody was still alive on the defense perimeter. When Folley answered, he had stumbled down into the hole with him and had fallen in a heap without saying another word. Folley knew nothing about him, except that he obviously wasn't one of the enemy from across the valley, and now he began to wonder whether this might not be some kind of traitor, or propaganda spreader, or at any rate some kind of enemy trying to get him drunk. If Folley got drunk, then the enemy would be able to sneak past him to the rear, without warning. Folley did not know what lay in the rear, anymore—he was deathly afraid there was so little left in the world that if the enemy once got by him, they would have won the war.

Folley could not be clear in his mind about this. He knew he wasn't being completely sane, himself. But he was doing the best he could, for a man who had been a clerk up until last month and had then been given a rifle for the first time since Basic, way back ten years ago. He had: stayed in his hole, living off the rations of the other men who had gradually been killed on either side of him, and he always fought off the few enemies who were left to make attacks. They would come up through the barbed wire and the minefields, always losing some men, and being driven back at last, but they had been closer and closer to Folley with each attack, even though there were only five of them left.

Folley was practically out of ammunition, and had to choose his shots carefully, and this gave them time to get in close. They had been getting close enough so that he had learned to recognize them as individuals—there was a tall, scar-faced one for instance, who was very cautious but persistent, and a short, stubby one with a nervous grin who shouted insults in pidgin English—and he was sure they knew by now he was all alone on the perimeter. Today they would be braver than ever, and he was down to one clip of eight shots. He had been hoping the new man—who had been such a great hope, for a while—would have more ammunition, but he didn't have as much as a sidearm. All he had was his bottle, and Folley shied away from it like poison.

"Throw that away !" he cried out.

The man hugged the bottle and hunched himself over it, to protect it from the sweep of Folley's arm. "Oh, no !" he said doggedly. "No — I'm not going to throw *her* away !"

The fact that he did not offer to fight, but only tried to protect the bottle, impressed Folley very deeply. It was such an unusual way for someone to react that Folley decided it must be because the new man really did feel the bottle was more important than anything else in the world.

"What about her?" he asked soothingly.

"The girl," the new man explained, his face as innocent as a child's under the beard, and the dirt, and the blood, and the sallow, doughy texture of his skin. "The girl in the bottle."

On the other side of the valley, Folley could see the enemy moving around, now. It was too far away for an accurate rifle shot, and neither side had anything else available to it. The enemy soldiers did not bother to hide themselves or their movements. Folley would have been badly upset if they had tried.

It occurred to him that if either side — they or he — were to violate established routine in some way, it would be a disconcerting and possibly fatal tactic to the opposition. But he could not seem to draw any conclusions from this thought, or to fully understand what to do with it. It drifted out of his mind as foggily as it had first entered, and he looked at the new man again. "The girl in the bottle," he said. "Is there a girl in there ?"

"Always," the new man said. He weighed the bottle in his hand. Earlier, it had seemed to Folley, that the glass was brown. Now he saw it was actually a delicate shade of green. A flash of sunlight sparkled on it as the new man held it up. It was like the sudden sideward turning of a young girl's eyes as she walks by on a park path. Folley blinked.

"Who is she ?"

The new man said: "The girl." He became shy. "You know," he said under his breath, not because he was trying to keep Folley from hearing but

because he was afraid of how Folley would react if he did grasp his meaning.

But Folley only looked at him blankly. "I don't —"

"Here," the man said tenderly, offering him the bottle.

With his hand carefully cupping the bottle, for fear his fingers might shake and loose their grip, Folley uncapped it and touched his lip to the rim. He winced away from the contact. Then, tilting the bottle very cautiously, he took a few swallows. Lowering the bottle, he slowly recapped it and handed it back. The taste slid down the back of his throat, warm, musky, and bittersweet. He looked around him, at the rubble and the tornup equipment, and the fly-clustered things like waterlogged feather pillows in too-tight dirty olive drab pillowslips, and the cracked old stumps of trees. He could feel that there: was no longer any clear separation between the raw soles of his feet and the glutinous fabric of his socks. He plucked absently at his shirt, and shifted his seat uncomfortably. A V of slow antipersonnel missiles went hunting by overhead, and he cowered, though he knew that the minimum concentration of men required to attract such a missile was twenty within a hundred yard radius. Abruptly, the missiles seemed to lurch in the air. Bits of machinery whirled out of their noses, and then they fell forward and glided steeply into the ground down in the valley bottom. They had run out of fuel, and had jettisonned their warhead fuses before crash-landing in open territory.

