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THE MAGAZINE ABOUT SCIENCE FICTION

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ROBERT SILVERBERG

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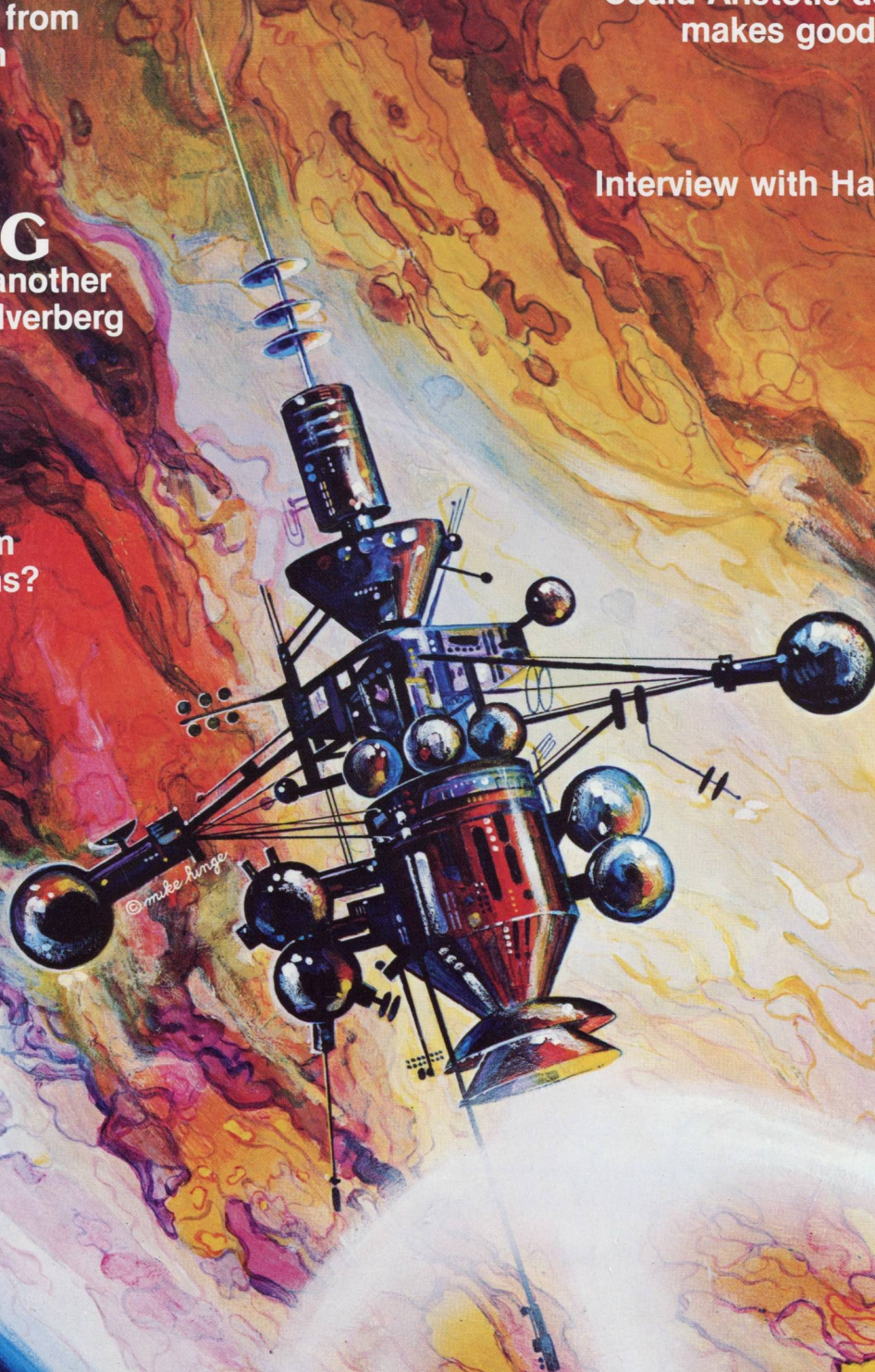
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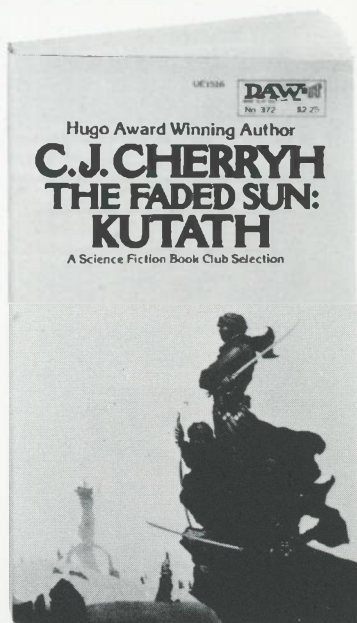
FREDERIK POHL

Could Aristotle define what
makes good SF work?

