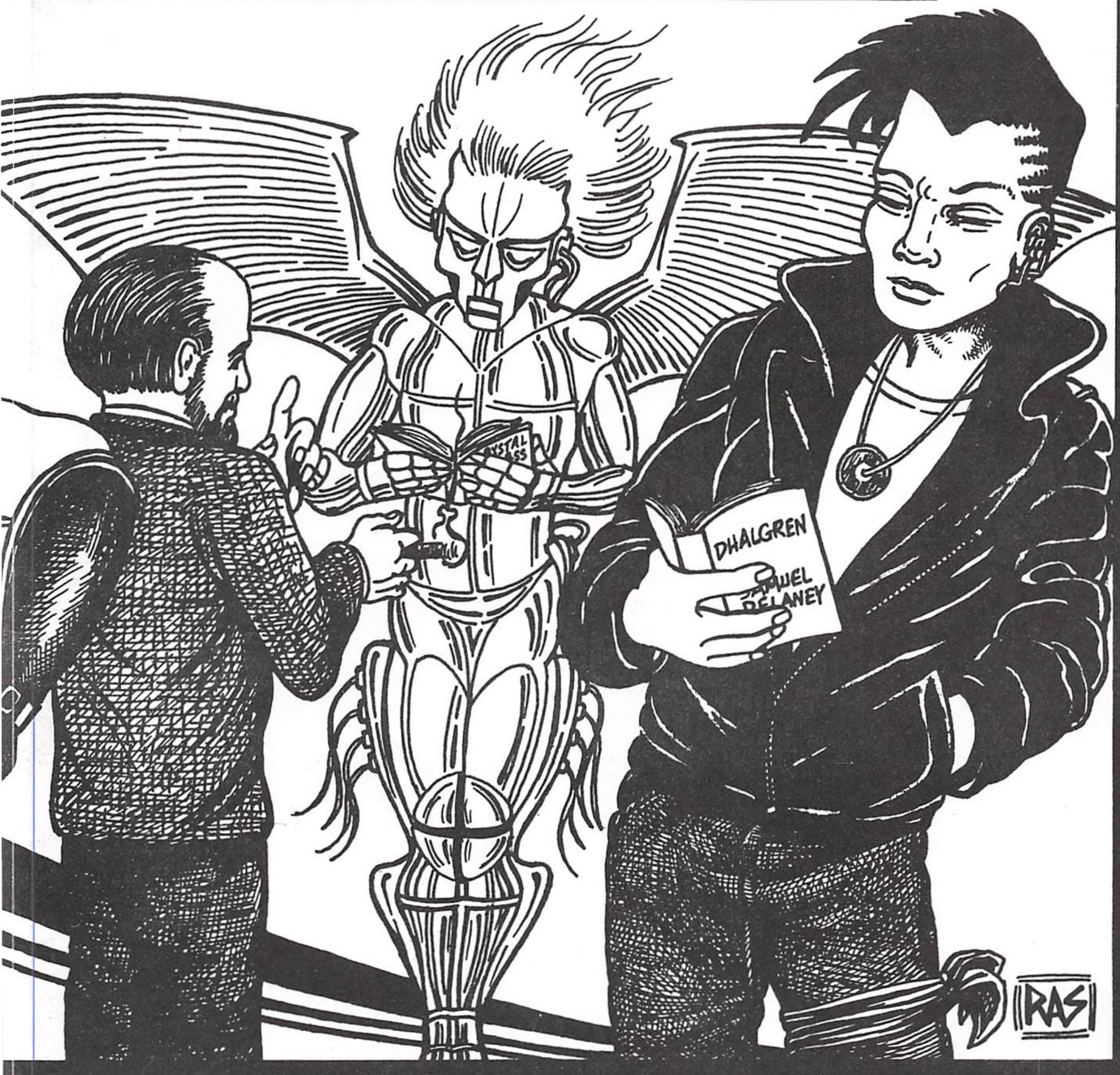
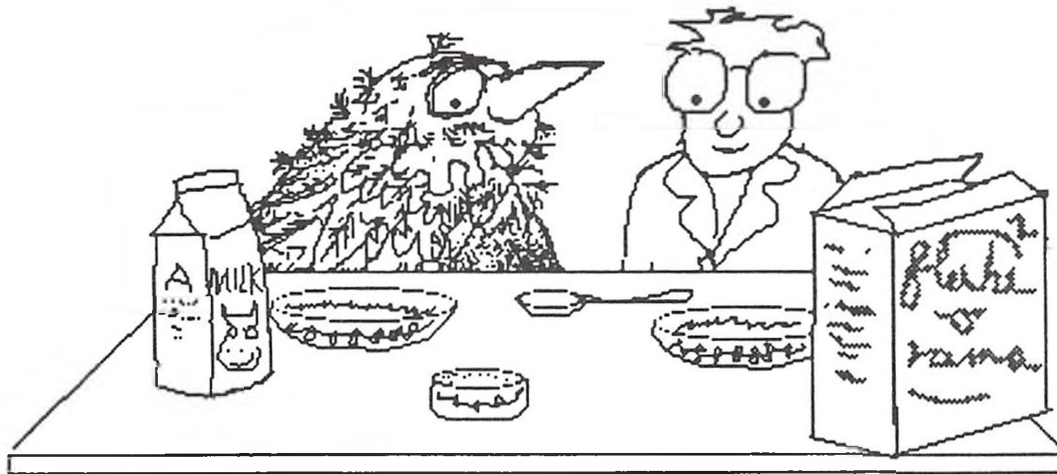


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March 30—April 1, 1990

Guest of Honor: John Crowley

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Chairman's Introduction

by Robert Colby

Welcome (or welcome back) to Readercon! If you think you've just heard an echo, you're partly right, because the same greeting appears in our separate Program. That publication contains all the practical information that you really need to know to get around (not that reading this won't significantly enhance your experience, but we don't expect *too* many of you to get the time this weekend). We've done this for two reasons: first, Program Books tend not to get read at-con, so we decided to segregate everything truly necessary into a "real" Program, and second because the expense of a 68-plus page Program Book would have had interesting effects on our bottom line (as it is, much of our originally-anticipated surplus is ending up in these pieces of paper). All together, this represents almost a tripling of the information we provided you last time; we hope you find it useful and entertaining.

Given the above, my assumption concerning the rest of this material is that most of you are reading it post-con. Since (because of the wealth of unique material by and about our guests) we're going to be selling the remaining copies of this Souvenir book through dealers, I also have to assume that some of you have never been to a Readercon at all. For you latter, I should explain that Readercon is just what its name implies: a conference for the serious reader in this field, one whose activities are designed with that reader in mind, and one that you would almost certainly enjoy if you're the type of person who would buy something like this in the first place.

And whether you've never been with us, or this is your *first* Readercon, you're probably curious as to whether this is the sum of our differences from the average con. Some people have, indeed, reacted (positively or negatively) as though the whole point of our

existence was to "get rid" of certain "elements" they didn't (or did) want to share a weekend with.

That's not *quite* the idea, people. While it is true that the underlying assumption behind our program is that our attendees are either intelligent adults or younger people capable of acting as such, we have no interest in the ongoing "fan" wars (who are the "true fans"? I don't know, and I couldn't care less).

What we are is a bunch of book people (readers, writers, industry people, etc.) who are spending one weekend exploring this glorious obsession, primarily through discussion; all those who think that this kind of thing fits within their own definition of "fun" are welcome to join in as long as they don't distract others from what we have come here to do (or damage our relationship with our hosts in the hotel trade).

Our true defining difference from what has gone before lies in attitude. We're not afraid of terms like 'art form' to describe what we're most passionate about, and we're interested in the whole spectrum of imaginative literature, including works published outside conventional genre categories. In other words, we're not afraid to take this stuff seriously (a lot more seriously than we take ourselves, we would hope). We're also not afraid to take a stand by promoting what we believe in (through the Readercon Small Press Awards, the new Readercon Small Press Review, and other projects described in "Looking Ahead").

It is our hope that this difference will provide you with an experience that you will remember as something more than just a fun weekend, that our passions and purposes will in some fashion inform yours. Let us know if we're right, OK?



Weissenbaum's Eye

by GEORGE STETTEN

"... reminiscent of Kurt Vonnegut's *Sirens of Titan*, ... plenty of unexpected twists ... Stetten's characters are very real and fully developed."

Syracuse Herald American

(ISBN 0-923056-00-9; 208 pages, \$4.95 paperback).

Bookstores - Available through Baker and Taylor or direct from:

Zwitter Press, 302 Carlton Drive, Syracuse, NY 13214



Books to Cherish 1: Déjà Vu

by Jack Dann

It is with a sinking sense of déjà vu that I read the Readercon Guest instruction sheet. A "brief" appreciation of five to ten of my favorite books: ah, yes, I've been there before. Stephen Jones and Kim Newman asked me to write a "short" note on a favorite horror novel; and my appreciation of Jerzy Kosinski's *The Painted Bird* went on for some twenty manuscript pages. Well, I have at least mentioned one favorite book, right here in the very first paragraph; but I have a problem with listing "five favorite books" because there are so many more than that which have become "mine."

In my appreciation for *Horror: 100 Best Books* I wrote (an author is allowed to cannibalize himself):

"Some books are read; others seem to become part of our own, private experience.

"Perhaps it's a function of youth, just as the music we hear during adolescence and early adulthood remains part of our intensely evocative experience. Yet I find something like that still happening: even now certain books become my own. Perhaps art enables us to overcome the ennui and cynicism of 'maturity' and suspend our disbelief. Thus, we become innocents once again, opening ourselves to life."

So I'll go on and list some of those books, which have become, for one reason or another, part of my own experience; and the editors can cut me off wherever they like, even at the five book limit . . . which leaves me only four books to go.

Remember *The Little Engine that Could?* An entire generation of graying hippies and accountants and doctors and lawyers and, yes, even writers remember it and are still whispering to themselves: "I think I can, I think I can, I think I can."

Those books I read at an early age still whisper to me: *Cannery Row* by Steinbeck, Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*, Salinger's *Catcher In the Rye* and the perfectly wrought *Nine Stories*

I remember trying to read Hemingway's *A Moveable Feast* after a close brush with death. I had been in a hospital for four months; and every day I would read a paragraph or two, and then, exhausted, would have to stop. It was as if I had a telescope that allowed me to look out of a mist of unbearable pain; and for those few, precious moments I was able to live in Hemingway's private Paris of the twenties.

And I resolved then that I, too, would become a writer.

The book is still a durable companion, for I reread it

several months ago.

There are certain books that are somehow sustaining during those times when money is short or work is not going well. *A Moveable Feast* is like good, crusty bread, and so is Jean Dutourd's *Pluche, or the Love of Art*. It was given to me by an old and dear friend, an artist who lived in a shack in the country, grew most of his own food, and painted what he saw out his window. His work sold well enough, especially his prints, which were carried by a chain of art galleries. It was as if he were living in Walden; and I could always find a free meal, some good scotch, and the very best of companionship. He was like the character Pluche, whose modest lifestyle gave him the freedom to pursue his own work. He had enough to get by on, augmented by a certain genius for the stock market, and managed not to get caught up in the bourgeois lifestyle . . . at least for a while. But then he moved to an island near Atlantic City, bought an expensive home, and began working two jobs to pay for it.

He just purchased a large sailing boat.

And he stopped painting.

Perhaps I should send him back his book.

Needless to say, I love Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*. Reading him is like listening to a wise and witty contemporary. Every few years I also reread Fitzgerald's translation of Homer's *The Odyssey* and *The Iliad*. They are not comfortable books, yet I am drawn to these quintessential epics every few seasons. So it is with many books, which I love but cannot consider as close friends: Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* (really a novella), Elias Canetti's *The Tower of Babel*, Nabokov's *Ada* and the rather cool, distant stories in his collection *Details of a Sunset*. I love his *Lolita*, just as I do Brian Aldiss's *The Malacia Tapestry*, Gene Wolfe's *Book of the New Sun* tetralogy, J. G. Ballard's *The Crystal World* and *The Unlimited Dream Company*, and John Fowles' *The Magus*. I would include here John Crowley's *Ægypt*, which is every bit as good (and certainly not as unwieldy) as Umberto Eco's new book, *Foucault's Pendulum*. Like Wolfe, Crowley has not received the general recognition he deserves.

There are books that are delicious, that I go back to and savor for their style and perfections, books such as *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen*, *Good Morning Midnight* by Jean Rhys, *Jews Without Money* by Michael Gold, and Borges' *A Personal Anthology*. The latter book I treasure, for I managed to get Borges to sign it. It was several months before he died. He was

blind, and so signed it upside-down. Someone had asked him about his dreams, and he smiled and said, "I dream of labyrinths, of course." I also recommend Carol Emshwiller's short story collection *Joy in Our Cause*, for she is one of our best short story writers. My favorite of her stories is "The Childhood of the Human Hero," which begins: "A little bit of you in him and a little bit of me and a little bit of him in you and I see a bit of my youngest brother. He's coming in, going out, coming in, going out, and it's another world outside which might be inner space which is outer space to him. 'Captain, your ship is approaching a doomed planet at twice the speed of light.'"

Emshwiller is virtually unknown in the field, which is our loss. Her second collection, *Verging on the Pertinent* (Coffee House Press), has just been published. I recommend it and herewith remove myself from my soapbox.

The Balloonist by MacDonald Harris might also be mentioned here. Harris is truly a writer's writer, stylish, startling, and, unfortunately almost unknown except by his fans. Even now, as I savor the remembrance of the book, it seems magical and resonant.

There are books I reread just for fun, or perhaps for nostalgia: Heinlein's *Starman Jones*, John D. MacDonald's Travis McGee novels, and Edgar Pangborn's *Davy*. I also confess a demented penchant for P. G. Wodehouse's Jeeves stories, which like Milk Duds and arsenic are not good for me.

I would recommend the essays of Guy Davenport in *The Geography of the Imagination*, *The Great Chain of Being* by Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Poetics of Space* by Gaston Bachelard, which is philosophy transformed into poetry, Francis Jacob's *The Possible and the Actual* and *The Logic of Life*, Cynthia Ozick's *Art and Ardor*, Canetti's memoir: *The Torch in My Ear*, Stanislaw Lem's *Microworlds*, and everything by Loren Eiseley.

And William Kennedy's *Ironweed* and R. A. Lafferty's wacky collection *Nine Hundred Grandmothers* and Fritz Leiber's *Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser* stories and Philip K. Dick's *Martian Time Slip* and *Confessions of a Crap Artist* and—

But, then, *that* is quite enough.

—23 January, 1990
Binghamton, New York

(Maybe Not Unfamous Enough) Books to Cherish 2

by M. J. Engh

I won't mention (this is a rhetorical device I forget the name of) E. R. Eddison's *The Worm Ouroboros* or M. P. Shiel's *The Purple Cloud*, because everybody already knows about them. Here are some mentionables:

Riddley Walker and just about anything else by Russell Hoban. These are the kind of thing to make you (me, at least) laugh with joy on almost every page, at the very moment they're forcing you to face up to basic and unpleasant questions. *Riddley Walker* is sf, *Pilgerman* is fantasy, *Kleinzeit* is—what?—maybe magic realism? Hoban may not deserve a Nebula—the science of *Riddley Walker* is scant and shaky—but I think he deserves a Nobel Prize. (No, I'm not kidding.)

The Long Ships by Frans G. Bengtsson, translated by Michael Meyer, is my favorite historical novel. It's "just" a good story (or rather four good stories, originally published in Swedish in two volumes), unencumbered by redeeming social value and innocent of any suspicion that there might be a down side to rape and pillage. For a writer, it's also an object lesson in how to evoke an absolutely solid and convincing alien world

with very little exposition and no description at all. This is an admirable translation, too; I can't speak for its accuracy, but it sure as heck reads right.

The Ronin by William Dale Jennings is a little gem—a Zen parable expanded into a sardonic, stylish novel.

Mary Norton's *The Borrowers* and its sequels are classic children's books about a race of little humanoids living their surreptitious lives pretty literally underfoot in Victorian (Edwardian?) England—all worked out in more satisfying detail than some grown-up SF on the same theme.

Ernst Jünger's *On the Marble Cliffs* (or *Auf den Marmor klippen*, if you can hack the German) is a lush, ambivalent dreamscape rhapsodized from the sordid raw materials of Hitler's rise to power.

All of these are great read-aloud books, Hoban's especially so.



Misremembering John Crowley

by Thomas M. Disch

Many very good writers seem not to have been very nice people. Some, like Frost or Hemingway or Mencken, end up losing a large part of their posthumous cachet as their friends and biographers and even their own diaries make it clear that there was a Jekyll-and-Hyde-wide chasm between the man and the mask.

As far as I can tell John Crowley is actually as nice as the people he writes about in *Engine Summer* and *Little, Big* and *Ægypt*, books that inspire readers to a special kind of readerly love precisely because their protagonists have a quality of ideal human sociability that is huggable without being sappy, charming without being coy, kind-hearted without being thick-headed. Perhaps there is another crueller, growly Crowley whom I've never met, but if so, he is an extremely adept and secretive fellow who's been able to fool not only me but all John's other friends of both sexes, since the only thing I've ever known any of them to say about John behind his back is how preternaturally nice he is. A good many people (writers) envy him, and in extreme cases may profess to dislike his work, but only in the way that Scrooge dislikes Christmas, out of misanthropy, or the way Salieri is said to have disliked Mozart. For Crowley's work is at that level of greatness that sets the parameters by which other work must be measured. It is absolutely good.

I understand that the traditional form of these convention-booklet appreciations is to reveal choice intimate details about the appreciated author's private life. It is not a tradition I can easily observe, for though I have no compunction about gossiping, I don't remember the details of my life (or my friends' lives) only the generalities. I have been chez Crowley on a few occasions, most memorably a book party for *Little, Big* at John's then home in the Berkshires, a party that had some of the flavor of the big riverside do in *Ægypt*. I can tell you that John's manner of home decoration was rather spare than cluttered, with a Japanese (or Shaker or French provincial) knack for making seemingly humble objects yield their numinous potential, a knack one would expect from a writer whose prose still-lives are often as

ravishing as Bonnard's.

But I can't tell you very much more about our occasions together. Except for, in some cases, where they took place, the restaurant or cafeteria where we sat to talk, I don't remember our conversations. They were bookish, often enough, and they must, as often, have been funny, since I can call to mind John's particular chuckle, which glides into and out of what he's saying like a figure in the left hand. I remember the modulations of his speech, and its melodies, which are usually down around the bottom of the treble clef but will take an octave leap upward for humorous emphasis.

I have a sense of how he dresses, which is usually with a conscious sense of style but never to the degree of being a showoff (yet not "correctly" neither). High bohemian with an emphasis rather on cut and texture than on boldness of color. The last time I saw him in New York City he was planning, the next day, to get himself a new winter overcoat at Barney's. I wanted to tell him where he could get the same label for half the price on Orchard Street, but I bit my tongue. He would get a better overcoat without my input.

So there it is, like a familiar opera seen on various occasions: the sets, costumes, style of delivery, everything but the libretto. But the thing about a really great opera is that the story is superfluous, or rather, the music *is* the story.

“As far as I can tell, John Crowley is actually as nice as the people he writes about . . .”

A John Crowley Bibliography

by Kurt Baty, Willie Siros, and Priya Mirkin

The following bibliography is based on that compiled by Kurt Baty and Willie Siros for *The Whole Science Fiction Database Quarterly* and is © 1990 by them. Dates of composition are from an interview with Crowley by Priya Mirkin (question marks indicate our uncertainty, not his). All works of short fiction are short-story length unless otherwise indicated.