He shook his head violently, having followed the missiles' downward arc all the way to the ground. "She was the first girl I ever loved," he said to the new man, his voice confidential. "We were walking hand in hand, along the glassy gray lake where the pelicans swam in the park, under the eyes of the buildings. There were forsythia bushes like soft phosphorus explosions beside us, and there were squirrels fat enough to eat that scampered along beside us. She was wearing a pale green gown and black slippers, and her russet hair came down to her shoulders. I remember I was afraid strands of it would catch on the thorny trees which hung their branches low over the walk, like barbed wire.

"My God," he said, staring in awe at the bottle, "it was beautiful!" He sprang to his feet and shouted across the valley: "Beautiful! Beautiful, you sons of bitches! You and your bombs and your gas and your chemicals — you and your war, your death, your rapine! Beautiful, you bastards !"

He crumpled back down into the hole, shuddering. He hugged his knees and rubbed his cheeks against the old camouflage cloth stretched over his bones. He had forgotten why he was here, and now that he had been reminded, he was trying desperately to forget, again. But he remained aware that the bottle was infinitely precious—that the new man was perfectly right in having saved it.

"What's your girl like?" he asked the new man.

"As lovely as yours," the man answered. He looked over the side of the hole, down into the valley. "They're coming," he said. "The enemy. It's another attack."

"The last attack," Folley said. "We've got to save her!" he cried out in panic. "I don't care what else they get—we can't let them get her !"

The new man smiled. "There's nothing else."

"*Nothing* else?"

"Just you and I, and the few of them down there. There's nothing else left in the whole world."

Folley believed him. There was no uncertainty in the new man's voice at all. But Folley was so shocked at believing him; at finding himself so ready to give up what he thought to be a proper attitude of confidence, that he burst out indignantly: "What do you mean? Not as long as General Gaunt's still alive. He can save us if anyone can, and we would have heard if he was dead !" He clung bitterly to his belief in the genius of General Gaunt, who was his personal hero of the war.

"I am General Gaunt," the new man said, tears in his eyes. He lifted the bottle in salute.

"General Gaunt?" Folley said.

The new man nodded. He extended the bottle. "Would you like another? He turned his glance momentarily in the direction of the enemy, who were scurrying across the valley floor like baby spiders. "There's time before they get into range."

"No," Folley whispered, "no, we've got to save her!"

"Save her ?" Gaunt pawed brutally with the back of hand under his eyes. "Save ?" He stood up, feet apart, back arched arms outflung to embrace the world. "Save!" he cried, and the long echo coursed down the valley. He collapsed forward, the enemy bullet bulging a lump from the inside at the back of his thonked helmet. Folley snatched the bottle as he fell, and patted it.

The enemy were leaping up the rocks, and twisting in behind old guns and trucks, hurdling up over the gassy old bodies and the broken ammunition boxes. The short, stubby one was in the lead,

screaming out: "Now die! Now die! Now die!" The scar-faced one was bringing up the rear, and this one Folley shot, the carbine banging his shoulder so hard that he clapped his left hand over the shirt pocket where he had put the bottle.

The other four enemies did not stop, and Folley saw that they had nerved themselves for this attack, and would not stop, but would soak up his ammunition until it was gone and would overrun him. Two of them were firing at him, keeping him down, while the short one and another man advanced.

Then there was nothing to do, for the short one and his companion would soon be at the lip of the hole, and once they did that, all was lost. Folley carefully put the bottle down and sprang to his feet, firing his carbine. He was immediately hit by shots from the two covering riflemen, but he had known that would happen. He shot at them, and killed them, because it made no difference what happened with the nearer two if the others were alive. Then he turned his gun toward the short one's companion, and shot him, but that was the end of it, for he had used up all his ammunition.

"Now die!" shouted the little enemy. "Now we have your all!" He did not seem to know he was alone, and he held his rifle arched up, ready to thrust down with his bayonet.