Interview with Hal Clement



C. J. Cherryh's Climactic New Novel



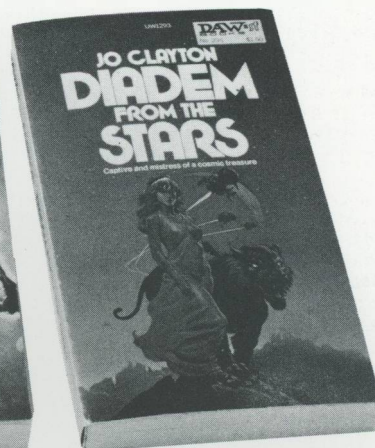
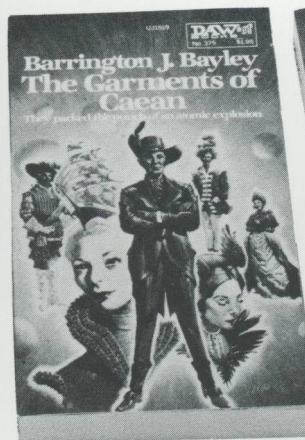
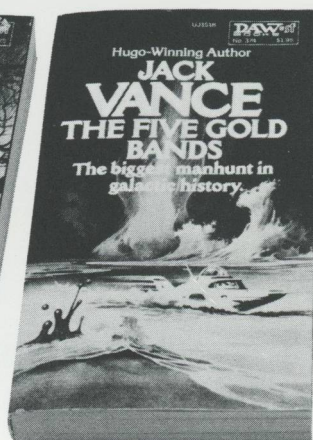
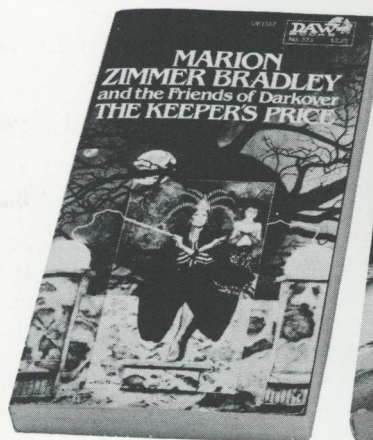
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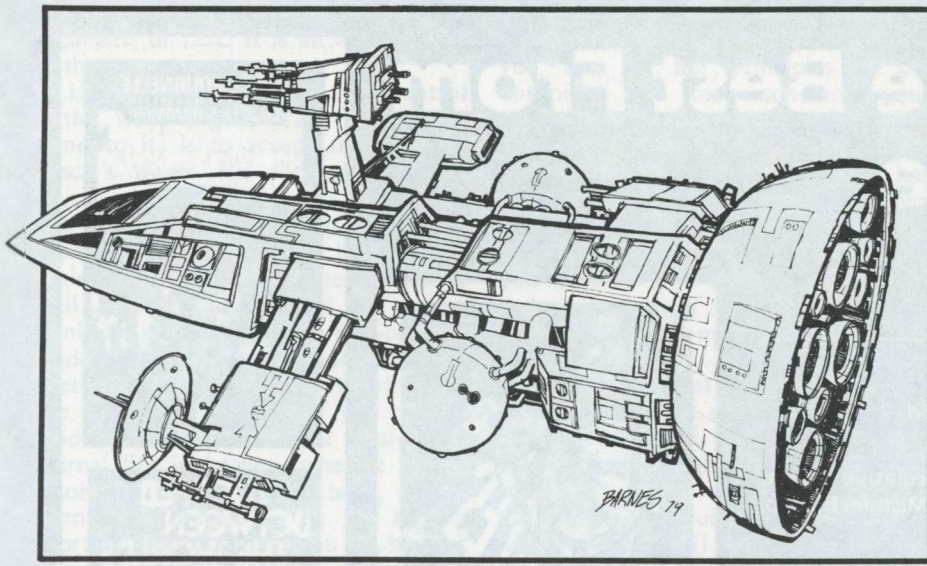
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WORLDS OUT OF WORDS SUSAN WOOD

Hi. I'm Susan Wood, and like Dick Lupoff before me (who's taking a well-earned rest from writing about other people's books, to work on his own), I'm a science fiction fan. I discovered *Lucky Starr* and *Oceans of Venus* at about age eight, and loved it. I loved its excitement, its colour, its ideas. Face it, I *loved* those Venusian frog-creatures, the telepathic beasts who lived in the swamps (remember when Venus had swamps?) and ate grease. When David Starr, space ranger-superhero with the comic Martian sidekick, fighting the awesome torment of the froggies' evil mind-controls, defeated them with a jar of vaseline . . . wow. I was hooked.

I also read coneflakes boxes, Jane Austen, *The Wind in the Willows*, *Freddy the Pig*, and my neighbours' comics. Inevitably, I stopped being eight, and stopped reading SF, because I'd outgrown Lucky Starr, cleancut cardboard heroes, and even ideas that couldn't soar when the writing merely plodded along. Inevitably, I became an English major, to give myself license to keep reading. Inevitably, I started reading SF again when a friend gave me

Isle of the Dead and *Babel-17*, to prove that SF could combine the sort of book I'd learned to love (with characters, good writing, all that literary stuff) with the sense of wonder I'd missed since I left the Heinlein juveniles behind.

I became, by profession, an "academic." I teach Canadian literature, SF, fantasy, children's lit, composition and technical writing, at any level from first year to graduate school. I sometimes find myself in a swimming pool at worldcon, reminding myself I'm at an, er, a conference related to my scholarly work. (I am, too.)

I have remained a fan, writing about SF (and teddy bears, Bob Tucker, feminism, conventions and wombats) for a variety of amateur magazines; organizing programs for conventions; and making friends with other fans from Brooklyn and Liverpool, Canberra and Capetown, Dawson Creek, B.C. and Jesus Maria, Argentina.

I have thus spent the last twelve years of my life falling, with what grace I could muster, between two stools.

Academics still view "paraliterature" with suspicion, and wonder exactly what I *am* teaching. (Given the current state of SF in the media, I don't blame them. Walk into the university bookstore, and what do you see, right by the

door? *The Making of the Trek Conventions!* *I Am Not Spock!* and rows of fluorescent killer-robots, which are "in" this year as cover-art.) I get no academic brownie-points, writing a column about SF and fantasy, especially for something called *Starship*.

I'm doing it because I like SF and fantasy, and like to talk about it, about the books that please and interest me.

Meantime the fans (some of 'em) still mutter about "ivory tower academics" (over there, beside Mad Scientists, under "C" for "Clichés, outmoded") who are "ripping off the field" and "taking the fun out of SF" by "making it Serious."