Unpublished, untitled historical novel c. 1960, basis for *The Deep*

Learning to Live With It c. 1967-1969, unpublished first draft of *Engine Summer*

The Deep 1972-1973; based on untitled historical novel

1975: Doubleday, \$5.95. ISBN 0-385-09098-6. Hardback 1st Edition. (cover art by John Cayea) 180 pp.

1976 July: Berkley Medallion, \$1.50. ISBN 0-425-03163-2. Paperback 1st. (cover art by Richard Powers) 186 pp.

1977 February: New English Library, £2.95. ISBN 0-450-03069-5. Hardback 1st UK. 180 pp.

1977 November: New English Library, £0.85. ISBN 0-450-03353-8. Paperback 1st UK. (cover art by Joe Petagno) 180 pp.

1983 November: Bantam, \$2.50. ISBN 0-553-23944-9. Paperback 2nd. (cover art by Yvonne Gilbert) 176 pp.

1987 July: Unwin, £2.95. ISBN 0-04-8233318-8. Paperback 2nd UK. (cover art by Les Edwards) 176 pp.

Beasts 1974-1975

1976: Doubleday, \$5.95. ISBN 0-385-11260-2. Hardback 1st Edition. (cover art by John Cayea, sketch of the author by John Foote) 184 pp.

1977 May: Doubleday, SFBC. Hardback. May 1977 Main Selection.

1978 June: Bantam, \$1.75. ISBN 0-553-11102-7. Paperback 1st. 211 pp.

1978 August: Orbit, £0.80. ISBN 0-7088-8031-2. Paperback 1st UK.

1983 November: Bantam, \$2.50. ISBN 0-553-23060-0. Paperback 2nd. (cover art by Yvonne Gilbert) 211 pp.

1984: Goodchild SF Alternatives, £8.95. ISBN 0-86391-026-2. Hardback 1st UK. 176 pp. Introduction by David Wingrove.

1987 December: Gollancz Classic SF no. 20, £3.95. ISBN 0-575-04134-X. Trade (UK). 184 pp.

"The Reason for the Visit" 1975

1980: *Interfaces*, edited by Virginia Kidd and Ursula K. Le Guin

"The Green Child" 1975

1981: *Elsewhere I*, edited by Terri Windling

"Antiquities" 1975-1976

1977: *Whispers*, edited by Stuart David Schiff

1984: *Magcats!*, edited by Jack Dann and Gardner Dozois

"When Spirits Gat Them Home" 1977

1978: *Shadows*, edited by Charles Grant

Engine Summer 1977; rewritten from *Learning to Live With It*

Included by David Pringle in *Science Fiction: The 100 Best Novels*

1979 March: Doubleday, \$7.95. ISBN 0-385-12831-2. Hardback 1st Edition. (cover art by Gary Friedman) 182 pp.

1980: Gollancz, £4.95. ISBN 0-575-02815-7. Hardback 1st UK. 182 pp.

1980 March: Bantam, \$1.95. ISBN 0-553-13199-0. Paperback 1st. 209 pp.

1982: Methuen, £1.50. ISBN 0-417-05880-2. Paperback 1st UK. (cover art by Tim White) 182 pp.

1983 November: Bantam, \$2.50. ISBN 0-553-23360-2. Paperback 2nd. (cover art Yvonne Gilbert) 209 pp.

"Novelty" 1976-1977

1983: *Interzone* #5

1989: *Novelty*

Little, Big 1969-1978

1982 World Fantasy Award, Best Novel

1982 Hugo Award Nominee, Best Novel

Included by David Pringle in *Modern Fantasy: The 100 Best Novels*

1981 September: Bantam. \$8.95. ISBN 0-553-01266-5. Trade. 1st Edition.

1982: Bantam, QPBC. Trade: Same as trade first, but no price. Sometimes mistakenly sold as an advance reading copy

1982 May: Gollancz. £8.95. ISBN 0-575-03065-8. Hardback 1st (UK). (cover art by Pat Doyle) 538 pp.

1982 May: Gollancz. £5.95. ISBN 0-575-03123-9. Trade 1st UK. (cover art by Pat Doyle) 538 pp.

1983: Methuen. £1.95. ISBN 0-413-51350-5. Paperback 1st UK. (cover art by Szafran) 538 pp.

1983 October: Bantam. \$3.95. ISBN 0-553-2337-8. Paperback 2nd US. (cover art by Yvonne Gilbert) 627 pp.

1986 November: Methuen. £3.95. ISBN 0-413-51350-5. Paperback 2nd UK. 538 pp.

1987 April: Bantam Spectra. \$4.95. ISBN 0-553-26586-5. Paperback 3rd US. 625 pp.

“The Nightingale Sings at Night” 1979 (novelette)

1989: *Novelty*

“Snow” 1984

1985 Nebula Nominee, best short story

1986 Hugo Nominee, best short story

1985 November: *Omni*

1986: *Terry Carr's Best Science Fiction of the Year #15*

1986: *The Year's Best Science Fiction, Third Annual Collection*, edited by Gardner Dozois

Ægypt 1972?-1985? (*Ægypt Volume 1: The Solitudes*)

World Fantasy Award Finalist, Best Novel

Arthur C. Clarke Award Finalist, Best Novel

Included by David Pringle in *Modern Fantasy: The 100 Best Novels*

1987 April: Bantam Spectra. \$17.95. ISBN 0-553-05194-6. Hardback 1st Edition. (cover art by Ed Lindlof) 390 pp.

1987 September: Gollancz. £10.95. ISBN 0-575-48108-0. Hardback 1st UK. 390 pp.

1988 August: Gollancz. £3.95. ISBN 0-575-04325-3. Paperback 1st (UK). 390 pp.

1989 February: Bantam Spectra. \$8.95. ISBN 0-553-34592-3. Trade 1st US. (cover art by Ed Lindlof) 390 pp.

“Great Work of Time” 1977?-1988 (novella)

1989 Nebula Finalist, Best Novella

1978: Part 1. “The Single Excursion of Casper Law (*sic*)” published in *Gallery*

1989: *Novelty*

“In Blue” 1979-1988 (novella)

1989: *Novelty*

Novelty (short fiction collection)

1989 May: Doubleday Foundation. \$18.95. ISBN 0-385-26171-3. Hardback 1st Edition (cover art by Mike Fisher) 227 pp.

1989 May: Doubleday Foundation. \$6.95. ISBN 0-385-26347-3. Trade 1st. (cover art by Mike Fisher) 227 pp.

“Missolonghi, 1824” 1976-1989

1990, March: *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine*

Love & Sleep 1987?- (Volume 2 of *Ægypt*, roughly halfway completed: publication projected in 1992 or 1993)

(Two further volumes of *Ægypt* projected.)

How I Came to Interview John Crowley:

by Eric M. Van

I remember it with a vividness usually thought more appropriate for first meetings of future lovers. I was browsing in the sf section of the Paperback Booksmith in my hometown Natick Mall, when a new paperback, its cover thankfully turned outwards by an enlightened employee, caught my eye. The artwork was abstract, of that wonderful sort dominant in the Fifties and now entirely out of favor. (That what I thought of as a certain school of artwork was, in fact, simply the work of Richard Powers was something I would only learn later.) The author and title were unfamiliar to me. But above them was this blurb: "Thoroughly enjoyable . . . I think it is an extraordinary first novel and will be recognized as such.—Ursula K. Le Guin." My very favorite writer in the world.

I grew more and more excited as I read the cover copy. *The Deep*, by John Crowley, had garnered extraordinary praise. But it was not just the amount of praise that moved me so strangely, but the sort of praise the book was getting; the blurbs spoke of newness, freshness, originality of vision. A listing of characters that followed the title page whetted my appetite further: they were divided into "Reds" and "Blacks," as if the society portrayed therein were organized along lines wholly alien to ours. I must have been at a point in my sf reading where I felt a need for something fresh; I know that I have never brought home a new book by an unknown with as much eagerness.

With expectations this high I was of course somewhat disappointed. The book was a hybrid—a fairly conventional fantasy story of warring factions and a mad king, but with a single mysterious science-fictional element adroitly interspersed. I found the latter so powerfully engaging that my attention to the former sometimes faltered. But the book had a stunning denouement that was unlike anything I'd ever read. In the end the book was unmistakably impressive; I put John Crowley's name at the top of my list of authors to watch.

There is a point in every relationship between a reader and a favorite writer where the reader realizes for the first time that he is in the presence of genius, in the hands of a master to whose narrative voice one can utterly surrender—not merely for the duration of the book but for the reader's (or writer's) life. Such a moment may, of course, be different for every reader.

Call it the Page of Gold.

I found *Beasts* at the Wellesley Library. On pages 30 and 31 (33-35 of the paperback), I found the Page of Gold. Caddie, the viewpoint character of this chapter, and Painter, a leo—only half human, half a lion, a product of cell-fusion research—are seducing one another. "You can't do this you can't do this you can't do it you can't," Caddie thinks, and the reader thinks precisely that to Crowley: he is biting off more than we dare believe he can

chew. Our anticipation, our nervousness, grows precisely as Caddie's ("You're going to do it you're going to do it," she thinks now); does Crowley have the courage to imagine what such a union might really be like (and the awareness of how the telling will inevitably reflect on real, human sexuality)? Does he have the skill to put it perfectly into words, into images as startling and powerful as the act itself?

He does, he does, and he does. "I did it I did it I did it," Caddie dreams afterwards, and we say to Crowley: yes, you did, yes.

By its end *Beasts* delivered on every promise of *The Deep* and then some. The ambitious structure, the superb handling of multiple viewpoint characters, the gorgeous prose, the mythic overtones . . . By the time I finished it I would not have been surprised had newly-discovered neurological tests shown physical changes in my brain. I typed up a slip of paper—"If this book doesn't win the Hugo and Nebula Awards, we fans (*sic*) deserve to be shot"—inserted it between the dust jacket and the plastic library wrap, at the end of the publisher's blurb, and returned the book to the library.

It was the next year that I wrote an article entitled "Five (or More) Reasons to Convert to SF" for *An Unreal Distinction*, the short-lived Harvard / Radcliffe Magazine of Science Fiction. In my introduction, I stated the usual arguments: fantastic narrative had a far longer and richer history than that upstart, realistic fiction; sf was the paradigmatic literature of an age where change was the only constant. I summed up the point with the pithy comment that "the English department here one hundred years from now may well be teaching John Crowley and not John Cheever." *Beasts* was one of the five recommended novels that followed.

The Paperback Booksmith, again. This time it's a slim hardcover: *Engine Summer*. It is even better than *Beasts*; it does some things, like portray the passing of the seasons, better than any fiction I've ever read.

A month goes by, and paperback copies of *Engine Summer* appear. (How long had the hardcover been out before I discovered it? How much longer might this book have been part of my life?) And I volunteer to teach a course in Alternative Literatures to bright high-school students for the High School Studies Program at M.I.T. *Engine Summer* will of course be on the syllabus; of course, it needs a set of notes.

It is with some trepidation that I sit down to reread it with the story utterly fresh in my mind. I know what happens next at every point; how gripping can it be?

My jaw drops in amazement at a bit of foreshadow or thematic unity that I'd missed. And stays there. Page after page. "That may be." I say aloud when I am through, "the

An Introduction (Appreciation (Reminiscence))

best book I've ever read." Three further full readings and endless browsing later. I feel the same way, although I no longer need to qualify it. Though the book is of course held in great esteem by critics such as Brian Aldiss, David Pringle, and John Clute, and by the many Crowley fans I've talked to, I seem to be the only person who feels quite this strongly about it. But I doubt if anyone else has read it twice in so brief a time . . .

I have just walked into the Booksmith in Harvard Square. On the front table are piles and piles of a handsome trade paperback: John Crowley's *Little, Big*. I take out my wallet. I have five dollars. I look at the price on the book. It is \$8.95. Cash cards are still the stuff of science fiction. It is Sunday; the buses are not running. (To this day I cannot recall how I came to be in the Square, or how I had planned to get back home to Allston).

I walk home; it takes thirty minutes. As I expect, my housemate Otis is there. "Hey, Otis—can I borrow ten dollars?" He says yes. I walk right back to Harvard Square and go directly to the bookstore. I buy the book. I turn around and walk home again.

That evening, my other housemate, Josh Shaine (at the time a well-known Boston-area fan, scourge of the art auction) arrives home with his copy of *Little, Big*. We do little else for the next two or three days but eat, sleep, and read, with occasional breaks to discuss the book, briefly. "Have you figured out who Grandfather Trout is?" (Once again I am in the minority, for while Thomas Disch has called *Little, Big* "the best fantasy novel ever written" and David Pringle half-concurs, I am not willing to go any further than "one of the three or four best." Then again, I suspect they have re-read the book, as I have not.)

It is sometime in the next month that the idea of going out to Western Massachusetts and interviewing Crowley occurs to me. I make the mistake of mentioning this to Josh, who has far less inertia and more chutzpah than I. "I could write a review for the *Phoenix*," I muse, naming the local alternative weekly I once wrote for some years ago, whose current Arts editor I know vaguely from my work as a rock critic for *Boston Rock*.

It is perhaps a day or two later. I arrive home, and Josh greets me cheerfully at the door.

"Well, the interview's all set!"

"What?"

"The interview with Crowley."

"You're kidding." I know he isn't.

"Of course I'm not kidding." He knows I know. He explains that he has called up Bantam Books, or something or other . . . We have a date with Crowley, for dinner and interview, on Friday, October 23, 1981. Wow.

Oddly enough, I don't recall our first meeting; but I have a vivid memory of the dinner, at a pleasant restaurant, that followed immediately. I can remember vowing not to ask questions that ought to belong in the interview, and getting involved in fascinating and valuable conversations nevertheless. In particular, Crowley talked about both his childhood and adult exposures to sf and fantasy; we analyzed at length his resistance to Tolkien (an author I adore).

As we followed Crowley's car back to his house, Josh asked me what I thought. "Well, whoever said you should never meet your heroes, 'cause they'll inevitably disappoint you, is full of it."

We set up my cassette deck and microphone in the living room of Crowley's house. As I did so, I gave Crowley a copy of the *An Unreal Distinction* essay to read ("I'd like to think they'd be teaching us both," he remarked, when he came to the crack about him and Cheever). And then we talked. And talked, for a good two-and-a-half hours. Crowley worried that *he* was keeping *us* up late. It's probably worth mentioning that Crowley sipped Scotch throughout most of the evening, in quantities impossible for this teetotaler to gauge—something he no longer does (which fact being a good topic for the next interview).

The next day the new issue of the *Phoenix* appeared; it had a review of *Little, Big*. (One, indeed, that read the novel as a pro-survivalist tract and trashed it on those terms! Compare Borges' famous "Jerry Pournelle, Author of *Little, Big*."") So much for the interview's potential market. However, these things have a way of working themselves out in the end . . .

The transcript that follows removes all our major digressions; those who wish to know Crowley's reaction to *Orsinian Tales*, or of his admiration for the animators John and Faith Hubley, will just have to ask me. For what remains, I have edited Josh and myself as much as possible and Crowley almost not at all. (The full transcript gives a very different flavor, of the evening as a conversation; I have included a few of the most amusing of these exchanges.)

One last note: anyone who has ever read a blow-by-blow transcription of actual human speech knows that people don't talk the way they do in interviews. Except Crowley. There are whole paragraphs here where there was nary a stammer or stutter to be excised. For the sake of balance, I have let the transcription devolve into a true word-for-word account on the few occasions where his ineloquence seemed in itself significant.

John Crowley Interviewed: October 23, 1981

by Josh Shaine and Eric M. Van

John Crowley: I am at present at work on a novel [Ægypt], my next novel, which is going to be a huge, long number like *Little, Big*, and will take years and years to come out. So don't hold your breath. There's not going to be anything for quite a while. Unless I publish some stories which I've got squirreled away [early versions of the *Novelty* stories, apparently; see the bibliography]. But I'm writing a novel which is about history. It's a contemporary novel basically, set in the present, but it's about history and a historian. And it's about magic and alchemy—16th, 17th century Renaissance magic. A more high, philosophical kind. Not witches, but the philosopher's stone, that kind of thing. And it's about a historian investigating all those things in the present. With large whacks taken out of the work of an historical novelist included in the book. The historical novelist's name is Fellowes Kraft. And he's nobody you've ever read. [laughter.] Yet.

Josh Shaine: How did you find yourself—here you are looking at your second novel, which in some senses deals with both a fair amount of history, and a fair amount of the arcane, as it were.

JC: Well, the history of both goes back a long way. In fact, they both kind of progressed side by side. I've just noticed a note in an old journal, that at a time when *Little, Big* was about forty or fifty pages long, I had just started—I had already started thinking about this next one. This was eight or nine years ago. So they've both been in the works for quite a while. I can't tell you exactly how I ended up with all this. I don't know how I got into writing what I would consider more than science fiction. Ontological romances [laughter] is kind of what I consider them to be. *Little, Big*, and *Engine Summer*, anyway. Not *Beasts*, which is a straight romance.

In fact, I think—it's my opinion that romance is a word that ought to be used more to describe these things. I think H. G. Wells was right in calling them scientific romances. And that's really what they are. Science fiction which is about science, as you were describing in your little article [in *An Unreal Distinction*—see Page 10]—science fiction which is about scientific problems, or turns on scientific paradoxes or things like that is interesting and can really be a lot of fun to read. But it's not what science fiction readers like. What science fiction readers like are romances, in which the amazing parts, to take the place of prophesies and bands of pirates and all those things, are things that are derived from technology and from a scientific post-Cartesian world view, but essentially fulfilling the same kinds of functions.

The book to read, which explained to me an awful lot of what I do, is a book called *The Secular Scripture*, by Northrop Frye. An amazing book, just a wonderful, wonderful book. About all kinds of romance, about the struc-

ture of everything from Superman to *The Divine Comedy*, and what things they share in common. And as far as I'm concerned, that is what we're talking about. Whether we're talking about fantasy or science fiction, or even in a lot of cases mystery novels, or westerns. They all share certain hidden structures, which are the structures of romance. I mean romance as distinguished from myth, which science fiction tends to sort of slide into. When they start telling big stories about how everything happened, and how it'll all end, those are myths. Romances are exciting stories that never happened. It was agreed back in the very beginning that romances were stories that never happened, whereas myths were true stories.

JS: That never happened.

JC: Yes. Well, they thought they *had*, or at least that they represented what had happened. We don't tell myths very much anymore, but the occasional science fiction novel will slide into myth. And romance does, too. I mean, as I say, Frye considers *The Divine Comedy*. He considers it as having a romance structure. But of course it was also supposed to be about what we used to call in the Catholic Church "the four last things."

Eric M. Van: Can we start at the beginning? The thing that I'm most curious about kind of ties in with what I said at the beginning of the piece [in *An Unreal Distinction*], about how new, young writers are making this conscious decision to write sf. I'm wondering about your background with literature in general, and then with sf as a—

JC: Well, as I say, I used to—I forget which science fiction writer it is who was asked "When is the golden age of science fiction?" And he said, "Twelve." Which I think is, in a certain sense, true. I stopped reading it when I was twelve. I had not really any interest in it. And got into a lot of other things.

Around 1967, I was out of work, and smoking a lot of dope, to tell you the truth, which was a big part of it, though I've never been quite sure just how much a part of it. But old things were coming back. Senses of wonder, and senses of kinds of—it was like old capped wells of childhood were opening up. Things were coming back to me that I had deliberately sealed up, in a lot of ways. And I started dreaming. And most of what I was dreaming of was the future.