Folley pushed him back with a nudge of his carbine butt, like a man stumbling in a crowd, but there was blood running down over his hands, and the carbine slipped away. The little enemy recovered his balance and came forward again. "You die!" he shouted, froth at the corners of his mouth because he was so frightened, "Now you die!"

And it was true. Folley could feel the pain like the teeth of a pitchfork in him, and the cut strings of his muscles would not hold him up.

"Now we rule !" the enemy cried, bayonet flashing down, and for a long moment Folley hung on the point of his rifle, all the wind knocked out of him as it had been once before in his life when he ran down the long park slope after the girl and tripped over a root, and never afterward could be sure of her admiration.

Then he was flung back, and he lay kicking at the bottom of the hole. "Now ours!" the enemy cried. "All world!" He was straddling the hole, and his victorious glance flashed around him. Slowly, as he looked, dismay crept into it. "All world?"

Folley reached toward the bottle. He began to inch forward very quietly and painfully. Before the enemy saw what he was doing, he broke the bottle against a stone.

The enemy heard the sound, and stared down. He leaped into the hole and scrabbled at the wet splotch on the ground. Then he whirled up, his fingers bleeding, and slapped Folley's face:

"Why you break? Why you break?" He slapped Folley again, and began kicking him. "I wanted! Why you no give me ?" He spun back toward the shards of glass in the sun, trying to find a few drops caught in the hollow of some curved fragment, but whatever there had been was evaporated, and the glass had turned dull brown. Folley, seeing it through a glistening fog the color of a gray lake, finally felt like a hero.

The Readercon Committee

Adina Adler has gotten back in touch with her inner computer geek by getting a shell account on a Unix system where she can do everything in emacs. You probably don't want to ask her about it.

After her tenure as Program and Co-Chair of Readercons 9 & 10, **Ellen Brody** will embark on a quest, beginning in Tibet, to learn the arts of bilocation and time regulation, so she can finally manage to get everything done. That, or she will move to a planet with all-night cafes, a robust ozone layer, and 29-hour days.

Julianne Chatelain's homepage (http://world.std.com/~jchat/) has her list of books wanted, plus a call for other online writers interested in participating in a software usability test. That almost sums up her life (oh, yes: she is still collating apa-50).

Bob Colby is this guy who seems to have a weakness for bringing people together to explore common (or uncommon) interests. This at least partially explains his '70s rock fanzine FRENZY, the founding of Readercon in the '80s, and his ongoing attempt to found a "Readercon-like" conference for font fanatics (for info on TypeCon '98, go to http://tjup.truman.edu/sota or write sota@tjup.truman.edu). Knowing him, he'll probably start a few more things before he's through. Humor him.

Richard Duffy, though not quite as crusty as a dinosaur, dates back at least as far as the early mists of the Readercon geological era. On the committee since right after the first convention, he has only recently managed to see a decent amount of the program, and likes it so much he thinks he'll stick around and stay involved in the process of putting it together. Some people just never learn.

George Flynn is a copyeditor/proofreader, both in the Real World and for NESFA Press. He still aspires to be an omnifan, to which end he is currently involved with four con committees, two apas, too damn many mailing lists, and the fanzine he just mailed.

As the center seat of the Readercon Sofa, **Merryl Gross** often feels caught in the middle. She's also been caught attending conferences about User Interface Design and Usability, and *Babylon 5.* When caught unawares by the question "What's your favorite author?", her usual reply is "This week?" Merryl hopes she'll be able to catch up with her friends and with lots of interesting discussions at Readercon 10, but she'll be happy if she just manages to catch some sleep sometime during the weekend.

Bob Ingria has recently undergone a major transition in his life, having gone from being a member of PsycheCorp to serving The Founders. He lives in Cambridge with a cat, his former rival, three flavors of Windows computers, and towering bookcases that threaten to fall on him at any moment.

B. Diane Martin has given in to temptation one more time and will be back next year as on eof the con chairs.

Mike Matthew will be found at Readercon Sales and Information. Impressed by the logic of assigning the Information job to the newest, least experienced member of the Readercon committee, he looks forward to a pleasant, continuing association with Readercon and the varied and fascinating people who attend it.