Well: you will be disturbed by this column, if you are disturbed when someone suggests that SF and fantasy deserve to be judged, not in terms of *Thrilling Wonder Stories'* worst issue, but in terms of the best of current fiction; that SF and fantasy can and should provide genuine alternate worlds, not just escapist colour, 1950's white middleclass male social assumptions, and cheap happy endings; that craft matters, because a writer worth your time and mine is doing more than turning out wordage by the metre in return for the reader's beer-money; and that a "good" book is not necessarily one whose sole reason for being printed is to occupy your eyes on a Greyhound bus between Winnipeg and Minneapolis.

This approach has very little to do with my being "an academic," though it has to do with my learning to appreciate, and talk about, good books in general. It has everything to do with my being a fan. Because I enjoy SF and fantasy, I want to see them done well. There's a place for easy-listening music, and elevator muzak, but no-one pretends they represent the state of the art. There's a place for easy-reading sci-fi (hereafter called "skiffy") and formula fantasy, too; but it's not academic irrelevance to say, hey, we can all do better than *that*.

OK. I admit, I sometimes wonder what I'm doing, assigning *The Best Science Fiction of the Year* for homework. I also wonder what I'm doing, asking questions like: "What is SF? What is fantasy? What do they do? What *can* they do? How can they do it better? What's going on in supposedly-mainstream non-realistic fiction, and, hey, doesn't it make our cozy little genre-world seem a little, um, cramped sometimes?"

What I'm doing is having fun.

This column may end up as a mixture of speculations and market reports, theory and book talk.

A reviewer delivers market reports—buy this, avoid that—based on more or less informed assessments of a book's style, content and so on. A critic starts to develop a context for understanding and enjoying that particular work which

the reviewer persuaded you to buy. The context includes other books by the same author, other SF/fantasy books, other literature/art/popculture in general. Me, I'm a booklover talking to other booklovers. Anyone got a third stool?

The original title? It was "Schematic Models," from Samuel R. Delany's essay "Shadows" in *The Jewel-Hinged Jaw*:

The critic sits at a certain distance from the work, views it from a particular side, and builds a more or less schematic model of the work as it strikes her. . . .

Basically, however, the critic is part of the work's audience. The critic responds to it, selects among those responses and, using them, makes, selectively, a model of the work that may . . . guide, helpfully, the response of the critic's own audience when they come to the work being modelled. . . .

All criticism is personal.

The best is rigorously so.

OK, Andy. How about "Worlds Out of Words," which are what the SF/fantasy writer builds . . . and what the writer-about-books builds . . . and what Douglas Barbour (a critic who cares about SF, and a poet) called his book on Delany (a writer who's become a critic speculating about SF, language, words, and how we talk about all these things). Delany, and Barbour-on-Delany, are asking the questions I'm asking. They're the living, breathing stuff of what we're thinking about, and working on. *Worlds out of Words*, by the way, is published by Bran's Head Books, 45 Milk St., Frome, Somerset, England, and sells for \$12US.

If you want a good discussion of "criticism" in SF/fantasy, I recommend Joanna Russ' "Books" column in the November 1979 issue of *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*. Onward to the books.

TALES OF NEVERYON, by Samuel R. Delany. \$2.25. 264 pp. 1979. Bantam.

HEAVENLY BREAKFAST: An Essay on the Winter of Love, by Samuel R. Delany. \$1.95. 127 pp. 1979. Bantam

One of the time-honoured reasons for building a world out of words is to comment on *this* world. Both of Delany's new books, one ostensibly fiction and the other ostensibly a nonfictional memoir, are in some sense "fantasies," playing with the idea of their function in presenting "reality" and in presenting "alternate universes."

Neveryon consists of six linked baroque tales, set in the sort of exotic pre-industrial world you expect in "heroic fantasy." (Sorry about the quotation marks, but I'm using technical terms and trying to suggest their limitations, at the same time.) There are

dragons and women warriors, enslaved barbarian princes and devious courtiers, hunters' huts, dockside slums and palaces: and they're all trimmings. (Delany is, among other things, exploring the Barbarian-Warrior-Mightythews genre, to see what lurks behind the formulas.)

The world, while interesting for its own sale, solid and richly-detailed, acts mainly as a distorting funhouse mirror of our own beliefs, social and sexual assumptions, actions and myths. In "The Tale of Old Venn," in fact, Venn uses mirrors to illustrate a point she's making about fiction, mirroring a mirror-image of "reality" and creating something new in the double-image process. Elsewhere in the tale Venn (who more than any of the characters is a mouthpiece for her creator) discusses the changes that come to a "primitive" culture when it starts to use money (what is money? economics?) and recounts a hunter's solemn discovery of penis envy (what are the differences between men and women? are they biological? social?)

The tales are crammed with ideas, ranging from sexuality, slavery and dependence, through creation myths, to speculations about language itself. Anyone misled by the cover and blurbs into expecting escapist fantasy is going to be puzzled, at best. If you want your brain pleasantly stretched, though, Delany'll do it. The tales are a "literature of ideas" in the best sense. They're also self-conscious, witty, sometimes irritating, sometimes slowmoving, and very often brilliant in language and insights.

Heavenly Breakfast is a mirror-image of a mirror-image, too, reflecting and reflecting on "real life" to create "something else entirely, with its own meaning" (to quote Venn). A man named Chip lived, in the fall and winter of 1967-68, in a Lower East Side commune called the Heavenly Breakfast, as part of a rock group of the same name. During the experience, he wrote down his observations, without shaping them into stories with predictable endings, "aesthetically manipulated lies." Several years later, Delany the writer got out the notebooks when a New York magazine requested an article on communes; he began to shape the material, and to analyse the communal experience. Still later, Samuel R. Delany published a manuscript, a memoir "basically for myself" of "the Heavenly Breakfast" as an experience.