And I still hadn't really read any science fiction. So I didn't really realize that what I was thinking about were things that were already standard in science fiction. The notions that I was coming up with, which I thought—I mean I remembered the old science fiction futures from when I was twelve, back in the early Fifties, and I was remembering the technocratic, streamlined, stainless steel futures that were in books in those days. And I was think-

ing of a completely different kind of future. I was thinking of a pastoral, very quiet, very non-technological future in which all this stuff will be forgotten. I said, what if they forget everything? What if they forget how to write? What if they forget all art? The doing of art stops being interesting to them. All the toys and things that engage our attention stop being interesting to them. Then what would society be like? But, suppose they still had to have things like initiation rituals, and a sense of figuring out what life is about, and paradigmatic lives being led, and that kind of thing.

So I would sit around, think up the weirdest, oddest things I could think of. Every once in a while I would get an idea, and I'd say, now *that* is as weird as it's really going to be. And I'd be very pleased with myself, and I'd write that down. Without really, at first, trying to put it together as a novel, except that I realized, now I've got a lot of free time, why don't I—

EV: Can I interrupt to ask, what work you were out of?

JC: Well, I had been a photographer for a while. I was freelancing as a photographer, I wasn't very good at it, so that had all sort of fallen apart, and I'd lost my apartment. But a friend had lent me an apartment, so I didn't have to pay any rent. All I had to do was get enough money together to buy the simplest meals. So, I was really sort of—I was preparing to start writing documentary films; there was a deal in the offing. So there was a promise of something to come. But for a good five months in there, I really wasn't doing anything.

So I started—I was putting all this stuff together. And I thought, well, what the hell, I'll put in the form of a story. Now the story that I started to write, the book that I eventually wrote, I didn't really conceive of as science fiction, strictly speaking. Even though it was a story about the future. I hadn't read any science fiction, I didn't know anything—I was not following consciously any of the genres, even though around then I read Tolkein and *Dune*, things like that. But they didn't seem to have anything to do with what I was doing. I was writing an avant-garde novel, in effect, I mean, I didn't really know what I was doing. I was writing this absolutely unclassifiable history of the future. I got about two or three hundred pages into it, and gave it to an agent, who also didn't know what to make of it but thought it was sort of weirdly wonderful, and hippie and strange, and you know, just the sort of thing that might hit a nerve. He started passing it around, and nobody wanted to buy it at all!

But I had meanwhile found a kind of a great satisfaction in having actually written a book, and having come all the way to the end of it. I thought that was just terrific. I'd never done that before, even though I'd started dozens of novels, ever since I was in high school I'd been writing. And so here I was with a real book that was done. It was a mess, but it was finished. So I thought, all right, now let's

gather up the pieces, and maybe next we'll try to write one that can be actually sold and bought. People can read it.

So now I was quite deliberately cultivating this field. I saw the advantages to science fiction right off. I said, well, here I have written a novel which is classifiable as science fiction. It happens in the future, it is in a certain sense about science or technology, because a lot of the plot turned on scientific gadgets and gimmickry and a sort of new physics in a certain way. And so I had written science fiction, but I hadn't had to do anything *special*, in a certain sense. I could indulge myself as much as I wanted. And I knew that it was possible, because I started reading science fiction, and I found out that you can get almost anything between covers, in science fiction, if it has a certain few basic elements in it. If it's set in the future, or set on another planet, or something like that, anything goes. So, I started again.

This time I wrote a novel that was quite deliberately designed to be plotty and have a lot of action, and so on. And I took up a whole bunch of bits and pieces of an historical novel that I had started when I was in high school. An historical novel about the Wars of the Roses, in England. And dropped all the history of it, and set it all on another planet, and actually got this one all the way through to the end. And it did sell. I was right. I could do it. And that was *The Deep*.

And so, in a sense, it's as much an historical novel as it is a science fiction novel. I could have made it an historical novel, except that it would have had to be three times as long, in the first place: a lot of bodice ripping and supposed historical color. None of which I had to bother with. But a sort of streamlined, or dark, strange book like *The Deep* could not have been sold if it was an historical novel. It looks odd as an historical novel. But as a science fiction novel, it plugged right in. Everybody—a lot of people thought it was quite good. And it did quite well considering, I mean, the limits. For a first novel in the field, it did about as well as you could expect.

And I know that there are dozens of people, thousands probably, uncounted thousands, who are sitting and writing their first novel, trying to say something special of their own, and so on and so on, and writing it without considering who might be interested in reading this, or what sort of parameters there are on any given piece of literature. You pick it up and you say, what the hell is this? It's a book, it's a novel, it's a story about—I don't know. And you put it down again. But, if you are writing within a genre, if you are writing a western or mystery, people know what they have picked up when they pick it up. They have certain expectations and those are fairly easy to fulfill, they're not real difficult to fulfill. So it gives you an automatic advantage as a young writer.

In fact, Kurt Vonnegut has the same advice. He said, if you want to write, and you have thoughts about the future, and you have notions about technology and how it works,

Crowley interview, cont.

or human life and how society ought to be organized, write a science fiction novel. Anything you write, if it has any kind of wit about it at all, ingenuity about it, it will get published. They don't even mind if it's well written! [laughter.] So, I kind of took that advice; I had already taken it before I had read the advice, actually. But that, in effect, was how I was working into science fiction.

But science fiction, I also saw, had some real definite advantages. You *could* take on large subjects. Science fiction fans *expect* you to be talking about important things. Now, of course there are a lot of important things that science fiction fans probably wouldn't recognize in there, like human psychology, and, you know, real characters . . .

JS: Now, now. My best friends are science fiction readers, and—

JC: Well, I exaggerate, of course, but you know what I mean.

JS: Not much, I'm afraid.

EV: You know, it is very depressing to go to a science fiction convention, and the number of people who are into the writers I dislike—who shall remain nameless here—And the few people I can find who have even heard of Crowley and Wolfe, and my other favorites.

JC: Yes, I know what you mean. Well, at least they're all collecting in one place, and they're buying the books. I'm selling books, Gene Wolfe is selling books. We're all making a living at this, which is the astonishing part.

JS: The real trick that I'd like to see happen some day is to be able to make a living by buying and reading books, [laughter]. Not, mind you, writing about them afterwards. Just buying and reading them.

JC: Well, Walter Benjamin said that of all the ways of acquiring books, writing them yourself is thought to be the most noble. [laughter].

So that was my entry into science fiction. I really hadn't thought of myself as a science fiction writer or a science fiction fan or any of that. The whole thing came to me as a complete surprise. This whole thing about cons, and you know, all these parties I was suddenly invited to, and I'm shaking hands with Isaac Asimov and Avram Davidson, and all these people whose names vaguely rang a bell from long ago. And it was all very surprising to me. But wonderful, too! I mean, the loyalty, and concern of science fiction fans for their authors, and the people they care about, and the support that you get. Any bookstore you walk into, you look at the science fiction book rack, and there are books on there with new covers that are thirty or forty years old. They have been in print ever since they came out. And that's very hard to say about almost any other kind of book.

EV: Is that possible to say now that *Engine Summer*, I'm

told is—

JC: Yes, it's out of print.

[Talk about reprint rights of his books, at the time.]

EV: Who has—does Berkley have *The Deep*?

JC: Berkley has *The Deep* at the moment. Dave Hartwell was my editor at Berkley, and he's very sharp about all these things. But he's since gone on someplace else.

EV: He's now at Timescape, I think. I think he's a good—

JC: Oh, he's very good. He wanted to buy *Little, Big* for his fantasy series that Berkley was doing. And my agent just couldn't bring himself to sell it to him. Just because of the money being offered, and because of the ghetto thing that would have happened to it.

EV: Right. Was Bantam the one publisher that had the idea or the offer of doing it as a big trade?

JC: As a big trade? Yes. Well, that was part of—I mean, when it was only partly finished, it was going to various people. And I was trying to get it published by Farrar, Straus, or some fancy fiction house as a big, new fiction, *regular* fiction. And they turned it down. Farrar, Straus, turned it down. Viking, all those people that publish all the mainstream hotshot, new fiction. Turned it down on the basis, admittedly, of about a hundred pages of it. And Bantam made an offer. Bantam made an offer. So, in the end, with some misgiving, I took the offer. I'm very glad I did. I think not only was it the right thing to do, but I think it's a very interesting, and almost kind of brave thing that they're doing.

JS: I don't think they have done badly by you.

JC: No, I think they've done very well, I'm very pleased.

EV: You're pleased with the package?

JC: Very pleased.

EV: It's really quite nice.

JC: I think it is. There were some illustrations that—they asked Elizabeth Malczynski originally to do some illustrations for it. I don't know if you know her name. I'm sure you've seen her work. She's done a lot of illustration, cover art, for fantasy and science fiction. I think she did the Bantam editions of McCaffrey books. She did those. *Dragonsong*, or something like that? *Dragon Wings*, something, I don't know. She's very, very good. But they were turned down by Bantam eventually as being too fantasy, too genre.

JS: Well, the funny thing is when you ask a fantasy artist to do some illustrations . . .

JC: Well, yes, you see, this is the funny thing, because my original editor at Bantam, named Sydney Weinberg, she of

course was a science fiction and fantasy editor, so she was taking it on as one of Bantam's fantasy packages the way they just did the Samuel Delany stories called *Distant Stars*, which is illustrated. And the brothers—what's their name?

JS: Hildebrandt. Who are broken up now.

JC: Oh yeah? They're not brothers anymore?

JS: You now have: Tim Hildebrandt does his work, and the other guy does his work, and ne'er the twain do meet.

JC: Oh, well, they'd just published an illustrated book of the Brothers Hildebrandt. So it was going to be in that kind of slot. But then, she passed it around at Bantam, and also she left Bantam right in the middle of all this, and my book, quite fortunately, got kicked upstairs to a general trade editor, who read it and liked it a lot. And so she made a campaign for it to come out as a regular novel.

EV: At this point did they have a finished manuscript, or were they—

JC: Oh, yes. At this point they had a finished, final manuscript. So it was kind of kicked upstairs.

JS: A lot of people are probably kicking themselves if they've seen it by now. Farrar, Straus, Giroux looks at that kind of book, and tends to appreciate it.

JC: Yes, I think it's kind of unfortunate. Because I really would have—I may be wrong, and I have since thought, no, look, it's the later half of the twentieth century, one's got to go with these things. I would have liked the cachet of having come out in hardback from Farrar, Straus, and all that fanciness and attention that is paid by those kinds of people to that kind of book. I admit, I would really have liked that. On the other hand, the notion of publishing this kind of book in this fashion, that is, as a trade paperback, and with the machinery of a gigantic paperback house behind it doing the kinds of things that only a gigantic paperback house can do for you—it's going to get more copies in people's hands, and get it read by more people.

Whether or not that will keep it from getting the kind of attention that would really matter to *me*, whether it's going to keep it from getting reviewed by—bought by, you know, Harvard Library as part of their permanent—and get it taught in literature classes, and that kind of thing, whether there's some stigma attached to this thing still from those kinds of people, that will make the book less permanent, or taken less seriously by people who really take books seriously—that's the only thing I wonder about. And I don't know yet. It hasn't been proven yet whether that's the case or not.

JS: And it again will be too long before we know.

JC: Yes, that's right, we won't know. We all know, of course, that novels as a whole weren't taken seriously, in

I flew west, as part of a great circle that would take me over the suburbs of Tsagul, the fire town, then back to my camp. I was caught in a wild current of air and carried into the heart of a storm. I fought with the poor pedal fan and we were whirled around in a sea of dark mist and hail and icy rain. Then, when I was at the end of my strength, I glided down out of the cloud and found I was over the ocean. I had been carried far, far to the west. The pedal fan was literally falling apart around me; I went down and ditched in the sea and thought my soul-bird was loosed from my body. The wonder is that I did not drown. I seized a portion of the wing and kicked as hard as I could. I pushed this piece of wreckage through the water until the light began to fail and in the short spring darkness I grounded on some sort of island.

from "Old Noon's Tale"

by Cherry Wilder

1780 or 1800, even later. They were not taken seriously as literature. And it was only after they started being taken seriously as literature that people could go back to people like Melville and Austin and Smollet and Richardson and Fielding and say, this is what we're talking about. This is great stuff.

It was after *The Deep* got accepted as a book and got published, and I realized that this was a good way to make a living, that I took up a whole bunch of ideas for stories that had been knocking around in my head for a long, long time, even since high school, among them the idea of a pack of dogs in the city, a wild pack of dogs. I wanted to write a story about that. And an idea that used to haunt me when I was in high school, for some reason for the longest time. I don't know, *haunt* is probably too strong a word, but I used to sit and think about it. The idea of animals behaving as though they were human beings, but *exactly* as though, I mean, the image of a lion sitting in a cafe smoking a cigarette, with on his face the expression of a human being, and the behavior, the small little nods and small little things that we associate with human beings. Having all those characters, a little chuckle, and things like that, just haunted me, for some reason. And so anyway, I put together all those ideas, and several others of the same kind. I'd been thinking about Paolo Soleri, I wanted to write a story about arcology, and about what life would be like in one of those immense buildings. You know Paolo Soleri's name? Arcology?

Crowley interview, cont.

EV: No.

JC: Paolo Soleri is an architect, visionary, who has come up with a science of arcology, which isn't really a science. But he builds these exquisite model buildings that—I've never really known exactly how big the models are, maybe this high? But they model buildings designed to hold millions of people. And they're to be built out in the desert somewhere, and the whole world is supposed to retreat into these—

JS: Silverberg read him before he wrote *The World Inside*.

JC: He's a very interesting man. I think he's a nut. I think the whole idea is absolutely creepy.

JS: I wouldn't want to live in one of those.

JC: I wouldn't want to live in one, either. But it is a fascinating idea. And I wondered about what sorts of movements—

EV: Was Great Belaire in *Engine Summer*—

JC: No, no. I don't think it came out of that. It came out of just thinking about falling-apart apartment buildings. But it's the same in the sense that when I was thinking about the arcology buildings, I was thinking, what human movements would develop in those that would be different from—what secret religions, or secret societies would develop within these buildings that would be different from outside. That theme never really got into *Beasts* that much.

There was a time in my life when I used to think about this all the time. What secrets, what mysteries developed in harems, over all those thousands of years, that we know nothing about. 'Cause they left no monuments. All those women were illiterate, and we don't know anything. There may have been secret societies, with their own secrets and initiations and searches for truths that developed in harems over the course of centuries, passed on from wife to wife, and on to the younger wives, and they left no trace at all. Well, that's the kind of thing I was thinking, and that's part of the motive for *Engine Summer*, too.

But anyway, that was *Beasts*, and after *Beasts* came out and was a success. I took *Engine Summer*, or I took the original manuscript that I had been working on back there as a hippie, if you remember that. Took that to my editors at Doubleday and said, here, now, why don't you buy this? And they said, ooh, pretty bad. I said, don't worry, I'll fix it up, it'll be wonderful, you'll really love it. And by this time I had enough clout at Doubleday that they agreed to give me a small advance on it. And I rewrote it, very extensively, and that was *Engine Summer*. I took out yards of it.

JS: Hmm! *Engine Summer* ends up having been your first book.

JC: *Engine Summer* was actually my first book. And quite—pretty much unchanged. All I did mostly was neaten it up, and polish it and make it intelligible. It was absolutely—you could not—even though it had basically the same plot, it was unintelligible. You couldn't figure it out in the first version, you had no idea what was going on. (It's hard enough in the present version!)

EV: It's amazing, because it's such a work of craftsmanship, it strikes me.

JC: Well, the craftsmanship mostly came in after, in the rewrite.

EV: Maybe that's the reason for it's—in that it had this gap between the construction, and the—

JC: Oh, yes. Oh, yes, that may well be so. Because of course then I could put in all these beautiful foreshadowings and all that.

EV: Perhaps if we put every novel in a drawer for X years, and—

JC: Well, that's what Horace said, "Keep your poems seven years."

[JS talks about Cordwainer Smith, and his future history.]

JC: Well, building up, making a false history is just so fascinating in itself that sometimes you just can't stop. I mean, a lot of what came out of *Engine Summer* was history of the intervening years, all told in that peculiar style. You know, that sort of naive style. Most of that I just had to take out. First of all, it stopped being able to be true; even though it was set thousands of years from now, it had already stopped being possible by the time I picked it up ten years later, five years, seven years later, which is interesting.

Some things I left in even though I thought they had already been outdated, like the Long League of Women, the secret society of women. I had decided, well, what happened to the feminist movement in that case, you know? I said, well, alright, the feminist movement was a mere pimple in time, it turned out to be of no interest at all. But the secret underground, Long League of ordinary, non-feminist women was the one that would—no one would know about that yet. That'll go on. But it has to be remembered that the Long League of Women was thought of before the recent big burst of the feminist movement.

EV: Two biographical notes have intrigued me. One stated that you were working on a fantasy trilogy?

JC: That was *Little, Big*.

EV: Was it ever thought of publishing it in three volumes?

JC: Yes. Oh, yes, it was going to be three volumes at one point. When I was still dealing with Doubleday, the publisher. And I finally said I wanted it to come out as a regu-

lar trade book, I don't want it to come out as science fiction. And they said, *nah*.

EV: The other is the note as to when you began *Little, Big*. And does that overlap with—

JC: Yes, it overlaps with all the others. Yes, I really thought of it—I began thinking about *Little, Big* in about 1969, though it was quite a different book then. What I began to think of was the idea of a family chronicle that would begin in the present. Instead of beginning in the past and coming up to the present, it would begin in the present and go on into the future.

JS: That would go backwards at the same time?

JC: It didn't though. My original conception was beginning in the present and actually going step by—because I was bothered a bit that science fiction was always set in the future. But there was no sense of the progression from our present to that future. So I was going to write a book that started now, went a thousand or two hundred years into the future. In the end, only a small part of that idea really ended up in it. And it was going to be about that, and it was going to be about an invented religion. If you want a common theme in all the books, maybe *The Deep* partly excepted, it's the sense of secret societies and secret religions. People who have a perception of a secret about the universe, which they almost can't express. And other people gather around them to find out what the secret is, and the secret works itself out in surprising ways, in common ordinary life. And turns out in the end, in fact, to be no secret at all, or to be our common heritage, or something like that. I think, if there is a common theme in all of them, that's what it is. In fact [laughing], this next one coming up is no different.

EV: Well, I think that's very perceptive of you! [laughter.] We're supposed to say those sort of things to you—I mean you're the writer, we're the critics. No, I guess that's true of a letter from Dr. Boots, that—

JC: Well, there's that secret society [Dr. Boot's List in *Engine Summer*]. There's also the secret society of the truthful speakers. There are the societies that start to work themselves around both Sten and the Leo [in *Beasts*—the secret monarchists around Sten, and the secret animal lovers around the Leo. There are an awful lot of religious or New Testament references in *Beasts*, which I don't suppose escaped you gentlemen.

ENDING OF *BEASTS* ABOUT TO BE SOMEWHAT SPOILED

EV: Well, what blew my mind when reading *Beasts*, in the latter part—I was saying: I know someone here is a Christ figure, but I don't know who! [JC laughs.] I said, is it Reynard? Is it Painter? Which one? Is it one of the humans? Is it all of them?

...“We will continue to monitor dream activity under the gun. Andy will speak to us more and more. The storyteller/mythmaker mouf is well-planted now. We should get a much higher order of presentation than he was capable of in his *Story of the House*. We will make sure his dreams contain the statis-lock. We will strengthen that until he is stable. He will keep returning to the image of the nets, depending on how much he needs it. The Arena, the fighters, will go.”

Pixie sighed. “This is what worries me. You make it sound as if Andy must fight to be free of your subliminal embeddings. That sounds wrong, against free will. Is it possible he might prefer psychosis?”