Fannishly, **Craig McDonough** has been involved in Boston-area fandom for *mumble* years, and currently is involved annually with three Boston area cons (Readercon, Boskone and Arisia), and when Life Ever Slows Down will even get back to contributing to APA:NESFA Real Soon Now. Mundanely, he has been involved in Data Processing for *mumble+meep* years. Lives with wife Leslie and son Sean (who is why Life Has Not Slowed Down Yet), in a household lorded over by 4 cats, who are dictated to by Leslie, and who is (in turn) commanded by Sean. So he's really on the bottom of the food chain...

Leslie McDonough lives in Worcester (Mass.) with Craig & Sean.

COMMITTEE

Barnaby Rapoport is best known for publishing such controversial zines as *Sadie Mae Glutz, Snarkin' Surfari,* and *Zina.* His writing has also appeared in *Science Fiction Review, Blat!,* and two best-of-the-year F*anthologies,* and he was Guest of Honor at Corflu 7. His essay, "Meeting Algis Budrys," was in last year's Readercon souvenir book. He attended the 1996 Odyssey writing workshop.

David G. Shaw met Eric Van, Patient Zero, at a Mission of Burma/Someone and the Somebodies performance at Boston's Underground club in 1981. Although he remembers Jello Biafra joining Burma for a rendition of "Break on Through," he has no recollection of being infected with what the Centers for Disease Control would later identify as the Readercon Virus. He has experienced severe flareups during Readercons 5, 7, 8, and 10, and anticipates the onset of end-stage symptoms between now and Readercon 11.

Eric M. Van has been half-joking so often in this space that he worries that people won't take him seriously when he says he'll be returning to Harvard University this fall (as a Special Student in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences) to begin work on what will eventually be a Ph.D. in Neurobiology. But it's true. In the meantime, he continues work on a short novel, *Imaginary,* and on deciphering the intended sequence for the Beach Boys' *Smile.* He plans to go public with his solution to baseball's Designated Hitter dilemma real soon now, and vows to do some open-mike standup comedy before he dies. He is temporarily living in two 10 x 10 storage units in Natick, Mass.

David Walrath was pulled into helping at Readercon 2, and hasn't escaped since. Dave pretends to run the dealer's room when not pretending to be in the 18th century.

Amy West is a mild-mannered editor at a reference publisher in the wilds of Western Massachusetts, who squeezes in work on Readercon publicity when not biking, brewing, watching her son grow, or working on other SF conventions.

Karl R. Wurst swore he would gafiate this year so he could finally get some work done on his PhD dissertation. Well, he's back running registration again this year. But he also got a lot of dissertation work done too! So he can't blame it all on fandom...

Nicholas K. Wurst simply wishes to say "No!"

Brian Youmans sells free software for a living, and is editing a best of the year anthology in his spare time. He lives in a townhouse in Allston with four SCAdians where the trains go by so often, you don't notice them.

The following committee members have had their biographical information impounded as evidence by the Special Prosecutor: **Ozzie Fontecchio, Diane Kurilecz, Sheila Lightsey, Kathei Logue, Michael McAfee,** and **Steve Pasechnik**.

READERCON 11

July 9–11, 1999

The Westin, Waltham, MA

Guest of Honor

Harlan Ellison

For more information, contact us:

Readercon
PO Box 381246
Cambridge, MA 02238

http://www.mit.edu/~zeno/readercon.html

New and forthcoming from **Wesleyan University Press**

Weird Women, Wired Women

KIT REED Foreword by Connie Willis

Mechanical Veronica by Joseph Reed

"The 19 short stories in Reed's collection smash the facade of straight, white, middle-class suburban life . . . and assess conventional gender roles and everyday sexism. But that is the only thing conventional about Kit Reed's writing. Her take on these well-worn subjects is fresh, and her ambivalence about both marriage and motherhood is refreshing. Anger, resentment, love, and obligation blur in tales that blend pathos and irony with the downright weird . . . Reed calls her stories 'womanist' and is clearly using fiction as a vehicle for social criticism. Moving and eerie, sharp and scary, these are stories to knot the stomach and boggle the mind. Highly recommended." —*Library Journal*