Mirrors. The final text isn't the autobiography of Samuel R. Delany, an account of his socio-sexual-musical-lit'ry-culinary-chemical activities (a companion, reading the interim essay, says "You've left out an awful lot about yourself.") It is a fragment about a character named Chip, who walks empty-handed into an apartment (you

look for one sandal, one bare foot), meets eleven people (characteristics and actions drawn from real people, to make characters "true" to the truth of the experience), interacts, observes other modes of living, thinks about the experiences he's having, leaves with three notebooks in a guitar case when group and commune disband: and who—this is the important point—spends the months trying to create an alternate world, trying to create a new way to live.

The book is random, diffuse and full of irrelevant details of what (for example) people ate, not what they said or thought or hoped they were doing. It's idyllic, too—surely no commune can work with so little space, so many different people, so few ripoffs/freak-outs/illnesses, so few hassles (not over sex or money, but over possessions, dirty dishes, decisionmaking and the sheer pressure of numbers)? It does recreate a vision, though, not of media-idealized middle-class 1967, but of practical dreamers in a time when building a new world seemed possible. The narrator says "We stand on the brink of tomorrow" and it's not just stoned rhetoric or escapist self-deluding fantasizing, but vision and creative dream: the roots of fantasy.

Like *Neveryon*, *Heavenly Breakfast* kept me up late, at my bourgeois dining room table, talking about communes, dreams and realities, alternate universes and this reality.

And the nightmare bikers' commune at "334 Eleventh St.." ("real" that address, or a nod to Disch?), the creation myth from the Western Crèvasse, and the work done by "K. Leslie Steiner" on the "Culhar" text," the "source" of the *Neveryon* tales: they're all equally true. □

THE BEST OF NEW DIMENSIONS, edited by Robert Silverberg. \$2.50. 333 pp. 1979. Pocket.

Recently, someone asked me what I thought were the best SF stories of the '70's. Trying to work back beyond 1977, I started going "uuhhh . . ." and fumbling for titles that turned out to have been published in the late '60's. My memory was jogged by *The Best of New Dimensions*, 18 stories published between 1971 and 1979, in the prestigious original anthology for which, Silverberg says, he sought stories which combined "early 1950's craftsmanship" with "late 1960's sensibility." Many of these are *my* kind of stories: ideas and solid plotting combined with good character development and controlled experimentation.

The collection includes "Nobody's Home" by Joanna Russ. Silverberg calls it "one of the most vivid and plausible depictions of the daily life of the future

ever written," and I agree; it rings absolutely true. There's Le Guin's "The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas," Tiptree's "The Psychologist Who Wouldn't Do Awful Things to Rats," Lafferty's "Eurema's Dam," and other examples of what SF in the 1970's could do when it tried. Silverberg encouraged both established writers, and some of the best new talent of the decade; and the collection reflects this. His own introductions give a fascinating picture of how an anthology is put together. This *Best of ...* is an important package, for anyone interested in contemporary SF; and it gives me cause to rejoice that *New Dimensions* is being revived, from Pocket Books with Marta Randall as co-editor. □

THE SCIENCE FICTION ENCYCLOPEDIA, edited by Peter Nicholls. \$24.95 hardback, \$12.95 paperback. 672 pp. 1979. Doubleday/Dolphin (US), Granada (UK).

Recently, the Noreascon Two committee—the group running the 1980 World Science Fiction Convention—announced it was exercising its right to create a special Hugo for the SF field's "best non-fiction book" of 1979.

The walk-away winner has got to be *The Science Fiction Encyclopedia*. If ever a project deserved to be praised, this is it.

If ever a book demanded to be used, this is it.

The *Encyclopedia* contains some 2,800 entries, ranging from bio-bibliographies for 1,817 authors, editors and critics, through histories of SF magazines and entries on films, to 175 general essays on SF themes: aliens to xenobiology. It's so complete that (statement of interest follows) Nicholls asked me to do an entry for "SF in Canada"; it's so trustworthy on trivia that he got my number of Hugos right (though he got my academic rank wrong—I hope he's as good a prophet as he is an editor).

I can pick nits as well as anyone. John Clute and Nicholls get Ted White's middle name wrong (apparently a mistake copied from Tuck). Nicholls gets Ron Ellik's middle initial wrong. Malcolm Edwards insists that *Warlord of Kor* is a novel. Etc. In a book like this, the little details are exactly what matter; I mention these only to point out that the editor and contributors care about details and, as far as I can tell, overwhelmingly get them right. (Nicholls includes the address of his British publisher, Granada, and urges readers to send corrections for future editions. Since the British edition went into a second printing immediately on publication, such new editions should be guaranteed.)

There are 35 contributors listed,

though the bulk of the work was done by Nicholls, associate editor John Clute, and contributing editors Malcolm Edwards and Brian Stableford. (Technical editor was Carolyn Eardley, who "wishes to firmly dissociate herself from some of the split infinitives which we have felt compelled occasionally to use for the sake of clarity." Oh, I do like this book's *style*.) Many of the contributors are loosely associated with London's Science Fiction Foundation, with a healthy mix of international experts. Each essay is signed, and, though judgments and opinions are present, they're generally reasoned and interesting.

The *Encyclopedia* is an invaluable reference work on SF. It's also more: a history and survey of SF (in and outside the Gernsback continuum) which, because of the theme essays and extensive cross-references, really does give a balanced picture of the field. The material from outside the British/American publishing world is useful, as is that on films, comics, SF art (much of it from Jon Gustafson) and criticism. As a bonus, there are 400 well-chosen illustrations. As another bonus, the contributors and editor, bless them, know how to use the English language, and write with clarity, economy, and a surprising degree of elegance.