Doctor Balm looked at his assistant. Beris was carefully neutral

“A curious notion, Doctor Todd.”

“But a possibility, Doctor Balm, though you don't like my saying it.”

“No, I certainly don't.”

from “The Quiet Redemption of
Andy the House”
by Terry Dowling

JC: In a certain sense of thought, in a sense, there aren't any. There is no Christ figure. That's what I'm saying. It all comes out ordinary. And it's all left up in the air in the end, when Reynard says, you have to make it up. It's not me, it's you: I don't know anything, you guys make it up. But yes, Painter becomes—he's obviously, at the end of the book, got a history that can be interpreted as Christ-like. And the great, the line—one of my favorite jokes in *Beasts* is when he's fooling around with the snares and he says, “you know how to work these?” And Loren says, “Sure, I can teach you.” And he says, “You teach me, I'll teach you to be hunters of men.” And if you remember Jesus' line to his first apostles, when they were down in the boats, and he says, “Come follow me. I will make you fishers of men.” That's the change. He's going to make them hunters of men. It's a very different kind of image. Different kind of Jesus.

END OF SPOILER

JS: Where do your characters come from?

JC: Well, I don't know, it's hard to say. A lot of them come out of other books, of course. A lot of—any writer's characters come out of other books. You could almost divide up the characters that you have in books into a few different types, it seems to me. There are characters that basically come out of yourself. I mean, you divide yourself into a number of different parts—different aspects of yourself. I feel that both Smoky Barnable and Auberon in

Crowley interview, cont.

Little, Big are contrasting parts of my own character. The sort of pleasanter and unpleasanter aspects, as I see myself. But some characters just come out of—they're just cardboard cut-outs. A lot of the characters in *The Deep* are just standard issue characters that come out of history.

Auberon, when he's sitting in the summer house, he's trying to write a play, or maybe it's a movie, about the Emperor Barbarossa. What he's thinking about the Emperor Barbarossa is an idea about a person that I've had, again, since I was very young. It seemed to me to be what the character of the Earl of Warwick during the War of the Roses was like, and the character that ended up as Redhand in *The Deep*, and a little bit what Painter is like in *Beasts*, too. A certain kind of humorless, quiet man of strength. Dark inside. Dark soul in a certain sense. Well, that person is one of my stock characters. I think every writer has a stock company that keeps coming up.

JS: These are people who belong to this man, whether it be Falstaff, or—

JC: Yes, they'll keep coming up. Shakespeare's women are very—he has a certain cast of women.

EV: I think it's officially been calculated that Heinlein has four characters.

JC: Right, yes, well, you have them more or less. And also, even though you ring changes on the same people, they turn out to be very different. And I don't know whether, I mean, there are—obviously, the girl in *Beasts* and the girl in *The Deep* are very similar characters, even to the fact of having their hair cut short. That kind of ferocious, humorless young girl with huge emotions, who gets attached to a non-human, to whom she feels some sort of strange—emotionally in whose power she is, in both cases. I mean, the Visitor sneaks Nod off to the outlands on this big trip that she doesn't want to go on, and the same thing happens to Caddie in *Beasts*. So those are obviously some of my stock situations. How they ever arose I have no idea. I haven't got the slightest idea. Some ancient dream.

JS: Do you find yourself at some point, here you are penning along and all of a sudden you look up, and there is this character in your story. And he doesn't fit with what you had in mind for going on, and he doesn't fit with what's happening, and he doesn't fit with where you thought everything was going, and you don't know where it came from?

JC: Not usually, no, not usually. I think those kinds of things—even though a lot of writers have claimed that that does happen to them. I always think that they're lying! [laughter.] I just don't believe that happens. Even though facets of their character will surprise you. Or they'll suddenly become larger than you thought they were. They've suddenly become capable of emotions you didn't think they were capable of. They can suddenly become—

suddenly a certain kind of character will turn out to have a gentle aspect that you hadn't thought of, or a witty aspect that you hadn't thought of before.

EV: Can you think of examples from any of your books?

JC: Well, none leap immediately to mind, I'm afraid. No.

ENDING OF *THE DEEP* ABOUT TO BE SOMEWHAT SPOILED

No, except that the last scenes in *The Deep*, when Redhand is sitting in that cabin, when the young king comes to see him, and he doesn't know that the older king has died, when he doesn't know that the older brother has died. Suddenly, Redhand seemed to be a much more vulnerable and odd person there than I had thought he was earlier in the book. But I knew that something like that had had to happen to him because he was the main character in the book.

END OF SPOILER

So, that's not quite the right kind of example. I'm afraid I can't really . . . Insofar as the characters got bigger, they got bigger by stages like that. Insofar as they appear to you, as large whole big human beings, it is because you start out with a fairly rudimentary character and then add, you know; he gathers qualities to him as he goes along.

You can also say, oh, I see, this is a darker *story* than I thought it was going to be. That happened especially in *Little, Big*. And I—you know, I thought it was real cute at the beginning, real nice. And it got less nice in a certain way, in a lot of different ways.

EV: Now we get to the conscious conception of *Little, Big*. Or—I know I have a capsule description I give to people, and before I offer it, I wanted to see if you—

JC: [Laughs] Well, I don't have a—I have a *handy* description of it just so that people know what they're talking about, and that is that it's a novel about people who believe in fairies.

EV: [Laughs] Without mention as to how good a reason they have.

JC: [Laughs] Right. Yes. Right. It's a story about people who believe that they are in a fairy tale.

EV: I've been telling people that it's a fairy story, or fairy tale in the strict sense of the word. Except instead of being eight or nine pages long, and very archetypal, it's eight hundred or whatever pages long, and—

JS: [Consulting book] 538.

EV: Five hundred? Well, it would be eight hundred if it were a little, you know, normal paperback. [JC laughs.] It's X-hundred thousand words, and it's in most other ways a superb contemporary novel. But it's a fairy tale, too.

JC: Right. Well, it's sort of—Marianne Moore defined poetry as imaginary gardens with real toads in them. And this is sort of—

JS: That conjures a very vivid image.

JC: Yes, it's beautiful. It's a wonderful, wonderful—it can't be beat. But, this in a certain sense is an imaginary garden with real fairies at the bottom of it. If you remember the old song about "there are fairies in the bottom of my garden"?

EV: I don't. Was there any conscious effort to get all the classic things that happen in fairy tales?

JC: Oh, yes. To a certain extent. Except I realized much later on I didn't get anywhere near all of them in. I missed a lot. I never really studied it. There were certain points in the writing where I thought, I really must settle down with Katherine Briggs' books, and stuff like that, and get all that stuff about fairies. And I never really did that.

JS: I'm not sure that Katherine Briggs is quite the direction I'd have gone off to.

JC: Well, it would have been something. Some compilation of—or what's his name—

JS: Bruno Bettelheim, perhaps, before Katherine Briggs.

JC: Well, maybe, yes, except he would tell you what to *think* about it all. And I wasn't sure—I *did* read that one, or part of it. And I didn't think I agreed with—

JS: He's got a number of different ones, and some of them take a little bit less antiseptic approach than others.

JC: Right. Well, I think as a writer what you would want was just the raw material, rather than, you know, interpretation. Since then I have learned more than I probably want to know. Reading Joseph Campbell especially has been an enlightenment to me. And then this Northrup Frye book, about the structure of romance. I don't know, they can't really hurt, I suppose—to know about how stories are told, and what the functions of stories are, what stories really mean. How we are all, like it or not, in a story. You cannot get out of being in a story. You just can't get out of it.

EV: That's another common theme, there.

JC: Which is a theme that's certainly in *Engine Summer*, and *Little, Big*. The idea that we are in a story, and we can't get out of it. Which is also a joke about literature, too. When you're reading a story, of course you can't get out of a story, these people are in a book. They're in between covers of a book. Of course they're in a story.

EV: Tell us a little something about the evolution of *Little, Big*, from its original conception, to the work we finally see. In terms of at what point the fairy element entered—

"A security guard was shot dead this morning," [the reporter] announced, "when a lone intruder robbed the Foodfast Multimart in London's Knightsbridge. Two packing androids were also damaged as the criminal made his escape down the Brompton Road. Police apprehended him shortly afterward, and he was taken to Knightsbridge Police Station for questioning. There he confessed to his crime and received a provisional sentence of personality reconstruction, subject to ratification by the Psychological Rehabilitation Board. Police have issued a hologram identifying the murderer as fifteen year-old Kevin Reynolds."

A picture of a blonde teenager filled the holocube. The reporter continued talking, but Mina wasn't listening.

"Switch off," she told Housecomp.

"That's our son," Norman said.

"Pack a bag," Mina told him.

"Where are we going?"

"Luna City. Mars. Anywhere. Just get moving."

"I'm afraid you're too late," Housecomp announced. "The police are at the door."

from "The Sins of the Fathers"

by Christopher Evans

JC: Well, as I said, the fairy element came kind of by the way. Part of it was going to be—again it would have my common theme: it was going to be a long story about long existing institutions, and human beings trying to adapt themselves to it. Could this come from my being a Catholic?

JS: It could! But no one adapts to that.

JC: No. Well, they do, they do. I always tried to—always wanted to, without being able to. Maybe that's part of it. I learn a lot from these kind of talks, too.

JS: Good. We look forward to seeing ourselves in the next novel.

JC: It started, as I say—it was going to be a family chronicle. It was going to be called *Time's Body*. Which was a title that actually I think ends up—no it doesn't. It doesn't even end up as a chapter head. That time is the body of God is a commonplace in philosophy, and I was going to write a novel about the shape of time and these continuing institutions. And I wanted the family and I wanted a religion, which this family was going to be part of. And the various ways they come to interpret this religion. How the religion changes from the grown-ups who take it in one sense to the children who take it in another. And how the institution is carried by the people who were—but it wasn't even going to be really an institution. It was going to be something much more like truthful speaking.

Crowley interview, cont.

Something more gnostic and private, more like Quakerism, but even without the meeting houses. And it would be something that would carry on through collapse and through societal changes. And I didn't, of course—it turns out to be harder to make up a religion than you would think, even though I've made up two or three now in various books. But, it was going to be—I wanted the book to be something about space and time and . . . houses. Houses would be a central metaphor in this religion. Which is how I got into architecture, and all that kind of stuff. But it was mostly—it was basically also going to be a city book originally.

JS: A city, in this case, New York?

JC: Yes, a real New York. I mean, the fantasy element and the sense of it being a fairy tale is all much later. It was going to be quite a realistic novel. Or I conceived of it as a realistic novel, and I thought of it as one. I don't know whether I can write a realistic novel. [laughter.] But that was what it was going to be. And it was going to be about this religion. And I could just never come up with a religion. And so the fairies came in, actually sort of by the way, and once they'd gotten in, the book took a completely different direction; it became a pastoral in a lot of ways, or at least the first three hundred pages, you could say. Certainly a pastoral, and then even when it goes into the middle section where it's just sort of a descent into the underworld it's still within the pastoral dimensions.

EV: Were the New York parts of the book earlier then in terms of conception?

JC: In terms of conception, yes. I think Old Law Farm really predates Edgewood in a lot of ways. In fact among the earliest things I thought of in the book was the scene of a character who's stoned on amphetamine running into the Sandman and getting turned down. Some of the very first things—I mean all books—Nabokov has a beautiful passage on this in his afterword to *Lolita* about the small things on which every book is hinged from the writer's point of view. The secret studs that are holding it up which no reader would ever really know. Only the writer knows.

EV: Except he put them in at the end of *Ada*.

JC: Oh, I don't know. I don't remember *Ada* well enough to know.

EV: *Ada* ends with the list of the secret moments. It ends with Van Veen's blurb for the book. "Despite the many intricacies of plot and psychology, the story proceeds at a spanking pace . . ." And it ends with "Not the least adornment of the chronicle . . ."

JC: I've tried to read *Ada* again, and I just can't. I've been unable to read more than the first couple of pages.

JS: *Ada* is one of the books, it's the next one in his class [in M.I.T.'s High School Studies Program] after *Engine*

Summer . . .

EV: After *Engine Summer*, after a week of short stories. We're doing you, then Borges, then Nabokov.

JC: [Laughs] That's wonderful.

KEY PLOT POINTS OF *LITTLE, BIG* ABOUT TO BE SPOILED

You know *Ada* came out after I had, I'm not even sure—ten pages of *Little, Big* might have existed, and I already knew that I was writing a novel about a big house and about a boy, a man, in love with two sisters, and the two sisters being occasionally in love with each other, all happening in some sort of parallel universe to what we think is real.

END OF SPOILER

EV: And the time thing is the most obvious thing.

JC: And the time. So I almost wrote Nabokov a letter. [Funny voice] Listen, you. I want you to know, I just want to tell you this is notarized and the date is, and I've already written ten pages. I thought of it *before* the publication date of your book [April, 1969].

It happens quite frequently, in fact it's almost certain that as you start a book, there's something in the air that makes a book like it come out. Fortunately, *Ada* turned out to be unreadable for almost everybody, and I have never heard anybody compare *Little, Big* to *Ada*.

EV: I have.

JC: Oh, yourself!

JS: I heard him.

JC: You've heard *him* do it! But they *are* very similar. The books that I think *Little, Big* is most similar to, or the ones I *know*, are *Ada*, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and Pynchon's *V*; and . . .

JS: He [EV] hasn't read that. He hasn't read any Pynchon.

EV: Believe it or not. All my friends say, "Pynchon, Pynchon!"

JS: And Eric says, "I'm busy, I'm busy."

EV: *Gravity's Rainbow* is definitely on the top of my list.

JC: *V*; is far, far better than *Gravity's Rainbow*. *Gravity's Rainbow* was an awful mess. I'm one of the few people in America who's actually read *Gravity's Rainbow*. There are a lot of people who bought it but very few people have actually read it.

EV: I've got some friends who've read it many times, in fact.

JC: I have one myself.

JS: I'm not willing to agree with you about *Gravity's*

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Rainbow being an absolute mess and therefore . . .

JC: Well no, it has its beautiful things in it, but *V.* has, despite some adolescent silliness, just a magnificent plot, and it has exactly the same sense as *Little, Big* does of—that you're on a search and then at the end you see that the search is over. The search was the book. The answer is the whole book, and you get no other answer.

JS: This was my problem with *Little, Big*. It was depressing.

EV: I disagree!

JS: Eric and I disagree.

EV: He finds everything depressing.

JC: [Perplexed] Tom Disch found it enormously sad.

JS: Yes. I would think—

EV: Okay, I will have to admit that—

JS: You know why it's sad—[to EV] hush—You know why I found it sad? Doors closed. Church is over.

JC: All that happens far in the future, you know. You've still got a chance. [laughter.]

JS: It's there and it doesn't—the sadness is just as surely, it doesn't matter to me, although I do want my own chance, mind you—It's nice to know that I still have a chance but my God what about all those other people?

JC: Oh, the cycles go on eternally. Another door will open. We're always passing into the next state.

EV: You'll have to write a sequel to satisfy this man.

JC: Oh, no. No sequels.

JS: You'll have to write—it doesn't even need to be a novel, just a quick short story saying—

JC: That another bunch comes along and they see visions of Daily Alice.

JS: Just a short story of the door opening.

JC: Oh, alright [laughs].

JS: Of the door opening. And I think maybe leave that for a work to be published should you ever have a demise. [JC laughs.] After your demise, everyone can say, "this is the great last chapter to *Little, Big*." The final concept of *Little, Big* is that yes, well the quest is over—the quest goes on. Because then I could feel happy. But as it is, it's very clearly final.

JC: Yes, but of course it's only final, it's final in the sense that—

JS: It's final for them and it's final for that.

JC: It's final for that book. Also the book has to have an

end, you see. The last pages of the book are about the last pages of a book. They have all those kinds of qualities. A lot of people are very irritated by that kind of self reference, and I am too. I am not irritated by it in a writer like Nabokov or Marquez, who has so engaged you with everything that's gone on. Just as it doesn't bother me in Shakespeare—who does it, by the way, all the time, even though much more subtly because it's on stage, but you almost—in that moment in Julius Caesar when they're all bathing their hands in the blood and they're saying, how many actors ages hence will act out this scene in lands, in tongues we've never even heard of. And you're sitting there, you're watching. That's what you're seeing. Shakespeare's full of that stuff but it goes by very subtly and you're engaged on a primary level with the events. Everything else is extra. If you don't engage on a primary level, if the primary level is a level of self reference, then it's repellent.

[Talk about Shakespeare.]

JC: That's why you just don't come to the end of Shakespeare. That's why, that's . . . he's my great model. (It's always stupid to say that.)

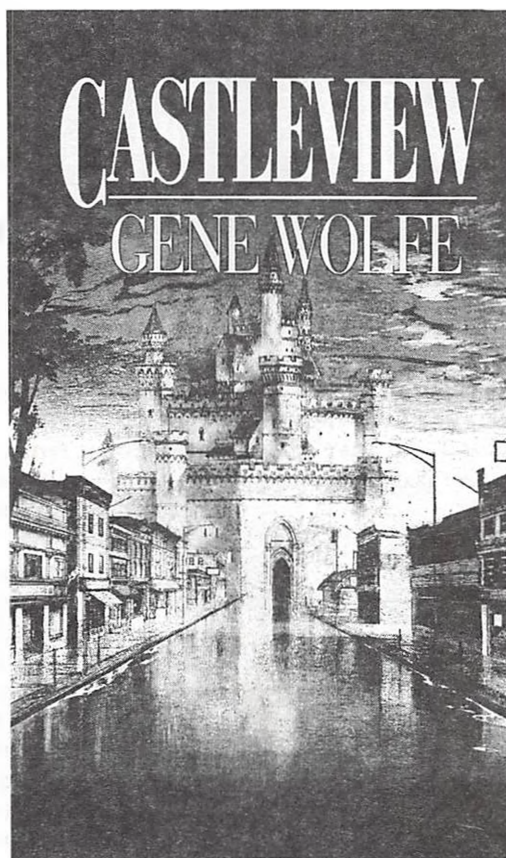
EV: [To JS] Did I say, "I bet you he's the type that"—!
[To JC] I have to admit, I was saying "I bet you he's the type who's heavily into Shakespeare."