"A definitive, indispensable sampling of Reed in top form. These are unconventional stories, the kind that make most editors wince and tremble . . . For your five most wanted list." —*Kirkus Reviews*

"These stories hover on the brink of science fiction and have a strong element of fantasy. They embrace, with fearful lucidity, contemporary trends like the passion for the perfect house; the all-enveloping beauty contest; the fiercer side of feminist combativeness; and the obsession with fashion. There is no doubt about the prescience of Reed's earlier stories, or about the despairing sense of the consumerist media culture that infuses the later ones. Her writing is always crisp and to the point." —*Publishers Weekly*

Cloth, $40.00 / Paper, $16.95

The Einstein Intersection

SAMUEL R. DELANY Foreword by Neil Gaiman

A nonhuman race reimagines human mythology in this 1967 Nebula Award winner for best science fiction novel.

"When Delany describes to us what he has seen, what he can compute, adduce, intuit or smell in the underbrush, our reaction is to sit bolt upright and cry out, 'Of course, I have that very wound myself!' The ability to produce this reaction in people is one of the commonly accepted and apparently valid appurtenances of genius . . . I look forward to the explosion reading this will create within you." —A. J. Budrys, *Galaxy Magazine*

Back in Print. Paper, $12.95

Backlist Books by SAMUEL R. DELANY

Atlantis *three tales* — Cloth, $29.95 / Paper, $14.95

Dhalgren With a new foreword by William Gibson — Paper, $19.95

A SPECIAL EDITION OF **Dhalgren** — Cloth, $150.00

Longer Views *Extended Essays*
Kenneth James, introduction — Cloth, $50.00 / Paper, $22.00

Return to Nevèrÿon — *4 Volumes*

- **Tales of Nevèrÿon,** Book 1 — Paper, $14.95
- **Neveryóna, or:** *The Tale of Signs and Cities—Some Informal Remarks Towards the Modular Calculus. Part 4,* Book 2 — Paper, $14.95
- **Flight from Nevèrÿon,** Book 3 — Paper, $14.95
- **Return to Nevèrÿon,** Book 4 — Paper, $14.95

Silent Interviews *On Language, Race, Sex, Science Fiction, and Some Comics* — Paper, $19.95

Trouble on Triton *An Ambiguous Heterotopia*
With a new foreword by Kathy Acker — Paper, $14.95

Commies, Cowboys, and Jungle Queens

Comic Books and America, 1945–1954
WILLIAM W. SAVAGE, JR.

"This is not reading material for the faint-hearted. The author states his position and then draws the line ready for challenge. His leanings are liberal, and the text flows from that perspective. The work is a positive contribution to the study of popular culture and its role in American history."
—*Social Science Quarterly* *Now in paper.* $14.95

Coming Soon

A Distant Technology

The Science Fiction Film in the Machine Age
J. P. TELOTTE

"Provides generous international coverage of the science-fiction films of the 20s and 30s, introducing readers to a fascinating array of both familiar and lesser-known films. Telotte approaches the films not only as specific cultural productions, but as a range of various cultural symptoms through which to read national and international responses to the unease of the Machine Age. *A Distant Technology* is an enjoyable and enlightening journey through modernism's utopian and dystopian dreams of technology, dreams which we are still in the process of interpreting today." —Veronica Hollinger

Due 11/98. Cloth, $45.00 / Paper, $19.95

Planet of the Apes as American Myth

Race, Politics, and Popular Culture
ERIC GREENE

"Much more than a casebook, *Planet of the Apes as American Myth* looks at the film and television series as an allegory of race relations in America at a significant historical moment. Written in an accessible style, the volume brings together invaluable source materials and contemporary theoretical work on race in a way that not only illuminates the series but also raises timely critical issues surrounding popular representation. This is an admirable work—and a fascinating read." —Vivian Sobchak *Paper edition due 9/98.* $17.95

UNIVERSITY PRESS OF **New England** • 23 South Main Street • Hanover, NH 03755-2048, USA
Toll Free: 1-800-421-1561 • E-Mail: University.Press@Dartmouth.edu • http://www.dartmouth.edu/acad-inst/upne/

READERCON 10