Nicholls writing on Nicholls comments that, when writing or publishing criticism, he has been "generally attempting to mediate between the two extremes of academic orthodoxy and fannish bonhomie." Among other accomplishments, the *Encyclopedia* gracefully accomplishes this feat. *Anyone* interested in SF will appreciate this book. For me, it's already become both an essential reference tool, and a bedside browsing book (which may say something about my habits, but says more about the book: imagine a reference work you flip through for entertainment).

Buy the hardcover. You're going to use this book, and the paperback won't stand the strain.

Remember *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* at Hugo-nominating time.

And look forward to Nicholls' promised companion-volume on fantasy. □

LEESE WEBSTER, by Ursula K. Le Guin, illustrated by James Brunsmann. \$7.95. 26 pp. 1979. Atheneum.

MALAFRENA, by Ursula K. Le Guin. \$11.95. 369 pp. 1979. Putnam.

It's a pity this column is appearing in February. *Leese Webster*, a children's picture book, would make a dandy Christmas present for a child (who'll enjoy the story about a clever spider who starts spinning pictures) or for a

special adult (who'll enjoy the charming fable about art and life). At first, I thought the black-and-white line drawings by James Brunsmann were too crude and cartoony; but they fit the book, since after all, a spider and her web are basically a collection of lines, and a realistic spider might be scary. Does anyone not working for a public library actually buy picture books? If you do, I recommend this one.

Malafrena is a realistic novel—about the texture, actions and decisions of everyday life, described in careful shadings and nuances. It's set in a created world, the Orsinia of *Orsinian Tales* (to give the author freedom), in a real place and time, The Austro-Hungarian empire of the 1820's, the era of the stirrings of revolutionary nationalism (to give the author context). Through Itale Sorde, a young patriot from the provincial gentry, and his childhood sweetheart Piera, Le Guin continues the debate on freedom and responsibility, love and duty, she presented in *The Dispossessed* and *The Eye of the Heron*. I find it oddly theoretical, at a bit of a distance, though the world and the lives are richly-textured. It's certainly proof that *any* serious literature is a "literature of ideas"; and it should be welcomed by anyone for whom Le Guin's ideas have human importance. □

MOON IN THE GROUND, by Keith Antill. \$12US. 220 pp. 1979. Norstrilia Press, P.O. Box A491, Sydney South, NSW 2000, Australia.

THE DARK BRIGHT WATER, by Patricia Wrightson. \$7.95. 223 pp. 1979. Atheneum.

Australian SF people tend to resent and lament their isolation from the supportive communities of fans, fellow-writers, editors and, especially, publishers in Britain and the U.S. They've begun to coalesce, in self-preservation and self-defence, as a community of their own, and Norstrilia Press is one result. A fan-owned effort, it's produced two volumes of stories from the Australian writers' workshops, and now, expanding, a novel.

Moon in the Ground opens with an aboriginal myth of a Moon Baby that plummets to earth and destroys the power of a much-feared shaman. It's an interesting narrative hook, and could have provided an effective fable for the story, which focuses on a group of US scientists (our shamans) confronting the "moon baby," a sentient alien artifact they name "Pandora." Unfortunately, however, Antill mostly ignores the extra dimension his myth and physical setting (the desert near Alice Springs) could have provided, though he does make some use of the social tensions between Australians and Americans. The scien-

tists (identified by last names, and virtually indistinguishable) confront Pandora. Everybody confronts Big Government. Since this is 1979, the latter is far more scary. The artifact isn't what you'd expect (the ultimate weapon, or the computer playing God); the government-stuff is what you'd expect, a stock thriller-element, and unconvincing.

The book is interesting enough, and certainly as competent as anything currently issued by North American paperback houses; I hope one buys reprint rights, if only to encourage Antill and Norstrilia. The problem is that, much as I wanted to hail this book as a new discovery, I can't. It won the Mary Gilman award for Australian literature given by the New South Wales Trade Union movement (!) in 1970. We're told that Antill has written other novels, but this is his first to be published—in 1979. I wish that, in the intervening years, someone—his own conscience, if not his editors—had made him do extensive rewrites. The actual writing is less than competent: muddy, imprecise, and full of sentence fragments, run-on sentences and sentences that change subject in midstream. Maybe you'll be so caught up in the story that you won't be confused and irritated; for me, the writing had exactly the opposite effect. □

Patricia Wrightson, in contrast, is an able and graceful writer. *The Dark Bright Water*, a sequel to *The Ice is Coming*, follows her aboriginal hero Wirrun as he and his friend Ularra leave the white coastal city, the world of "the ordinary things a man had to live with," for the Outback, the world of the People and the spirits. The Yungamurra, a water-spirit, in woman's form, sings sweetly, luring him to death; and all the land is disturbed. Wrightson does make good use of the Australian background, both the physical setting and, especially, the strange and haunting myths associated with the Outback. Like Wirrun, we come to accept the reality of Yungamurra and Mimi, as present and actual as the rocks and streams.

Wrightson's prose is flowing and evocative, her characters (both the abos and the spirits) convincing, and her emotional relationships (the friendship between Wirrun and Ularra, the attraction between Wirrun and Murra) powerful. Packaged as a "young adult" book, this is meant for everyone who enjoys good, and unusual, fantasy. □

And finally. . . I checked with Dick Lupoff to make sure that our columns didn't overlap; and for that reason, I'm not reviewing Octavia Butler's *Kindred* (Doubleday) and Thomas M. Disch's *On Wings of Song* (St. Martin's). I admired

them both, though. Butler's fantasy premise was too arbitrary, but the emotional situation it set up was fascinating and convincing. As for Disch's book, it's my choice for the best SF novel of 1979.

The following two reviews have been sitting in Andy's files since the spring of 1979, but we both decided to run them. This column is full of recommendations; here's another: remember "Options" at award-nominating time. □

JUNIPER TIME, by Kate Wilhelm. \$9.95. 288 p. 1979. Harper and Row.