JC: [Laughing] Well, it's true. Shakespeare's pretty high

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CASTLEVIEW

Gene Wolfe



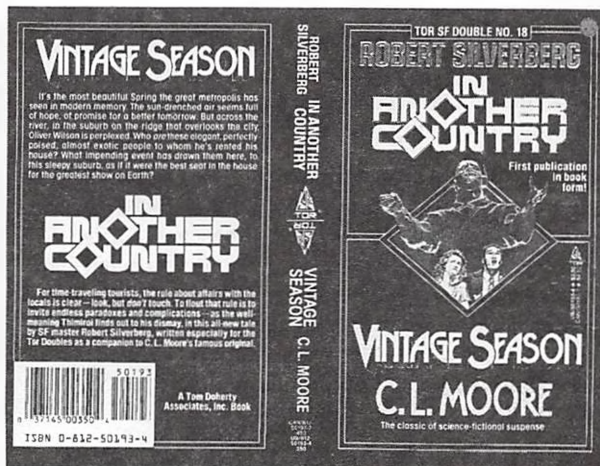
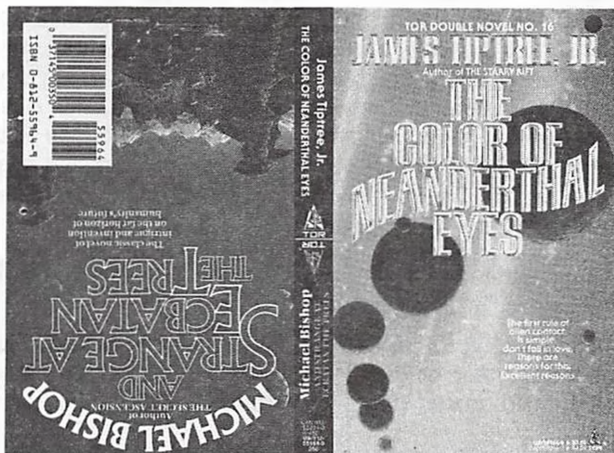
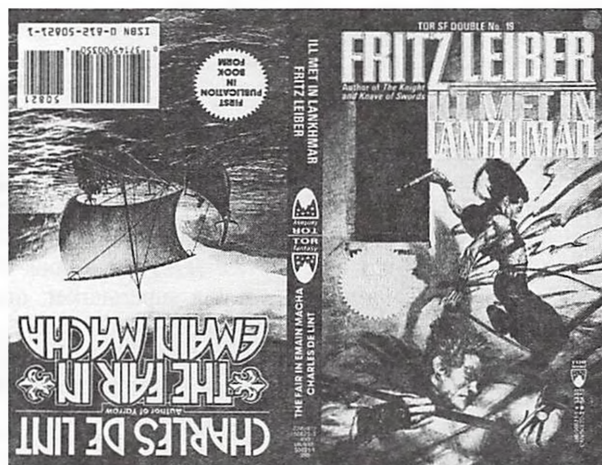
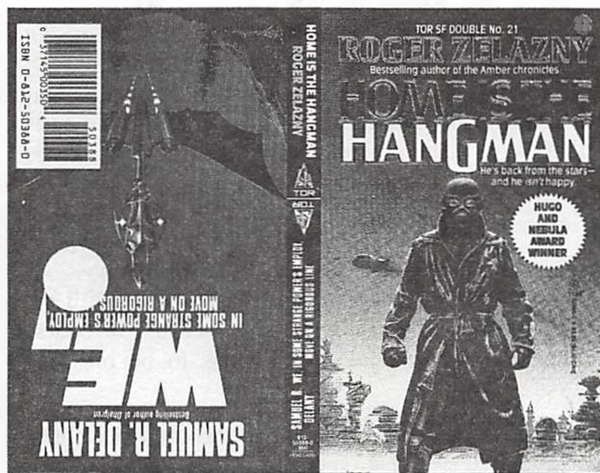
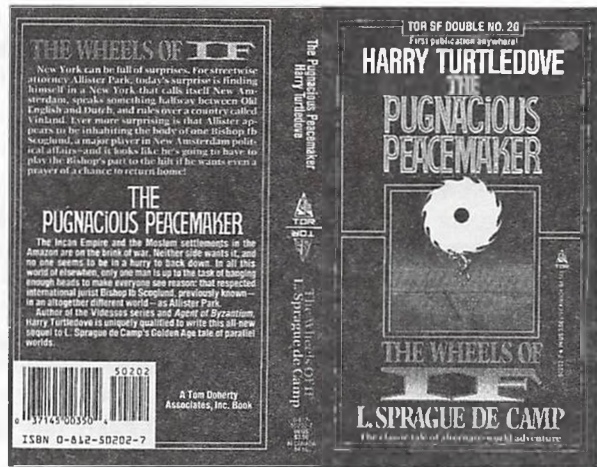
In the small Illinois town of Castleview one can sometimes catch a glimpse of the phantom castle that has given the town its name. On the night when Will Shields and his family arrive, Tom Howard is murdered while the Shields family is looking at the Howard house with a real estate agent. And Will sees the magnificent Castle from an attic window. From that moment, Will is embroiled in a series of rapidly escalating mysterious events that threaten his life and his family. For the castle is that of Morgan Le Fay.

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Crowley interview, cont.

up there. I have to admit. By the way the other novel, besides those three, besides *V*; and *Ada* and *One Hundred Years of Solitude* that I'd compare *Little, Big* to is *The Wapshot Chronicle*, by John Cheever—it's funny that you coupled those two names [in EV's essay], because he's also one of my favorites. For a small thing, *The Wapshot Chronicle* just for its sense of this tide of life that's just . . . and the gorgeousness of the language and the scene setting. I've never read anything like a few scenes in the early part of that book, that just take your breath away. Maybe that's a—he's a writer's writer.

JS: We're you pleased, yourself, with *Little, Big*?

JC: Enormously, enormously. I am—I think it's possible that it's the best book I'll ever write. That does not fill me with as much horror as you might think. Because of course I can write other good books. There has to be one big, one—

JS: You could write some fantastic books and not touch that.

JC: Yes. I could. I could. I hope I will, too. I would be really pleased if they turned out to be as good or better, but in every writer's life there has to be one best book and, at least for the time being, I'd be content if that was it. I also see some largeness and some things that it didn't take on and some things, which you could say—there are ways in which . . .

JS: You've got more to do.

JC: I've got other . . . yes. There are other things—it didn't deal with a few things that the earlier books kind of did deal with in a sort of cartoony way; *Beasts* and *The Deep* dealt with things like power and madness and politics and the real world in a way that *Little, Big* didn't. *Little, Big* is in a lot of ways about dreaming and falling asleep and not suffering and not waking up—so I don't know whether I'm capable of writing—I may attempt a book like that and have it not turn out to be—have it turn out that I'm not good at doing that kind of stuff, and that *Little, Big* is really the best that I can do out of my deepest recesses, which may not be the most important concerns of the human race. I mean, you know, it may not—those little—that sense of escape to paradise and all those things may not be the greatest concerns that human beings ever have, but they may be my own real, true deep subject.

EV: Can I interject a few comments? One, in my saying what's your best book, *Engine Summer* or *Little, Big*? I've read *Engine Summer* close to three times and *Little, Big* once, and that's a big factor because I told you what happened when I reread *Engine Summer*. The other factor is a thing I run into as a critic of rock—any critic runs into this, movie critics especially—the whole thing of fineness of execution versus scope and ambition. And *Engine Summer* not to my mind an overly ambitious work—

JC: No.

EV: But very close to perfect in what it tries to do. And *Little, Big* much larger in scope, tremendously ambitious—and then you start to see a trade-off. Is a 100 percent successful book that's X ambitious better than a book that's 95 percent successful and 2X ambitious? I mean, it becomes almost a matter of personal taste; I don't think there's any final—

JC: No. I don't think there is. But I have a feeling that most writers would choose . . . I don't know! [laughter.]

I was going to say that most writers would choose the book that was most perfectly finished because as a writer you have to read it dozens of times between the time you take it up and the time it's actually published. And you get very bored with books that are flawed, no matter how ambitious they are. And I think *Little, Big* has certain areas that are hard for me to read. The one I—maybe for a different reason, but I think the book that I enjoy reading of mine the most (besides parts of *Little, Big*) is *Beasts*. Just because it's written in a style—it's my oddest book. It's the book that strikes me as being least like me.

EV: Which strikes you as being most?

JC: *Little, Big* I think is the most; it represents me as I see—as I really am. The flavor of *Little, Big* seems to me like my own flavor, to myself. Whereas the others are more invented. *The Deep* has that kind of phony old burnished kind of air, and it's all about these characters killing each other and strong men at war and all that kind of stuff and it really doesn't have much to do with me. And *Beasts*—I remember I was in New Jersey at a book signing, it was in a supermarket—not a supermarket, one of those malls, shopping mall bookstores—and there was a kid who was kind of hanging around fascinated by having real writers—there was me and Lin Carter signing books together.

JS: Interesting pair!

JC: Lin was real good at this kind of stuff. Oh, and also a writer from New Jersey, a doctor who had just published his first novel which I forget the name of. He was really the sort of the focus of it all; it happened in his home town. And we were signing books and this kid was really fascinated with real writers and he came up and—he'd read *Beasts*—and came up and said "So, how do you spend your spare time? I suppose you go backpacking and hiking a lot, huh?" I said, "I haven't slept outdoors since I was twelve years old!" [laughter.]

JS: Blew the kid's illusions forever; he never read another book . . .

JC: So really, *Beasts* is very unlike me, the sense you have of the narrator or the writer of *Beasts*. Every book has a writer, no matter how impersonal what's going on is.

There is a *writer*. You know that someone is telling you this story. And you know—you think you know a little bit about that person. Very often that person who's writing that book is not the author. The author of *Little, Big* is me in a lot of ways, in very important ways. Not completely of course, it can't ever be completely. But the person who wrote *Beasts* is *not* me, and I really enjoy the skill with which I wrote a book by somebody else, in effect. [laughter.] You get the sense in reading *Beasts* that the guy who wrote that really must know a lot about physical sports and hunting and the big thing with animals and hawking—and I've never done any of that stuff!

EV: Did you do research, or what?

JC: Oh, a little bit. Looked up things in the Encyclopedia. [laughter.] I did work it up, but there is somebody who wrote that book whose character you get the sense of, who must know how to handle canoes in the wilds—and I don't know anything about that. As a matter of fact after I finished that book, a friend of mine took me up to the top of Mount Tom over in Northampton where somebody was actually—was in effect doing that, releasing falcons in the wild. And, ah, that's all wrong in *Beasts*. Don't—don't—that's off the record. [1990: JC approves.] But I've got—I've made—I've made—it's pretty dumb, I mean it's all quite . . .

JS: You now know how it's done and it wasn't done that way.

JC: No, it's not done that way.

EV: It's the metaphoric importance anyway.

JC: It's all an illusion. All an illusion. It's all done with—

JS: Don't you love having people like this who say "it doesn't matter!"?

JC: [Laughs] It *is* all an illusion, though, and all you have to do is create the effect that you know what all this is about, and that's all that matters really.

....

EV: I'm wondering about your tastes in fiction and literature aside from sf.

JC: Well, you've gotten a fair list of them. I think that there is a movement in literature that is, maybe call it post-post-modernism, but maybe it's just post-modernism, which is a sense that—we were just talking about Shakespeare—that there is a duty to entertain, that fiction is stories, that there is a certain fascination (so you might call it magic realism, or something like that), a certain fascination that literature has to have in order to do anything. Way early on I figured out that maybe the distinction was that modern literature *contains* symbols whereas this kind of literature that I'm talking about is symbolic, doesn't contain symbols but is a symbol. So, I don't know whether

that means—

JS: It is a symbol as opposed to containing a symbol.

JC: Containing a symbol: being a story about real life which contains some symbolic actions. You know, like the salesman's case in *Death of a Salesman*, that kind of thing. Instead of those things in an ordinary story, it is *itself* a quest or a journey or one of those kinds of magic or ritual forms, religious, basically religious forms, so it has an inherent fascination. In itself, the whole thing has a fascination.

Well, there's something about that. There's something about accessibility and the inherent fascination of tale telling. Those kinds of things that I think of as being a new motion in literature. And I don't know quite who to put up, except Marquez, who was, I think, the primary example of it. Borges in another sense, in another way is also fascinated by story telling.

EV: Borges is fascinated by taking it at the one remove.

JC: Right, yes, right. Of telling a story about a story.

JS: There's someone that I haven't read anything of, so—

JC: Oh, Borges is, Borges is—

EV: He's mind stretching and mind blowing.

JC: Oh, yes. "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius" [laughing] is one of the greatest science fiction stories ever written.

Anyway, Borges has that kind of trick playing, and I think that this post-modern kind of thing that I'm talking about doesn't drop all the experiments that were made in modern literature. Joyce and Proust and Beckett and all those characters who I think of as "modern." You don't drop all those investigations as to what literature can do and how it refers to itself and all that kind of stuff that makes it's own genre. You don't drop anything, you just say, alright given that, how can we make it interesting? It's a little bit like, how would you go about making realistic paintings now? What would make an interesting realistic painting, now we've been through abstraction? Well, there's magic realism and there's super realism and there's photo realism. There's all these different ways of finding a way to paint the real world, recognizably, entertainingly, engagingly, accessibly, but still be modern right now.

EV: It's the same thing with music. How does one write tonal music?

JC: Exactly. Exactly. Yes. After having been through serial music and all those experiments which were just deadly and boring and never got anybody's heart as far as I know. I don't know—that's a prejudice.

EV: Ives, you know, can carry you away, but that's not serialist.

JC: Oh yes. But Ives I consider—Ives is sort of in the position of somebody like Marquez. Or not Marquez, because he comes out of a movement whereas Ives doesn't really. But Ives is—you get back to Ives and you say, ah, this works. This is different. This isn't old. But it's not serial. It's not that stripped down minimal experimental stuff. It's real music. You know, something happens.

JS: But it doesn't quite fit either what was happening or what is about to be happening.

JC: Right. Right. It is music. New, real new, music, it's different. Philip Glass or Steve Reich I think are in their own ways like that too.

EV: Well, they'd be the musical equivalent of what you're talking—what you're seeing in literature.

JC: Yes. Right. If there is a movement, the people that are in it, the people that are in it—I don't, I don't read an awful lot of fiction. So I, it would be wrong for me . . .

EV: Also, it's interesting to see that in music there has been this merging of pop and serious, what was done experimentally in pop, because pop music would continue with total tonality. Just as sf continued telling stories. In music you're seeing Brian Eno working with—

JC: Very clever!

EV: —well, I'm a critic—Brian Eno, coming from pop music, working with Reich and Glass coming from the other side, and maybe—

JC: It's obviously true that the newer movement in literature does come out of—I think if it doesn't arise from it, it will certainly take elements from all the genre writing, from mysteries, from westerns.

But you were talking about literary antecedents, I think that the two great influences on me are Shakespeare and Walt Kelly. [laughter.] That's less of a joke than it seems. Walt Kelly really is an influence, I think, especially on—if I write funny scenes they seem to me to definitely come out Walt Kelly. There's a few in—and Lewis Carroll.

EV: I was too young to appreciate Pogo.

JC: I think his time may be past, he may be like *Sargeant Pepper's*. He may not be appreciable anymore. And if you missed it, you missed.

EV: Who was I talking to?—somebody who was a real Pogo fanatic, who said that they did not get into him until later.

JC: It's possible, it may be possible to still get into Pogo, but you have to get into . . . He had a very brief summer. The best Pogo is from about 1951 to 1955 or 6 and then it's pretty much downhill from there.

(Continued on page 28)

EV: We were discussing whether the ending of *Little, Big* was sad. The ending of *Little, Big*. I have to admit that I lent it to a friend and before lending it I reread the first chapter and then the last page. And I, I cried, really.

JC: I find it very touching, myself.

EV: And I cry every time I get to the end of *Engine Summer*. But an irony that I cannot help noticing: when Rush That Speaks tells the woman, the angel, to stay with the man who he is, it's a promise. She says, "yes, ever after."

JC: "Ever after."

EV: But "ever after" is what *Once a Day*, more or less, had said—

JC: Promised to Rush.

EV: Rush.

JC: Yes. You got it.

EV: How dare you— [EV & JC laugh]

JC: Punch a hole right there in the end?

EV: Okay, the question is: is the angel aware of that irony?

JC: I don't know, I don't know; it's the first time I've ever thought of it. I was aware of it; that seemed sufficient. I'm not sure whether—I don't think, no I would say—I don't know. I really don't, but that's a very interesting question. I don't know.

JS: It's the only reason I brought him.

EV: That irony—I don't think I picked that up until the second time I read it.

JC: That's a very—oh well, that's certainly built in there but I don't know whether it was—there is a sense in which, you've got to realize, a book is the dream of the author. There are things said by characters that are not—they're not autonomous people. The things that they say are the things—they're half what they're saying and half what the writer is saying to himself. So that accounts for half of the ambiguity in books. I have to think.

EV: I was discussing *Engine Summer* with a woman who works in the same program [High School Studies], and she was wondering: was a letter from Rush really any better than a letter from Dr. Boots? Now the angels thought so.

JC: Oh, very different. They didn't think a letter—they thought a letter from Rush was better than a letter from *Plunkett*. They didn't know—except that of course anybody who got a letter from Rush also got a letter from Dr. Boots. Because Rush had gotten a letter from Dr. Boots.

Major Spoiler for Engine Summer

EV: That's true. I never thought of that.

JC: Right. That's why she says, "It's all you here now, Rush." We're all truthful speakers too. They've also all gotten their letters from Dr. Boots insofar as Rush got it. Whether he got it as much as the List got it is another question.

EV: She said when she found out who, or what Dr. Boots was—when she heard Dr. Boots was a cat—she's a cat lover and she just felt that it was creepy.

JC: Oh, yeah, to have been a cat for a little while?

EV: Yeah. Are you a cat type person? Do you have—have you had—

JC: I have been at times. I had an old cat. I had three or four cats when I was in New York, and the story arose at a time when I was as much of a cat lover as I have ever been or will be. I may never have another cat. They intrigue me in a certain sense but I seem—I feel like I came to the end of it.

EV: Did you work it out in the —

JC: Worked it out.

EV: Talking about *Engine Summer* is so strange because it's kind of unique in the relationship of the story within to the world within in that it *is* all just a story now. When I try to explain the book to people without giving away the structure—the italics is how I might refer to it—I say, it's terrible that I can't be clear, because I'll give it away, but the book is one of the few books I know of that ends where it has to end. [JC laughs.] The story of the book ends and you can't know what happens after. Not because the writer chose to say, here's where I stop telling you. But the story continued, the story continued would be what—

JC: There wouldn't be any teller.

EV: Well, the way I see it, if you continue that story it would be the angel, and the person who was—who got a letter from Rush, and what happened to them. But you'd still never find out—the sequel to *Engine Summer* would still never tell us what Rush himself asked, "Did I"—"Did I"—

JC: No.

EV: "Did I be—" Of course, he *did* become a saint . . .

JC: He did become a saint. Of course.

EV: By his own definition, which is—

JC: He did, yes, right. That's all in there. But the funny thing is that the original form of that, the fact of Rush telling the story to somebody who is somebody else was

only a device that I started with because I had already decided that they didn't write books and since I decided that—I wanted to write it in the first person, he had to be telling the story to *somebody* So I just had him telling the story to somebody—I didn't know who it was when I started writing the original version.

EV: Was there still that voice in italics?

JC: Oh, yes, there was still a voice in italics saying, "What do you mean?" and all that. And I didn't know who that was. I vaguely thought it might be another version of the girl, I didn't know who it was going to be. It was about—I remember the day, about halfway through the book I was typing away, retyping a draft and all of a sudden I realized who it was he was talking to. I almost fell out of the chair! It had the same affect on me, that revelation, as I hoped it would have on the reader when he eventually, he/she eventually figured out who it was, what it was that was going on. I said, "Oh my God, and it's not—and it wouldn't even have to be—and of course he's talking—" And it all ties up.

That, you see—three quarters of the book had already been written. Now that's one of the reasons the book was such a mess, because the voice in italics didn't know things, and asked to have things explained, that if the story were common knowledge in the city in the sky would also be common knowledge. So when I went back and rewrote it, a lot of things—I had to clean up a lot of that. She had to tell *him* things and she had to say, yes I knew about that.

The one thing I retained that she had not heard of was the fly in plastic. I figured out, well of course, they've heard the story a lot but the story is endless. I mean it's got lots of parts to it. The fly trapped in plastic was just not something that had come up in any of the other three hundred versions of the story, which all would be slightly different depending on who was telling it. Depending on who the person who was carrying Rush at the time was.

EV: And on who was helping. Who was asking—

JC: Who was asking the questions. Who was there, right. His particular relationship—whether *that* Rush is more in love with Once a Day than any other Rush had ever been, only because that particular person carrying Rush was talking to somebody he's in love with . . . All these questions that are left up in the air . . . I mean, you don't want to tell everything. All my books . . . Lin Carter said I should write a sequel to *The Deep*. He said "Oh, my! What are you, throwing that away? You've got a whole world there you can use. That's good for another six books!"