In *Juniper Time*, Kate Wilhelm's twelfth novel, she returns with increasing skill to the territory she has staked out for herself. Her subject frequently is the struggle of human beings to survive,

psychologically as well as physically, in a devastated near-future world where "the machine society" demands conformity. Here, her protagonists are Arthur Cluny, a graduate student in astrophysics, who longs for space; and Jean Brighton, a graduate student in linguistics, who understands the "magic" and the power of words. Both are the children of dreamers, men who schemed to build the first space station. Arthur has grown up to be the tool of power-hungry men; Jean has rejected the "large machine that had no need for souls or consciences or feelings," the military-government-industrial machine which destroyed her father.

Yet neither Jean nor Arthur has a real choice, since they are both born into a "shrinking world" without hope.

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*John Brunner

"Bewilderment, humiliation and apathy, these were the masks people wore, and it was terrifying.... And they were helpless. Nothing could be done."

The actual drought devastating the world is a powerful metaphor for this lack of hope. Wilhelm presents these bleak scenes with impressive skill. Her understated style effectively suggests the people's despair, and the horror of the "newtowns"—refugee camps in which civilized people become either apathetic or violent, like the gang which rapes and brutally beats Jean.

Yet Wilhelm insists on the *necessity* of choice. We can choose, not to live—this is a tough-minded book, and Wilhelm makes no promises—but to try to live. We must choose to hope. Jean's search for her own "real place," in the Oregon desert with an Indian tribe relearning survival skills, and within herself as she comes to terms with her past, counterpoints Cluny's loss of his dreams. Wilhelm's skill at character development and center-of-consciousness narration is clearly evident in *Juniper Time*.

I could have wished for even more psychological exploration, and fewer plot mechanics—the discovery of an "alien" message encoded on gold, kidnappings, murder, political machinations, international intrigues. The framework of *Juniper Time* is spectacular, a science-fiction thriller. Yet its heart is quiet, an exploration of what it means to be human, an individual, whole. The book can be read as entertainment, or as a disaster novel with ecological overtones. It can also haunt your mind, asking hard questions about human nature.

That's Wilhelm's territory. She explores it well. □

UNIVERSE 9, edited by Terry Carr. \$7.95. 182 pp. 1979. Doubleday.

People have accused me of writing nothing but positive reviews. Well, yes.

Unless I find a really "important" bad book, I simply can't be bothered finishing anything crummy-to-mediocre, much less write about it just to see the blood flow. Marking term papers gives me all the lousy prose I need.

I always finish Terry Carr's *Universe* anthologies. For some reason, I seem to prefer the odd-numbered ones; and #9 kept me away from a stack of technical-writing exams for an enjoyable evening.

The anthology contains 9 original stories, from Carr's usual blend of established pros (Bob Shaw, Greg Benford), newer luminaries (John Varley—is he an "established pro" now, with his *Nebula*? can't keep these categories straight—Marta Randall, John Shirley, Greg Bear) and *good* new writers (Paul David Novitski, Mary C. Pangborn and Juleen Brantingham, the latter two with their first published SF stories.)

Carr says of Varley's novelette "Options" that it "may well be the best story he's yet written." Yes. It's stunning. It's the story we've been waiting for him to write, about the beginnings of that future society in the Eight Worlds, when the easy sex-changes are first introduced. Cleo is a happily-married mother of three on Luna who decides (after much soul-searching) to find out what it's like being Leo. Husband Jules is quite happy as a man, quite unhappy with Cleo's decision. Are "man" and "woman" just social roles, limitations put on the minds and hearts of male humans, female humans, human humans? Cleo says: "It's the option I want.... I want to know how much of me is hormones, how much is genetics, how much is upbringing" (p.171). So do I. This story will produce a lot of discussion and thought.

Paul Novitski's "Nuclear Fission" also focuses on the problems people will have, even if we achieve an almost-utopia of sane power use (zeppelins and home computers), back-to-the-land liv-

ing, an end to rigid sex roles, and so on. His future is both possible and plausible; his people are convincing. Juleen Brantingham's "Chicken of the Tree" is a short parody of the search for rural bliss in a polluted world ("Pickles... gave back my Euell Gibbons autograph. I ate it for breakfast with honey and yogurt"—p.130.) It's the sort of thing I never have the nerve to actually submit.

Marta Randall's "The Captain and the Kid" is a delight. Randall handles first-person, present-tense narrative extremely well, convincingly showing the Kid's exasperation with, and love for, the Captain, cranky about being stuck on a colony planet.

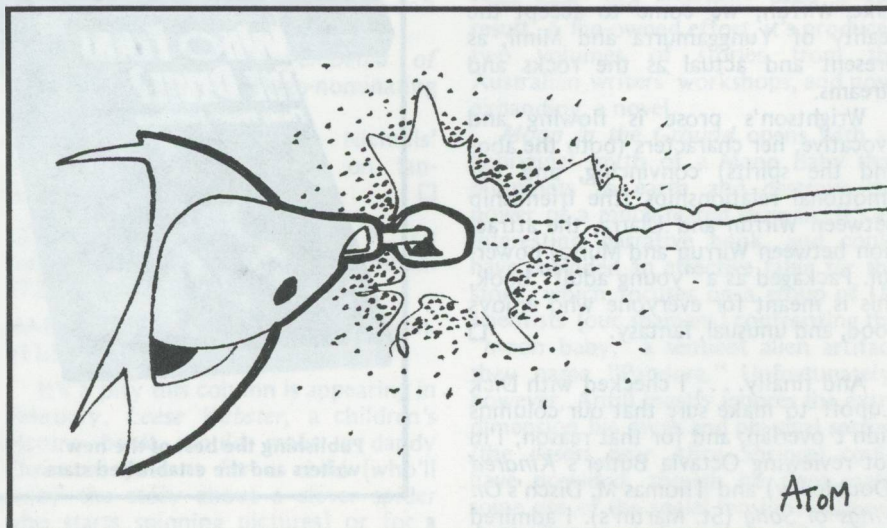
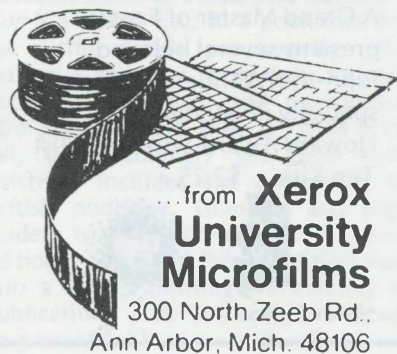
Bob Shaw's novella "Frost Animals" is a murder mystery with a difference, as Dennis Hobart, returning from space, recalls events which happened 13 subjective months and 18 Earth years before. I found it emphasized ideas, and rather arbitrary plotting, at the expense of character.

Greg Benford's "Time Shards" involves a Smithsonian scientist of 2000 AD attempting to recapture a voice from 1000 AD—and asks what we're leaving as "history" for 3000 AD. It's an entertaining short story with well-handled dialogue. Like it, Greg Bear's "White Horse Child" is a fine variation on a familiar theme: a fantasy in which an imaginative child learns to tell stories despite a repressive, Billy-Graham-reading community dedicated to concentrating "on things that are real" like the hardships of life. Mary Pangborn's "The Back Road" is a pleasant Simak-style tale of strange happenings in rural New England. John Shirley's "Will the Chill," very different in tone, is an adventure story and psychological study.

Universe 9 is an interesting collection, then, with an outstanding Varley story. It's a worthy addition to the series. And now I've got to get back to marking those papers... □■

—Susan Wood

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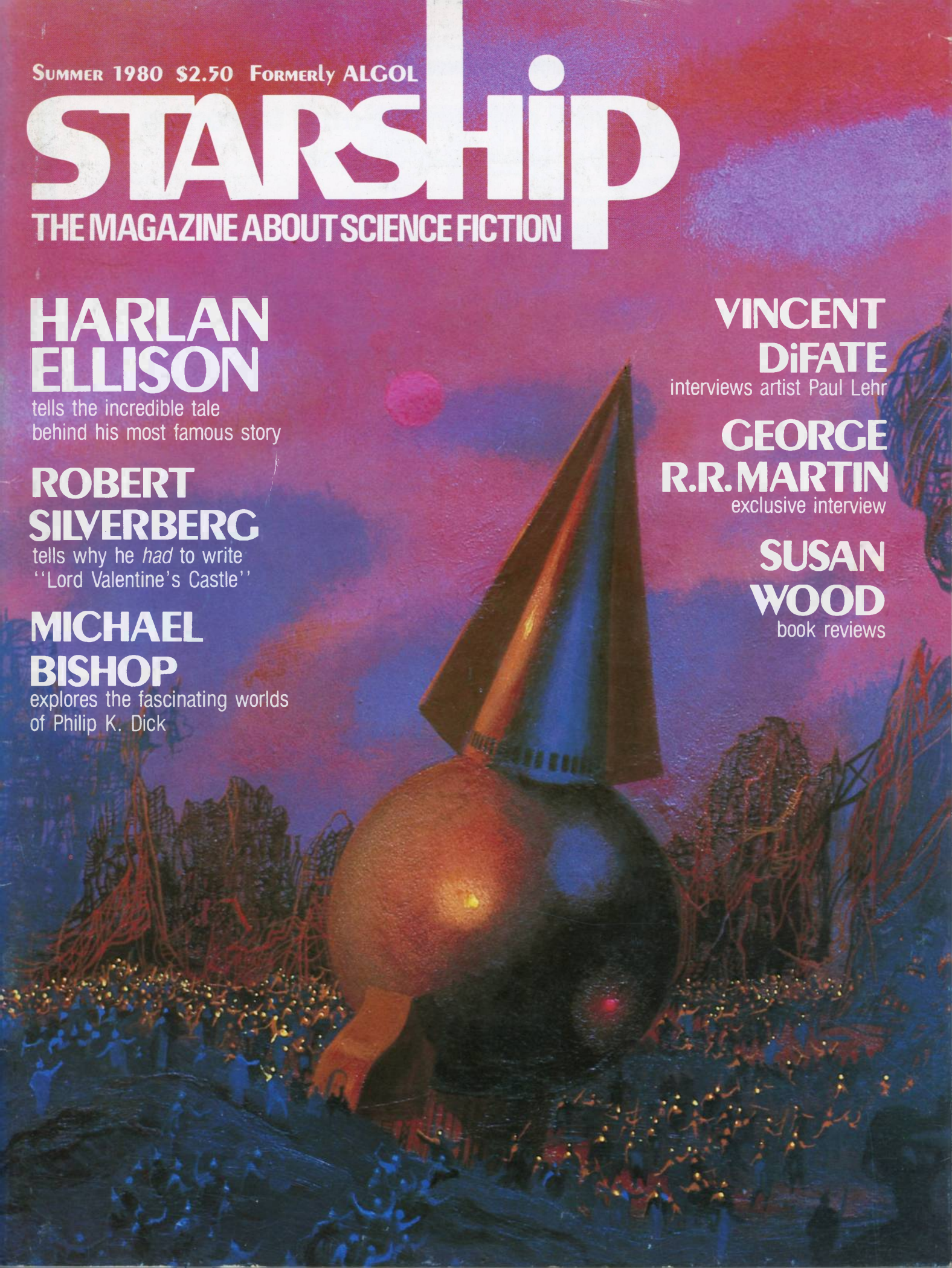
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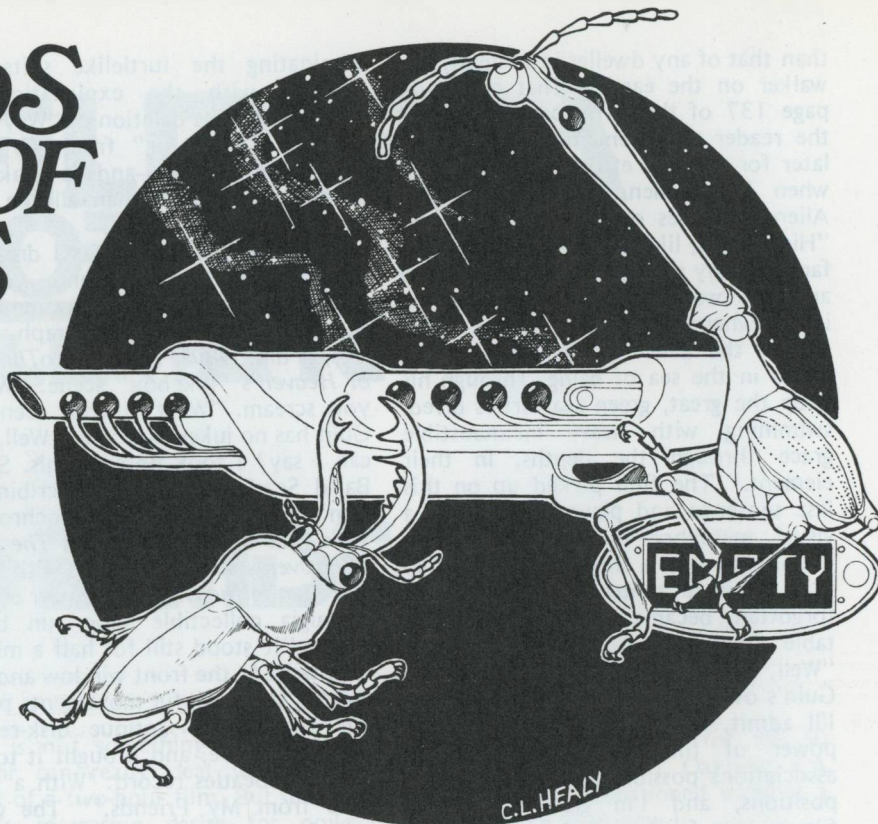
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WORLDS OUT OF WORDS