Crowley interview, cont.

EV: Some further questions. One is: you said you started writing when you were twelve. So you can tell us that whole "Oh, I always wanted to be a writer" bit. And the other thing I'm curious about is your work habits. Are you conscientious, [JC laughs] do you—you can tell the story of how you always wanted to be a writer, and incorporate your work habits into that! [laughter.]

JC: All right. First of all, I didn't always want to be a writer.

JS: Oh my God! An illusion shattered.

JC: No, no, no way did I ever—I never really thought of being a writer. When I was twelve or so, or ten anyway, I wanted to be an archeologist. And I read *Gods, Graves and Scholars* and all those wonderful books that are available to young—but I found out that *most* archeologists spend their time digging up Indian bones and stuff like that, that all of the great Greek statues had already been discovered. You're not going to find any of that stuff. Potsherds I wasn't particularly interested in. So that tended to fade away. Then, even though I had always written—there had never been a time when I didn't write poetry and, you know, little bits of this and that.

EV: Was English your best subject in school?

JC: Always. Yes, all that. Yes. But, I kind of resisted it. I knew I was going to be famous as an artist of *some* kind, but I didn't know of what kind. But I think everybody at a certain point in life feels that they're going to be a hero of the human race.

JS: Do you still believe you'll be famous?

JC: Yes, I still cling to that, I still cling to that notion. It's a destructive one, one you ought to get rid of early. I think every human being, every man at least—I don't know about women, because it's trickier for them—but I think every man at a certain age, maybe ten to twelve, thinks he's going to be a hero of the human race, of some kind. I think it's necessary. I think if you don't there's something wrong with you. I mean, almost none of us turn out to be heroes of the human race, maybe none of us, Jesus, Napoleon. But I think that also you have to drop it at a certain point. I mean, past twenty-five it's kind of destructive to think you're going to be a hero of the human race.

EV: Well, it depends on how you set your goals. To think of it in terms that you will create Art that will survive. Art with a capital A.

JC: That's a very—that's a noble—Nabokov says, "There is no more pure love in the world than the love a young writer has for the old writer he will someday become." Which is a wonderful insight. But in any case, I went from wanting to be an archeologist to getting into theater, and theatrical enterprises, and puppets. I used to build puppets. Beautiful, great huge puppets. Rod puppets about this big,

I wanted to put on Shakespeare. I used to read a lot of Elizabethan drama when I was in high school.

EV: Do you like Elizabethan poetry? Do you like John Donne?

JC: I didn't, no. I read more dramatic stuff. And in fact my taste in poetry—I am, I think among the last adolescents who will ever swoon over Swinburne. I think that's so. I'm not absolutely certain, but I think that's so. Take him absolutely seriously. Not camp but all, but just read it—

EV: Have you ever heard "The Swinburne Stomp," by the Fugs?

JC: No, but I've heard them do—they do an absolutely exquisite rendition of "How sweet I roamed from field to field," that William Blake song, as a country-western—as a bluegrass kind of tune, that's absolutely exquisite. I haven't heard "The Swinburne Stomp" but Ed Sanders is older than me so, you see, he doesn't count as the *last* adolescent to be swept up by Swinburne. I am probably the last. And Ernest Dowson and all those ninety-ish kind of poets, I was very swept up with all that. I had very bad taste in poetry, at that time. But I did write—I used to write a lot of poetry when I was in high school. I remember the discovery that I could write blank verse, which turns out to be enormously easy to do, really. And I wrote—once you discover it you write it by the yard, by the yard.

I used to write that kind of stuff, and as I said I started writing an historical novel, and I wrote blank verse tragedies, and I went on and on with all this kind of stuff when I was in high school. When I got into college I got very distant from it.

JS: Which college?

JC: Indiana University. I spent high school and college in Indiana, roughly. And, back in those days, when you went to school the idea was to not go to classes and not have anything to do with that stuff. But get through it anyway. Get grades, get—you know, pass. So I did all of that, but I got out of the habit of literature. It was just something to pass tests on. Dozens of books that I was set, in college, that I didn't read and then you have to, later on, find out that you really do want to read them. And that's all very puzzling. I also wrote some verse in college, poetry, but I really fell out of the habit of writing when I was in college. And I took up photography and films when I was in college, and when I came to New York—I mean, the films really seemed like the sort of *Gesamtkunstwerk* as Wagner says, that I really thought was going to be really wonderful. But it turns out I really don't have the skills for film in a lot of ways. Skill in films requires being able to push people around in a way that I don't.

EV: Meric Landseer in *Beasts*, is he the kind of—sort of

what you might have wanted to be?

JC: Yes. Well, actually he's based on a friend of mine who makes documentary films and who I worked for for years. I knew him in college. He's based a little bit on that guy, and a little bit on myself, because I have done a lot of work in films, as a matter of fact. I've written an awful lot of documentary films, and ended up, actually, making a living at making documentary films. I'm writing one about Upton Sinclair right at the moment, as a matter of fact. Of all people. But I do have a certain amount of experience in that field. And when I came to New York I was a photographer for a time, for three or four years, anyway. I was assistant to a fashion photographer. It turned out I wasn't a very good photographer, unfortunately. So that all ended badly, and then we're up to the story of where I began *Engine Summer*.

Now, what was the other question? Oh, work habits. Well, I write longhand. There you have a sample. This is my next book, lying here on the floor! [laughter.] And there, that's what it looks like when it comes out, if you want to see.

EV: Wow, what handwriting. Is Smoky—

JC: Yes, Smoky's italics are my own. That happened around 1967, also, when I got tired of my old handwriting and decided to learn all over again.

JS: I see "once upon a time" here! [*Ægypt*, first chapter, second paragraph.]

JC: Yes, unfortunately.

EV: Is this a first draft, or—?

JC: It's a first draft.

EV: [Intimidated by the cleanness of the text] You seem to proceed without much . . .

JC: Yes—no, actually it's—no, it's a second draft. It's a second draft. That particular section—

EV: [Relieved] That *is* a second draft. Do you cross out more in the first draft?

JC: I don't, no, I don't. I write pretty much straight through. I sit around and think an awful lot before I write. I don't write very many drafts, and I never rewrite a novel, except for *Engine Summer*. I've never rewritten a novel. I think that would be just beyond me completely, to come to the end of it and say, well, that's the first draft, now we'll start all over again from the beginning. It's just inconceivable to me. I couldn't bear it. So I get it pretty much—I think an awful lot before I write. My writing habits are mostly: get up, have a cup of coffee and a piece of toast, and sit in a chair for the next three hours. I consider that a good day's work, if I come up with a couple of ideas.

EV: Do you make yourself do it every day?

JC: Yes, pretty much. I mean, you have nothing else to do. Why not? It has come to the point that I can really spend a month here or there anyway doing nothing else. I have to work, I have to write these films, and things like that, so you know, that takes up a certain chunk of time. But I can spend a couple, three months at it, and if you do that, it's what you're doing for a living.

I don't usually write past noon. And I write in longhand, like I say, sitting in a chair. And when it's all done in longhand, or at least mostly done, I'll start typing it, and do some editing and make some changes as it's being typed. But I'm pretty much in control. I mean, I'm not the kind of writer who starts out "One day a certain man . . ." not knowing at all what's going to happen. I'm not like that. I know what's going to happen to everybody. I know, I usually know what the gimmick is. The experience in *Engine Summer* I was telling you about, about finding out about halfway through the book what the whole book was about is not usual with me. That was my first book. In most of the cases I'm much more in control. I know what the big gimmick is. In the case of *Little, Big*, for instance, I'd come upon "The Parliament of the Birds," by—you know that Sufi story, "The Parliament of the Birds"?

EV: I don't believe so.

ENDING OF *LITTLE, BIG* ABOUT TO BE SOMEWHAT SPOILED

JC: It's a Sufi fable which I'd come upon early on, and it's about how all the birds get together in a great parliament. The hoopoe has called them all together because they've come upon a feather of the Simurgh. And the Simurgh is the great god of the birds, and his feather is thirty yards long made of solid gold, or something, and they say, "What are we going to do about this? We've got a feather of the Simurgh." And the hoopoe instructs them about the Simurgh, what he knows. The Simurgh—the literal translation of Sim-urgh in old Persian is "thirty birds," and this is also the great father or god of the birds. They say, "Well, let's go search for him." And the hoopoe says, "Come on everybody, get together, it's going to be a long journey, it'll be real difficult, but we can make it."

And they all set off in search of the Simurgh, and along the way they pass various valleys where several of the birds fall off because they're taken in by false paradises, or vices, or they fall away or give up, but finally after many, many years they come upon this final mountain. And many parables and legends have been told about the love of God along the way. Now they're much—thousands and thousands of birds had set off in search of the Simurgh, now they've been variously cut down by accident or people have gone off, when they get to the final mountain. At the top of the mountain's supposed to be the Simurgh. The hoopoe says, "Alright, everybody who dares, let's go, we'll charge up this mountain, up there is the Simurgh." And they mount the top of the mountain, they get to the

Crowley interview, cont.

top of the mountain, and there's nothing there! And they look around, count the number of birds that made it to the top—

JS & EV: And there are thirty of them!

JC: There are thirty of them. And that was the genesis of the plot of *Little, Big*. And I knew that before I'd started writing. That that was what was going to happen to all these people, that they were going to eventually go on a journey. One of the earliest images was of a man packing up his married life in a suitcase, and taking it on this final journey that I knew everybody was going to have to go on. And I can tell you that it had quite an effect on me to finally, after five hundreds pages, get to that scene where a man packs up his married life in a suitcase and takes it with him on that final journey. I was very moved myself. Ten years of having this idea in my mind, actually writing down the page on which it occurred.

END OF SPOILER

EV: How long did the actual writing, in terms of once the idea was fully formed and you began to—

JC: I don't know. That one's a hard one. *Little, Big* is a hard one.

EV: Did it ever get put aside for a period of time?

JC: Oh, sure, yes. 'Cause like I said, I conceived it in 1969. Between then and now I've written *The Deep*, and *Beasts*, and rewritten *Engine Summer*. So I've done an awful lot of writing—

EV: Your books have almost come out in reverse order.

JC: In a certain sense, yes, in a certain sense. In the order in which they were conceived, it's: *Engine Summer* is first, and then *Little, Big*. Well, actually, no. *The Deep* was first conceived, 'cause it was conceived as an historical novel. It's all a mess. They've all existed simultaneously—it just depends—

EV: Including the one you're working on now.

JC: Including the next one, yes.

JS: How many stories do you have percolating somewhere in the dim reaches of your mind?

JC: Well, you know, I think—somebody once said that a writer's whole store of what he writes out of is fixed by the time he's fourteen. And I think in a certain sense that's true. I think the *notions* I write about, as opposed to the color and the flavor, come a little later. The flavor and color really do—really are in a certain sense fixed at fourteen, I think. I had an enormously amusing—

JS: God, I was such a boring person at fourteen.

JC: Well, it was all there, though. You're just wide-eyed with it. And the trick is really to get in touch with those

things that were going on with you when you were fourteen. So I'm resurrecting them as an adult, because it's the passage around puberty, just as you enter into puberty, where the whole world opens up suddenly, and everything is imbued with feeling. That's when everything gets fixed. I think, in a certain sense.

JS: Oh, you have something to look forward to, Eric. [laughter.]

.....

EV: [On sequels] What is it like to put a group of characters away, to finish dealing with them? Obviously, Madeline L'Engle has this desire to—

JC: Well, I think that's enormously fascinating. There was a certain point at which I realized that this book I'm working on now could connect to *Little, Big*, if I made some changes. I could just go on—it could be a prehistory. And I said, no, I really don't want to do that. In a certain sense, you know—I don't know. As I said, Lin Carter said, "Geez, you've got a whole world there. You could go on and on." The books are—I think a book has a certain shape, and that the characters are defined by the shape of the book. They really don't exist outside the book. And that that book has a story that—I mean, even *Beasts*, which ends in the middle of the story, that's it. The story has been told sufficiently. You can imagine what you want as to what happens to those people. As far as I'm concerned, they had the curve of their existence within the book. They're not—no, I don't feel bad about putting them aside. I never think they could ever do anything beyond what—

JS: [speculates on the potential link between *Little, Big* and *Ægypt*]

JC: No, it was more like—"the magic in this book has to do with, or centers around, the court of Rudolph II of Prague around 1600"—and you remember Ariel Hawksquill talks about that's when the cards were printed.

EV: You were going to put the manufacturing of the cards—

JC: Yes, it could—this could all still be a prologue to *Little, Big*, so—

JS: But you think you'll probably avoid that.

JC: I will definitely avoid that. Because *Little, Big* has this—I think that the three, four books that I've written so far, each has a very individual flavor. You know, you could recognize that they may have been written by the same person. But they really are distinct worlds. And I think the thing that you really like about books is that they have a world all their own, that only exists within those covers. That nobody could imitate it, that nobody could recreate it. It's just in that book. And I like to do that! I like to—I've got a bunch of those. I've got more of those.

I've got more of where that came from. I could do another. I could do a world where there's different characters, that has a completely different flavor.

EV: I guess the essential difference is that there are some writers who write one book, in many volumes. All the Philip Dick novels all share—they don't share specific things, but they have the flavor of one book. That's true of a lot of other writers, and then I would say you and Gene Wolfe are writers who are cutting these individual things that stand very much on their own.

JC: That's interesting. I mean, every writer feels—there are a few writers that every writer envies. I think. Every writer envies Proust. To say, all my whole life's work will be one great huge novel, would be just so wonderful. It would just be so great. Proust, Anthony Powell. *The Dance to the Music of Time* series, which are absolutely wonderful, and amazingly put together. Just amazingly put together. That's a lifetime's study. Anybody who's interested in private worlds ought to like it. You would like Anthony Powell. Have you read him?

EV: I have a friend who's basically into sf and things like that. Bob Colby, who's into him.

JC: They're wonderful. And they're amazingly well put

together. The fact that he started writing it in 1952, the series started in 1952, even though the first book is set in 1920...

EV: Is that four... sixteen?

JC: Twelve novels.

EV: 'Cause it's organized in seasons.

JC: Yes, that I think came later. I don't know that he thought about that. But it works. It fits very nicely. But the thing is that he predicts—he sets things up in books that he wrote in the Fifties that pay off in the Sixties. I mean, that pay off in the Seventies. You say, "how could he have known..." He couldn't have known in 1952 that this movement was going to happen, or that Suez was going to happen, so that his character would turn out to be important in Suez in, you know, five novels later.

EV: Are you sure he isn't secretly going back and re-writing them?

JC: I don't know, who knows?

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Books to Cherish 3 & 4

by Lucius Shepard

Turkey Hash by Craig Nova. This early work (1972) by one of our best writers might just be the definitive punk novel, lacking only a few cheap thrills and the prefix *cyber* to lend it popular appeal. Certainly it's the most powerful statement of disenfranchised American youth that I've ever read. It details in crackling prose a brief period in the life of Niles Cabro, a seventeen-year-old who lives in the desolate moonscape of Los Angeles, and who may or may not have committed a brutal murder. Stuff like "I prow through the junkyard, finger twisted steel, hunt alloys, deal a hand of license plates. Mutant Cadillac sighs as I lift the hood. A deepfreeze still smells cold. Buick has a broken steering wheel, a jagged point that pierced soft tripe. On the front seat there's a stain. Piles of automobiles sit like fat men round a fire . . ." This is one tough, true book, and it's beautiful too.

Foe by J. M. Coetzee. An examination of the Robinson Crusoe myth by a South African novelist who is likely to wind up with the Nobel Prize one day soon. The novel pretends to be the narrative of a young British woman who is shipwrecked on Crusoe's island and focuses upon her relationship with Friday, who seems alternately more metaphor and demiurge than man. What might in other hands have become mere literary conceit, in Coetzee's is made into an absolutely stunning, many-leveled work that both startles and illuminates, and manages to make intriguing commentaries on colonialism, feminism, and much more, all in the space of slightly over a hundred pages.

In a Free State by V. S. Naipaul. A grouping of two long stories and a short novel, each dealing with the expatriate experience. In my opinion, the title piece, which concerns a homosexual English civil servant's drive from the capital of an anonymous African country to a diplomatic outpost during a time of revolution, is—despite its relative brevity—Naipaul's finest work, free of the bitchy, chauvinistic sermonizing that is seeded throughout many of his other books. The story "One Out of Many," which concerns an Indian cook from the streets of Bombay who comes to America in the service of a diplomat, is a brilliant study of rootlessness, one I've used in teaching to illustrate how to handle an extreme or alien point of view.

Dancing Bear by James Crumley and *The Neon Rain* by James Lee Burke. Two detective novels that elevate the form beyond genre bonds, written by authors who tell riveting stories and have terrific prose styles and invest their stories with a wonderful sense of place—

Montana and Louisiana respectively. Though they obey genre conventions, giving us tough, boozing, out-cast lawmen who get laid a lot and are given to violence, their facility with language enables them to avoid cliché and create an atmosphere of newness. Particularly captivating is Burke's protagonist, Dave Robicheaux, a Cajun policeman. Two other of Burke's books, *Heaven's Prisoners* and *Black Cherry Blues*, continue Robicheaux's story . . . and it is an unfolding story, the character aging, acquiring a wife, losing same, adopting a child, etc., rather than a simple one-case-per-book format like most detective fiction.

Affliction by Russell Banks. A strangely underpraised book by the author of Pulitzer Prize nominee *Continental Drift*, this is the relation of a family tragedy during the deer-hunting season in New Hampshire, one that Banks elevates to the mythic. Against the backdrop of a once-prosperous town now afflicted by real estate swindles and spiritual erosion, Banks illuminates two murderous acts committed by an ordinary and well-meaning man, and through a wise examination of the breakdown of the American family, he succeeds in examining the larger breakdowns occurring in our culture. His depiction of a relationship between a brutal father and his damaged children achieves the proportions of classic tragedy. I thought this was the best American novel of 1989.

by Marjorie Bradley Kellogg

Secret Books I tell other people to read (scrawled at the last moment before an airplane flight):

(1) All the books—no, *most*—that I pass on to my friends are the great sf classics, as most of my friends "do not read *sci-fi*" . . . or fantasy (gasp!) Such as *The Left Hand of Darkness*, *Neuromancer*, *Little, Big* and now *Ægypt*, and the usual older classics as well.

(2) . . . "obscure" sf I recommend to those who have a taste: Keith Roberts' *Pavane*; George R. R. Martin's *The Dying of the Light*; Michael Bishop's *No Enemy But Time* (not so obscure); and for artist types, C. J. Cherryh's *Wave Without a Shore* (one of the best novels about making *art* I've ever read.)

(3) Mainstream books. Keri Hulme's *The Bone People*: Luminous and mystical and full of life & joy; Ted Mooney's *Easy Travel to Other Planets*: A mainstream writer's "first contact" novel, sort of. Who's the alien is the real question, man or dolphin?

Books to Cherish 5 & 6

by John Kessel

Some of my favorite more or less obscure books, off the top of my head:

Decline of the English Murder and *Inside the Whale*, by George Orwell. Essays on politics and literature. Even when I disagree with him (I usually don't) I find Orwell invigoratingly clearheaded. Penetrating stuff on naughty postcards ("The Art of Donald McGill"), "Charles Dickens," "Why I Write," "Politics and the English Language," etc.

His Monkey Wife, or Married to a Chimp, by John Collier. Devastating satire of British society and the "modern woman." A colonial schoolmaster brings home his chimpanzee servant from Africa, unaware that she is intelligent and, as a result of reading Victorian romances, has fallen desparately in love with him. Eventually, through a twisted plot too improbable to explicate, love triumphs and they marry! Intended as a misogynist fable about the battle between the sexes, Collier's "gorilla war" ends up puncturing both male and female stereotypes.

The Secret Agent, by Joseph Conrad. I don't agree with his politics (Conrad was a conservative and imperialist) but this novel takes such a dark view of international political machinations that it says things I think would have made Conrad himself nervous, if he'd thought them through. The spy novel pushed to the edge of existential despair; the heart of darkness moved to middle-class London.

The Edge of Running Water and *To Walk the Night*, by William Sloane. Written in the late 1930s, hybrids of sf, mystery and horror long before such books were common, these novels build quietly to a pitch of high terror. Excellent characterization, subtle chills.

The Confidence Man, by Herman Melville. My inspiration for *Good News From Outer Space* The entire story takes place on a Mississippi riverboat, from dawn to midnight on April Fool's day, during which a confidence man employs a multitude of disguises to bilk characters from every walk of American society. Moving from realism to parable, comedy to threat, by its end this book has undercut any basis for confidence in man or god the reader might cling to. Humor that draws blood.

Sneaky People, by Thomas Berger. I'm a big Berger fan. This is another comedy of deception, set in an average U.S. town in the 1930s midwest, in which every character has some secret. A *tour de force* of characterization and plotting, with one of the most

haunting endings I've ever read.

Finnley Wren, by Philip Wylie. Wylie's best book, vaguely reminiscent of later Philip K. Dick, about the encounter between "Philip Wylie" and the charismatic Finnley Wren, who in the course of a wild weekend in New York and Connecticut tells Wylie his life's story. Imbeds two short sf parables in the text (one of them broken off before completion). Full of surprises and invention, strange twists of plot, wild satire and invective, and even a happy ending.

I suddenly realize that five of these books were written in the 30s, and one of the others is set there. Hmmm.

by Robert Frazier

The Flight of the Iguana, by David Quammen. Thoroughly skewed views on science fiction from the most underrated wit in the science essay game.

Awakenings, by Oliver Sachs. Parkinsonian case studies that reveal an astounding wealth and depth in human nature.

Jacklight, by Louise Erdrich. Poetry that parallels themes and material from *Love Medicine*, *The Beet Queen*, and *Tracks*; her command of the craft is superb.

Affliction, by Russell Banks. By way of example, an all-in-one workshop on how to write a good novel. "This book was haunting" is a cliched phrase that is, for this once, all too true.

The Knife and Gun Club, by Eugene Richards. Riveting photographic study with text and insider views of emergency room procedure in a big city hospital. The coffee table book you'll never see on a coffee table.

The Bumblebee Flies Away, by Robert Cormier. A young adult science fiction novel every bit as powerful as your favorites.

Our apologies to David Alexander Smith, Darrell Schweitzer, Stan Leventhal, Susan Palwick, J. F. Rivkin, and Elissa Malcohn, who submitted entries for this feature that we had no room to print. They'll appear in next year's souvenir book, and in the meantime I can get a head start on everyone else in searching for the rare items.

—E. M. V.



My T.H. White

by John Crowley

In addition to the interior lists that many passionate readers make—of the Ten Greatest Books Ever Written, or of My Ten Favorite Books (not necessarily the same), or The Ten Books I would Least Want to have Missed—writers often keep another: of the Books I would Most Like to have Written. On my own short list of such books, along with *The Man who was Thursday*, *The Crying of Lot 49*, *Invisible Cities*, *Lolita*, and *A High Wind in Jamaica*, stands T. H. White's *The Once and Future King*.

White's book is in one sense an anomaly on the list, since the others share a certain stylistic virtuosity, a kind of "perfection" more easily apprehended than defined. *The Once and Future King* is inconsistent, with passages of embarrassing slapstick, and shortcomings of a kind I am usually not patient with; and yet there it is. The reason may be that the books which make this particular list of mine do so not only because I admire them and envy the skill with which they are achieved, but because I can vividly imagine the joy and relish of their authors in creating them, the fun they had, the private pleasure. I can imagine White's most vividly of all.

He began it when he was thirty years old, and had just quit his job teaching in a public (American English: private) boy's school. He had sold his beloved Bentley and got a bicycle; he had no debts, and his little gamekeeper's cottage in the woods was fully rented; he had nothing to do. "I was wild with freedom," he wrote much later on. "I was a hawk, a falcon which had slipped its jesses. The wide air was mine again, as it ought to be in boyhood, and that year—which seems in retrospect to have passed like a flash—was one of the only seven consciously happy years I have had in all my life."

"The art of life," says Thoreau, "of a poet's life, is, having nothing to do, to do something." What White did was to write *The Sword in the Stone*, the first and in most respects the most successful part of *The Once and Future King*. And we can feel completely the happiness he felt in writing it.

What a reader learns who reads White's books of essays and his autobiographical writings is that the fantasy he creates in *The Once and Future King* mirrors the passions and occupations of his life. He was a passionate hunter (i.e. foxhunter, in British English) and fisherman who loved the craft and tackle and lore of those pursuits. He trained several hawks to hunt, and trained them according to the methods he found in medieval manuals of falconry—not out of mania for things medieval, but because he knew of no other way to begin; only after he had completed his goshawk's arduous training did he learn that modern falconers used simple behaviorism to

achieve the same results with a tenth of the trouble—and a tenth of the passionate bonding of man to bird that the trouble entailed. (The whole heartbreaking story is told in his book *The Goshawk*.)

More directly: Merlyn's cabin was not different from the gamekeeper's cottage he lived in; he really kept an owl named Archimedes there (he'd rescued it as a baby from a brook) and baby badgers that nipped at his ankles. Half Merlyn's age, he lived backwards in his own way, escaping from the constraints of his own character into a premature absent-minded-professor character he had developed in teaching, a profession which (like Merlyn) he was devoted to.

He hayed with the local farmers, he fished for tench in the streams. The mudflats where Art lives as a wild goose are the flats where White spent hours in a shooting blind; the exquisite scenes of the geese in flight came from his own experience learning to fly a small plane in the 1930's (see his chronicle of this adventure, *England Have my Bones*.) The awful poignance of the aging Arthur dreaming that wars would end when man could one day fly like the geese, and could know how negligible are the borders they have drawn on the earth and defend so passionately, must come from a similar hopeless hope the young White felt.

White loved the insides of books, and he also loved the natural world. Of course much fantasy literature is filled with Nature of a sort, with forests and animals and weather, and readers of fantasy are eager for it. It is common for a reader of fantasy to export the matter of his reading into the world he lives in—export the emblematic beasts and forests and the symbol-freighted techniques (falconry, archery, woodcraft)—and by means of them enlarge the meaning or at least the affect of his diurnal round. White really did the opposite: he imported into his fictions the real crafts he had learned, the real beasts he knew, the real relations between animals and men which he himself had.

Thus the animals into which the boy Arthur is transformed, though they can speak, are not fantasy animals or mythic animals at all, not the wolves or Ents of Tolkien but the ordinary animals of de-divinized post-Darwinian ethology, *our* animals; and this renews their symbolic power within the Arthurian story. As Lytton Strachey noted about the speaking animals of La Fontaine's fables, they "are not simply animals with the minds of human beings; they are something more complicated and amusing; they are animals with the minds which human beings would certainly have, if one could suppose them transformed into animals."

Something similar happens in White's treatment of the

My T.H. White, continued

English Middle Ages; he imports into his Arthurian fantasy the historical Middle Ages he had studied and loved, and by a simple trick enriches the fantasy realm he is creating with the actualities he obviously relishes teaching us about. The trick is effective partly because of its obviousness, like a shock effect in a movie achieved by nothing more than film run backward: White simply pretends that Arthur's rule extends over the whole course of the medieval period, from shortly after the Conquest to the Wars of the Roses, and that it is the other kings—the Richards and Henrys and Edwards—that are the mythical ones.

This allows White to talk directly to the reader as a teacher, pondering with him the right translation of medieval terms of art, finding familiar analogues, quoting real handbooks of falconry and hunting, and getting away with anachronistic jokes: "The battle of Crecy was won on the playing fields of Camelot," and so on. He can be nostalgic about medieval social relations, ironically nostalgic about the weather ("It was July, and real July weather, such as they had in Old England") and get away with it, because it is Arthur's England he's nostalgic about. What is mysterious is that though it is used chiefly to amuse, this trick ends by deepening the poignance of the tale; the decline of Arthur's realm, and White's sadness at it, borrows affect from the real historical passings of an order that White mourned.

Like many English lives—like White's perhaps—his book seems richest in its beginnings, and not only darkens but grows thin as it progresses. Children and childhood call up his best efforts, not only the essentially happy childhood of the Wart but the terrible childhoods of the sons of Morgan LeFay. Lancelot's baffled desire to be good had such deep roots in White's nature that he made it effective, but when he approached the intensity of grown-up sexual passion that joined Lancelot and Guinevere he faltered.

White's own orientation was homosexual, and he suffered from that aberration that transforms sexual desire into the impulse to cause pain—a genuine aberration, I believe, and quite different from the largely histrionic excitements of S&M. In any case the impluses he felt frightened White away from any kind of sexual encounter for much of his life, and pushed him into self-exile in rural Ireland (no country can dampen sexual ardors of any kind more thoroughly) or Scotland. The greatest love of his life was an Irish setter, whose death he mourned extravagantly and, though he kept other dogs, never got over. It is characteristic that the muddle and pain caused by sexuality are clear in the affair of Lancelot and Guinevere but never the exaltation; nothing that happens between them equals the heart-tearing moment in *The Sword in the Stone* when the King's huntsman Master Twyti puts down his dog Beaumont, whose spine has

been broken by a boar.

There are other lapses in the later parts of the book. White can no more rise to the religious mysticism of the Grail legend than to Courtly Love; both are beyond his ken, and seem to be beyond the ken of his knights as well. (It's too bad that the Arthur stories he uses are exclusively the Christianized ones; there are Grails and Grail legends in other sources that don't turn on Christian myth and monkish ideals of "purity," and White might have responded better to them. Wolfram von Eschenbach's Parzival is a married man.) The comedy, especially in the later volumes, grows tiresome, and more tiresome I would think for an English reader: the John-Bull old knights with Edwardian doncha-know accents and mild-eyed twits like King Pellinore are at least interestingly outlandish to Americans, and not simply the stuff of old *Punch* cartoons.

Never mind: by the end the tale itself seems to take control, enormous engine of destiny; White must have his characters meet the fates they must meet, sometimes cruel and terrible ones that no author would think of assigning to such comic characters as Pellinore. A thoroughgoing late-medieval cruelty settles over the story, and the Wat's boyhood in the Forest Sauvage becomes the infinitely precious world that will be lost entirely when Arthur is taken to Avalon, not to be restored until, in some manner that this plain-style Arthur cannot grasp, he returns. I have read the brief scene in Arthur's tent at the book's end a dozen times, when the boy Tom Malory promises to tell the truth about the old King's reign, and never without tears.

The Once and Future King was by far White's most successful book, and made him rich and relatively happy. (He liked being lionized in his later years and even loved the musical *Camelot*, to my ears and eyes exactly the phony theatrical romanticizing that *The Once and Future King* is not.) But it is far from being his only book. There is a genuine science fiction novel too, out of print as far as I know, called *The Master*: a philosophical romance about eternal life, world peace and other things, with charms of its own and some resemblance to Jules Verne. There are the writings about fishing, hunting, Ireland, Scotland, hawks, history and other things collected in *The Godstone and the Blackymore*. And there is *Mistress Masham's Repose*, one of those small classics that ends up in the Childrens department and there lives long, known to a select society of smart children, unknown to all others: as happened for a while to Madeleine L'Engle's *A Wrinkle In Time*—and Tolkien too, for that matter.

The central notion of *Mistress Masham's Repose* is that Gulliver on his return to England brought back (as he intended) several Lilliputian natives, along with some

sheep, cows and horses; and that they escaped from their intended bondage in a travelling circus, hid themselves, and have been keeping themselves hidden up to the present time (1946, when the book was written.) The idea, once grasped, is so natural that the reader seems almost to have thought it up himself; and White enriches it wonderfully by having the place where the Lilliputians took refuge be a vast 18th-century estate, "built by a friend of the poet Pope's, and . . . surrounded by Vistas, Obelisks, Pyramids, Columns, Temples, Rotundas, and Palladian Bridges". It is within the hollow columns of a classical gazebo built on a little island of the estate, called Mistress Masham's Repose, that the Lilliputians have been living.

Within a far smaller compass, *Mistress Masham's Repose* allows White to indulge a fondness for the eighteenth century as *The Once and Future King* did the Middle Ages, in the same chatty smart-teacher mode: "Maria laid her bark alongside the end of a larch, and tied it up so that it could not drift away—an Inconvenience, as Gulliver tells us, which all prudent Mariners take special Care to provide against." (The Lilliputians, when they appear, all speak Swift's English, of course, with capitalized Nouns.)

But the story of young Maria's discovery of the little people didn't excite White only because it was fun, though it is; he wanted to think about moral difficulties, ones similar to those he thinks so hard about in *The Once and Future King*: tyranny and freedom, resisting wickedness, using others for one's own ends. Like Arthur's, Maria's problems (she is innately tempted to rule, kind-

lily of course, over the little people she has discovered) are mediated by a wise, absent-minded, scholarly and aged teacher, not so unworldly as he seems, who lives in a cluttered cabin in the woods. It continues to intrigue me how often good writers have only a single book to write, and write it over and over.

It is the force of White's moral convictions that make this such a wonderful book to come across when you're young, and they remain compelling when one's own moral life has grown shadowed and complex with grown-up evasions and compromises.

About the villains in the story, White says first: "Maria's governess was a Miss Brown. She had been appointed by the local vicar, who was Maria's guardian. Both the vicar and the governess were so repulsive that it

is difficult to write about them fairly . . . It is difficult but important to believe that this precious pair may have been trying to do the best they could, considering the kind of people they were." He gives them not one jot more than his own sense of right compels him to—but he gives them that. When this loathsome couple (the worse sadists for being certain of their own moral rightness) threaten Maria with harm unless she lets them in on the secret of the little people she has found (they want to sell them, of course) White tells us the only way to resist such people when you are in their power is "to tell them the truth, and to face them, and to let them see how much you hate them plainly, so long as you can make them understand that you will hurt them if you can. It frightens them away."

T.H. White seems himself to have been a passionately good man; the goodness may have been hardwon, the result of his struggle to overcome what he saw as the temptation to give pain (like the heroic goodness of his ill-made Knight, Lancelot) and the struggle may be what gives such simple moral force to his writing. In his last years he lived on the tiny Channel island of Alderney (more exile) and there he took care of an assortment of mentally and physically handicapped people who had wandered into his life, who bored and confused White's literary visitors but with whom White was unfailingly patient. He died in this month, twenty-six years ago. Sylvia Townsend Warner (*Kingdoms of Elfin*) has written an engaging and touching biography.

- February 6, 1990

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T. H. White: A Bibliography

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I could not have done this without the resources of the MIT Science Fiction Society and The Boston Public Library. Any mistakes are my own, and should not be blamed on my sources, which were:

The Science Fiction Encyclopedia, edited by Peter Nicholls;

T. H. White—A biography, by Sylvia Townsend Warner;

T. H. White, by John K. Crane (published as part of Twayne's English Authors Series).

Novel	British Publication, Year	American Publication, Year
<i>Dead Mr. Nixon</i> *	Cassell. 1931	
<i>Darkness at Pemberley</i>	Gollancz. 1932	G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1933
<i>They Winter Abroad</i> **	Chatto & Windus. 1932	Viking Press. 1932
<i>First Lesson</i> **	Chatto & Windus. 1932	Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1933
<i>Farewell Victoria</i>	Collins. 1933	Smith and Haas. 1934
<i>Earth Stopped</i>	Collins. 1934	
<i>Gone to Ground</i>	Collins. 1935	
<i>The Sword in the Stone</i> †	Collins. 1938	G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1939
<i>The Witch in the Wood</i> ***, †	Collins. 1940	G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1939
<i>The Ill-Made Knight</i> †	Collins. 1941	G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1940
<i>Mistress Masham's Repose</i>	Jonathan Cape. 1947	G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1946
<i>The Elephant and the Kangaroo</i>	Jonathan Cape. 1948	G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1947
<i>The Master: An Adventure Story</i>	Jonathan Cape. 1957	G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1957
<i>The Once and Future King</i> †††	Collins. 1958	G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1958
<i>The Maharajah and Other Stories</i>	MacDonald. 1981	G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1981
<i>The Book of Merlyn</i>		University of Texas Press. 1977
Non-Fiction	British Publication, Year	American Publication, Year
<i>Loved Helen and Other Poems</i>	Chatto & Windus. 1929	Viking Press. 1929
<i>The Green Bay Tree; or, Wicked Man Touches Wood</i> (Songs for Sixpence, No. 3)	Heffer. 1929	
<i>England Have My Bones</i>	Collins. 1936	MacMillan. 1936
<i>Burke's Steerage</i>	Collins. 1938	
<i>The Age of Scandal</i>	Jonathan Cape. 1950	G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1950
<i>The Goshawk</i>	Jonathan Cape. 1951	G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1952
<i>The Scandalmonger</i>	Jonathan Cape. 1952	G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1952
<i>The Bestiary: A Book of Beasts</i>	Jonathan Cape. 1954	G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1955
<i>The Godstone and the Blackymor</i> ††	Jonathan Cape. 1959	G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1959
<i>America at Last</i>		G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1959

* Written in collaboration with R. McNair Scott

** Written as James Aston

*** Revised, and retitled to *The Queen of Air and Darkness* when included in *The Once and Future King*

† Part of *The Once and Future King*

†† American title: *A Western Wind*

††† Includes first publication of Part IV, *The Candle in the Wind*

T. H. White: Fun Facts for Collectors

selected from The Whole Science Fiction Database

Only one of T. H. White's works of fantasy and science fiction is difficult to come by: his sf novel *The Master*. Herewith a list of known editions.

- 1957: Cape, LCC# 57-1502 £15s. Hardback. 1st Edition. (cover art by T. H. White)
- 1957: Putnam, LCC# 56-6497. Hardback. 1st US.
- 1962: Fontana, 609L. Paperback 1st (UK)
- 1964: Penguin Peacock, PK 43. Paperback 2nd (UK.)
- 1967: Blackie Teenage Bookshelf, LCC# 68-1211952. £(11/6). Hardback 2nd UK.
- 1967 September: Avon Camelot, ZS118. \$0.60. Paperback 1st US.

White's short story "The Troll" appears in *Dark Imaginings: a Collection of Gothic Fantasy*, edited by Robert H. Boyer (1978), and in *The Year's Best Fantasy Stories: 5*, edited by Lin Carter (1980).

Further editions of interest of two famous books:

The Sword in the Stone

1963: Dell, 8445. \$0.50. 1st US Paperback. media tie-in ("Now a full-length Walt Disney motion picture.")

The Once and Future King

1960: Dell, 6612. 1st Paperback.

1969, March: Berkeley Medallion, D1662. \$1.25. Paperback. Media tie-in ("Now a Warner Bros. Motion Picture.")

Mistress Masham's Repose was a 1947 selection of the Book-of-the-Month club; this edition can be differentiated from the first by a small dot on the lower right of the rear board.

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USA

About the Readercon Small Press Awards

The Readercon Small Press Awards have been set up by Readercon, Inc. (that's us, in our official non-profit corporate identity) to recognize the work of small publishers in the field of imaginative literature, by which we mean science fiction, fantasy, horror, magic realism, and post-modernist fabulation. With the increasing trend of absorption of larger publishers into multi-national conglomerates (who then proceed to eat each other), there may soon come a time when small presses are the only ones that will treat their books as something more than bars of soap.

We feel that serious readers need to start making the acquaintance of the better small presses in this field, and have designed these awards as an aid to both reader and publisher in establishing that relationship.

Our first Awards

After talking about this for a couple of years, we appointed our first jury at Readercon 2 in November of '88: Algis Budrys, David Hartwell, Arthur Hlavaty, Terri Windling, Mark Ziesing, and Joey Zone (Samuel R. Delany was a member of the jury, but had to withdraw when, due to our error, review copies were sent to the wrong one of his two addresses). That jury presented the first Readercon Awards at Noreascon 3 in August '89, there being no Readercon that year. (See sidebar for a list of the awards.)

This year's judges are author and critic Thomas M. Disch, author and critic John Shirley, editor, critic, and writer Kathryn Cramer, artist and writer Paul Chadwick, publisher Jerry Kaufman, bookseller Greg Ketter, and reader (fan) Evelyn Leeper. (All but Shirley and Kaufman are guests at Readercon 3; Cramer and Kaufman are past winners.)

Due to the unusually early schedule of this year's awards, books appearing in December, 1989 will be eligible for the 1991 awards (for books published in 1990) if they are not nominated for a 1990 award. This, fortunately, is a one-time only exception, since we'll be moving to the second weekend in July beginning in 1991.

How it all works

Awards are presented both to the publishers and the creators of works. They consist of a handsome framed certificate, and, for the publishers, a free half-page ad in an upcoming Readercon Souvenir Book.

If you're curious, we pick the judges this way. There are seven categories: writer, artist, editor, publisher, critic, bookseller, and reader. We ask the previous year's judges to suggest new ones, and then everyone on the committee adds as many names as they can think of. Each of us then ranks the nominees in each category, and the results are tabulated by the New Zealand (i.e., pseudo-Australian) ballot. We discuss the results, and after tweaking them for various balances, we come up with a slate of judges (and backup choices should folks need to turn us down) that we can approve by a majority vote.

We use *Locus's* Books Received and Magazines Received columns to compile a list of eligible items; the

The 1989 Readercon Small Press Awards

- Best Novel:** *Fool On the Hill*, by Matt Ruff. Atlantic Monthly Press
- Best Short Work:** *The Drowned Man's Reel*, by Charles De Lint. Triskell Press
- Best Single-Author Collection:** *Co-Orbital Moons*, by Robert Frazier. Oceanview Press
- Best Anthology:** *Night Visions #6*, Douglas Winter, ed., Dark Harvest
- Best Non-Fiction—Criticism:** *Strokes: Essays and Reviews 1966-1986*, by John Clute, Serconia Press
- Best Non-Fiction—Reference/Bibliography:** *Apocalypse Culture*, Adam Parfrey, ed., Amok Press
- Best Reprint:** *VALIS*, by Philip K. Dick, Kerosina Books
- Best Jacket Illustration:** Don Maitz, for *First Maitz*, Ursus
- Best Interior Illustration:** Michael W. Kaluta, for *Metropolis*, Donning Starblaze
- Best Value in Bookcraft:** Chris Drumm booklets (as a series), Chris Drumm
- Best Magazine—Fiction/Poetry:** *Interzone*, David Pringle, ed.
- Best Magazine—Reviews/Criticism:** *Mystery Scene*, Ed Gorman & Bob Randisi, publishers; and *The New York Review of Science Fiction*, Kathryn Cramer, David G. Hartwell, Susan Palwick, et al, eds. (tie)
- Best Magazine Design:** *Midnight Grafitti*, Jessica Horsting, art director

publishers are notified, and asked to send review copies to the jury. Judges may nominate as many items in each category as they like. For our first two years, all nominated items have made the final ballot, since we didn't have time to do it in two stages; beginning with the 1991 Awards, we'll have the judges narrow the preliminary ballot into a more manageable final one.

Some notes on eligibility

—Awards to magazines are based on the entire year's run.

—Books published as limited editions ancillary to a concurrent or forthcoming edition from a major press are eligible only for the Value in Bookcraft (which honors the publisher of the book which provides the most aesthetic pleasure per dollar of cover price) and Illustration Awards.

—Judges are ineligible to nominate their own works or to vote in categories in which they have been nominated; in the latter case, they may choose instead to withdraw the work from consideration.

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Row (35%) • Houghton Mifflin-Ticknor & Fields • Jwindz (RIA only) • Leisure • Little, Brown-Atlantic Montly Press-Evans (35%) • Maclay • McPherson-Treacle • Midnight Graffiti • Necronomicon • New Moon • New Pathways • Norton-Dembner-Thames and Hudson (35%) • Ocean View (30%/10% hc) • Pulphouse-Axolotl (30 pb/20% hc) • Putnam-Perigee • Random House-Knopf-Pantheon-Vintage-Modern Library-Schocken-Ballantine-Del Rey-TSR (35%) • SF Eye • St. Martin's-Tor-

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Publishers not listed are all 25%.

Note: Special limited editions and short-discount (usually academic or reference) books are 0—10% generally.

Mass-market paperback publishers are 30%, unless listed above.

Credit is given for discounts not taken when order is placed (if prepaid).

These discounts are subject to change and apply to all books listed as NEW in my regular monthly catalogs, not the "as new" or used books. From time to time I'll be putting out lists by publisher of new books I have in stock. Non-discount books may be included in membership orders—I

will charge postage only on the weight to send the new books. U.S. orders over \$100 and outside the U.S. over \$200 get a 10% discount on all books not already discounted. Visa/Mastercard orders are welcomed, but 4% must be added to the amount of discounted purchases.

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Looking Ahead

There have been some obvious changes this time (we hope they strike you as improvements). Here are some more (in various stages of preparation).

New Venue

The most surprising thing about Readercon's immediate future is that it contains an element of stability. Dates for the next two Readercons are set, and they're actually on the same weekend, and in the same place! (Of course, those weekends and that place are different from what we have now). We will do everything in our power to hold onto the second weekend in July from this point forward, and look forward to a long relationship with the Worcester Marriot.

Art Exhibit

We've been struggling with this concept for a while now. While Readercon is about the printed word, it's impossible to deny the effect of the package (cover art, overall graphic design, etc.) on the way a reader *experiences* a text. We feel, too, that the typical sf convention art show is as moribund as the typical program, and in our usual messianic zeal we feel we can do better here, too.

Starting with Readercon 4, we'll be setting up an art exhibit based on the work of one or two featured artists. Ideally, our Artist Guests each year will include one known within the sf field, and one from outside the field whose work uses sf and fantasy themes.

Genre-Bending

One of the things we've been saying for a while is that our view of what constitutes imaginative literature is not limited to those things *published* as sf/fantasy. We're talking here about stuff like *Satan: His Psychoanalysis and Cure By the Unfortunate Dr. Kassler, J.S.P.S.* by Jeremy Leven, *A Winter's Tale* by Mark Helprin, *The Birth of the People's Republic of Antarctica* by John Calvin Batchelor, *Fiskadoro* by Denis Johnson, *The Broom of the System* by David Foster Wallace, *Krazy Kat: A Novel in Five Panels* by Jay Kantor, *Woman on the Edge of Time* by Marge Piercy, the works of many South American writers, much of the William S. Burroughs oeuvre . . . indeed, the list is vast. (See Bruce Sterling's article on the subject in issue 5 of *Science Fiction Eye* for many more titles.)

However, this all seems a bit one-sided when you consider that only one of the creators of such works (Jack Womack) is here to discuss them with us. This is one of the many things planned for Readercon 3 that we just ran out of time on. We have the names of perhaps one hundred and fifty of these writers, but there's no handy database (like SWFA's) of their addresses. What's more, inviting them to the conference isn't trivial, since many of them are likely unaware of the entire *concept* of sf conventions (let alone how we differ from the norm).

When this subject was raised at the last Sercon, the prospect of our luring these writers to Readercon was greeted with much enthusiasm; one well-known editor, in fact, volunteered to collaborate with our Program Chair on the invitation letter. Keep watching the Readercon 4 guest list!

Special projects

Though the above items show that we're hardly content to rest on our laurels as a conference, our mission stretches beyond the con itself to embrace a range of literary services we would like to offer the public (though this is, in fact, mandated by our status as a non-profit, we'd do it in any case). Among those currently planned are:

Readercon Speakers Series

This one's the easiest to explain: Since we're certain there's a large segment of the public interested in imaginative literature who don't yet have the time or courage to devote an entire weekend to our conference, we hope to arrange for our favorite writers, both local and out-of-town, to speak in the Boston area (most likely at libraries). Look for this to begin, on a quarterly basis, this fall; we dream of a monthly series someday.

The Readercon Small Press Review

Designed as a companion piece for the Readercon Small Press Awards, this journal, edited by Bryan Cholfin, will offer the public (and other small publishers) an in-depth look at the various alternatives to mass-market publishing in this field. It will contain listings, reviews, opinion pieces, publisher profiles, news and other stuff we haven't thought of yet. We intend to publish at least one issue in 1990, and aim for quarterly publication thereafter.

Computerized Sf Text Archive (by Bob Ingrida)

We intend to investigate the possibility of creating a centralized archive for machine-readable sf/fantasy texts for the use of the science fiction research community. We believe that the availability of such an archive will allow researchers to perform activities such as concordances, frequency counts, and various types of statistical and stylistic analysis more easily.

For the near term, we intend to explore the following necessary preconditions to any such project:

- (1) locating an academic institution that would be willing to serve as the actual repository of the archive
- (2) determining ways of making this project attractive to publishers, so that they would be willing to allow their texts to be available in such an archive. (One possibility would be to convert the typesetting tapes into a standard format, such as SGML (Standard Generalized Markup Language), and to return them to the publishers in this form, for possible future electronic publication.)

Readers' Lobby

There are some 250 million Americans. Somewhere in that mass there is sure to be enough people with ambitious reading tastes to provide an appreciative and substantial audience for books in this field that are both written for *and marketed towards* intelligent adults. But genre publishers don't appear to think so, preferring to treat us as consumers, rather than as aficionados. What if we decided to start changing their minds? Most people in publishing really do love good books, and would probably enjoy their jobs a lot more if they could sell the bean-counters on the feasibility of acquiring and promoting more art (and less product). To make this happen, readers who want more from this month's books than a slight variation on last month's need to start acting in concert. How? We've just begun thinking about it (there's a discussion group on the subject in this year's program).

Readercon BBS

With all the changes and developments happening around here, it would be nice if we could get regularly-updated news to you modem owners out there. While we're at it, I suppose a discussion forum and opinion pieces would be nice, too. We won't be able to start on this one right away, though (see below).

And how will this all be done?

Behind all of these ideas lies a single supposition; that the Readercon committee will significantly expand (doubling or even tripling) in the next two or three years. Why do we think this is necessary? Perhaps the fact that key committee members are currently burning out two or three months before the con (just as the hardest work starts) has influenced our thinking here. Of course, we could just do what's comfortable for us to do, drop things like the Small Press Awards, and stop trying to exceed current standards in almost every aspect of what we do, but we'd be giving up a chunk of our soul (and any chance to make a difference in this field) in the process. Without a compelling, visionary agenda, there really isn't much chance that we'd be willing to continue this thing. We are currently committed to producing Readercons 4 & 5, but to go beyond that point we will really need to have attracted a lot more people who share our vision (the special projects are especially in need of people with specialized expertise, so you don't have to be interested in convention-running to join us. For example, some of this stuff may require grants, which means we need fund-raisers). So if you've been excited by the work we've been doing, now's the time to get involved!

Piers Anthony *Pornucopia*

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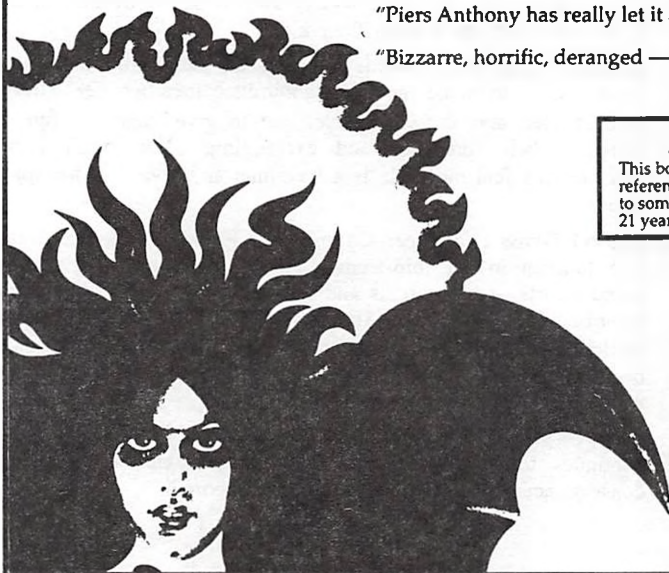
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Readercon, Inc.: Who We Are

Robert Colby (President and Treasurer, Chairman of the Board of Directors, Conference Chair) digs Philip K. Dick, Sonic Youth, R. A. Lafferty, John Coltrane, Geo. Herriman, GoH Crew (Gene, Mark, Chip, John, and Tom), The Lyres, Barry N. Malzberg, The Velvet Underground, J. G. Ballard, The Flamin' Groovies, Thelonus Monk, Ursula K. Le Guin, Brian Wilson, Jim Thompson, Robyn Hitchcock, William Faulkner, Mission of Burma, William S. Burroughs, Charlie Parker, Raymond Chandler, Iggy Pop, The Cramps, Daniel M. Pinkwater, Marc Bolan, The NYRSF Posse, both Elvises, and could go on like this for hours and hours.

Eric M. Van (Vice Chair of the Board, Program Chair)'s list of things to do beginning April 2, 1990: work late programming FoxPro (= get off s—t list at work), put up more bookshelves, buy MIDI studio and do song demos, compile database of c. 1500 unread books and begin reading them, resume Nautilus workouts, immerse self briefly in annual baseball statistics books, start going out to local rock 'n' roll clubs again, finish short stories and continue plotting novels, play guitar daily (investigate lessons); pursue possible romance, eat smart, sleep late, pay bills, do dishes and laundry, clean the apartment. (Start work on Readercon 4.)

Bob Ingria (Clerk of the Board, Computerized Sf Text Archive) says that, since the 90's began, he has been spending too much time looking at personnel database queries, reading Spanish newspaper articles about AIDS, examining the language of military air-traffic controllers, and evaluating natural language interaction with the electronic Official Airline Guide, as well as taking care of his virtual children; and not enough time going out to rock 'n' roll clubs, translating Modern Greek, attending plays, watching movies, and, in general, "wallowing in the dives and cathouses of Beirut"—and that's *tavernas* with a V!

Adina Adler (Corporate Secretary, Conference Green Room) has been reading everything she could get her hands on since she learned how at the age of six. This includes vast quantities of mythology, science fiction, fantasy, historical novels, and lately, mysteries. To her dismay, when Eric starts discussing authors to feature in the Bad Prose Competition, she realizes that she's read most of them. Recently she's become involved in the MIT Assassin's Guild (believe me, you don't want to ask.)

Connie Hirsch (Vice-President, Membership Secretary, Conference Registration) is a comic book fan who majored (at different times) in Film Writing and Fiber Arts. When asked how she became a programmer and an officer of Readercon she only mumbles "It made sense at the time." This past year Connie discovered Usenet, where she is known as "Dark Fuzzy." As for this year, Connie expects either to stop suffering and write the Great American Imaginative Literature Novel, or start suffering and write the Great American Imaginative Literature Novel.

Ozzie Fontecchlo (Hotel Liason) takes credit for being the first to notice the similarity between the philosophies of the Readercon Committee and the Blues Brothers ("we're on a *mission from God*"). Oz says he returns to Readercon year after year because he loves the people and it is a quiet way of stealing Program ideas for Philcon.

Janis Fontecchlo (formerly Hoffing) (Dealer's Room Coordinator) says that anyone desiring (so to speak) her biography

should discuss it over a drink.

Priya Mirkin (Dominatrix of the Timeline, Conference Sales) still prefers to remain anonymous.

Bryan Cholfin (Speaker to Printers, Small Press Review) hasn't, as far as he can tell, been born yet, though this is expected sometime in the next decade. Since this means he doesn't have to waste his time with nostalgia for the Sixties, he can spend his time on interesting things. These include (recently) Karl Popper, Hannah Arendt, Information, Folk Music, Jewish Philosophy, Anarchist Politics, and Publishing. Founding Broken Mirrors Press primarily to publish the works of R.A. Lafferty, he has found that publishing is an addictive activity, and fertile ground for the planting of various seeds of subversion, to challenge complacency, self-righteousness, and pretentiousness.

David Walrath (Volunteer Coordinator), once a reader of philosophy, history, and the classics, found himself a couple of years ago reading cheap paperbacks with lurid covers. He joined Readercon in an attempt to raise his standards. It hasn't worked, but he's still here.

Mary Poole (Data and Text Entry, Hospitality Suite) thinks that it's none of your business.

Leslie Choras (GoH Liason), last seen with Philip K. Dick, could not be reached for comment.

Sue Safton only allowed herself to be roped into this nonsense because Eric Van, Robert Colby, Kathei Logue and her were all punk rockers together in the late '70s (they've all been involved with Kathei's classic *Killer Children* fanzine). She intends to use this opportunity to become familiar with the works of far more of our guests than the current three (which three, she won't say). As resident DJ (host of "Aural Fixations" on WMBR 88.1), she promises that there *will* be music tapes in the Hospitality Suite.

Kathei Logue (At-Conference Treasurer) entered SF fandom in 1968, and was Assistant Treasurer for Noreascon 1 in 1971. Like Sue Safton (but earlier), she got suckered into this as a result of knowing rock critics Robert Colby (Readercon founder) and Eric Van through Boston's thriving underground rock scene (from whence she derives her income today.) In both sf and rock fandom she is widely known as "Babysitter to the Stars" (and we don't mean their kids.)

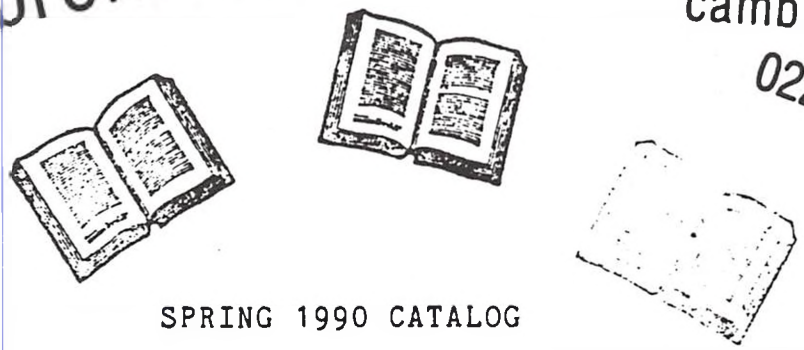
Stephen Frug is the token youngster on the committee, whose main task is to make the other committee members feel suave, sophisticated and knowledgeable, and to give them the fun of slapping their foreheads and exclaiming, "You don't know that? God, I feel old!" He is a freshman at Harvard in his spare time.

Merryl Gross (Volunteer Co-ordinator Emeritus) tried to break into fandom in her mid-teens, but was thwarted by the combined efforts of her parents and her residence, deep, deep in the suburbs of Long Island. She joined the MIT Science Fiction Society a week before she even *registered* for classes, and has been hopelessly fannish ever since. She still thinks digital watches are a pretty neat idea.

Richard Duffy (Member Emeritus) could not be reached, as he continues to be preoccupied with the possible set-theoretical consequences of the Nielsen-Schreier Theorem.

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