SUSAN WOOD



I want to thank Andy Porter for giving me a lead into this column. *Starship* arrived today (March 6) with an introduction saying "I hope Susan can overcome the deadliest peril the columnists in *Starship* face: attack of the deadly deadline beast." Well, my deadline was March 1, and my column still isn't quite finished. Part of the problem, a large part, is a creature I call the Strep in Residence. For over a year, I've had a series of strep infections which seem to be mutating, resisting any and all antibiotics. (I may miss the next deadline because the US Army bacteriological warfare people have kidnapped me for research purposes.) I've just been sick again. My doctor prescribed Sleep, so I'd return from school and flake out at 6 pm instead of writing.

There's another problem. I've written everything except the lead reviews, which I've been working on for three weeks. I have seventeen failed drafts and terminal reviewer's block. I hate writing killer reviews. Yet I feel I *have* to talk about these books, because they fail in extremely important ways, because they're by a major contemporary novelist crossing over into SF, and because they're what non-SF readers will regard as representative of today's SF, which they are not.

CANOPUS IN ARGOS: ARCHIVES
Re: COLONIZED PLANET 5. SHIKASTA. Personal, Psychological, Historical Documents Relating to Visit by Johor (George Sherban) Emissary (Grade 9) 87th of the Period of the Last

Days. 365 pp. 1979. Knopf, \$10.95; Jonathan Cape £5.95 (Canada \$17.95).

CANOPUS IN ARGOS: ARCHIVES. THE MARRIAGES BETWEEN ZONES THREE, FOUR, AND FIVE (As Narrated by the Chroniclers of Zone Three). 256 pp. 1980. Knopf, \$9.95. Jonathan Cape, £5.95 (Canada \$17.95).

What *is* a science fiction novel? (Welcome to part 2 in a continuing plaintive query into the void.)

It's no news to anyone who's noticed a "mainstream" novel in the last five years that "realism," as a literary convention, is wearing a bit thin. Meantime, fantasy and flights of imagination, the roots of story, are regaining acceptance.

Doris Lessing, a British mainstream novelist of considerable ability, considerable preoccupation with Serious Themes, and considerable status in the world of contemporary literature, observes in the preface to her novel *Shikasta* that "novelists everywhere are breaking the bonds of the realistic novel because what we all see around us becomes daily wilder, more fantastic, incredible. . . fact can be counted on to match our wildest invention." When Le Guin says this, we SF people listen, and Andy Porter publishes her national Book Award acceptance speech in his magazine. When Lessing says this, Gore Vidal pays attention in the lead review in the *New York Review of Books* (Dec. 20, 1979).

Lessing has made previous forays into "inner space fiction" (*Briefing for a Descent into Hell*) and SF (*Memoirs of a Survivor*). In these cases, her metaphors served her well, and she them. Now she's embarked on a projected epic, "Canopus in Argos: Archives." *Shikasta*, the full title of which I refuse to keep retyping, "has as its starting point, like many others of the genre, the Old Testament." Really? What genre? "Space fiction"? or moral fable, which is what Lessing is really writing? Huh?

The series is set in "a realm where the petty fates of planets, let alone individuals, are only aspects of cosmic evolution expressed in the rivalries and interactions of great galactic Empires: Canopus, Sirius, and their enemy, the Empire Puttiora, with its criminal planet Shammat."

Discovery of this realm gives her "the exhilaration that comes from being set free into a larger scope, with more capacious possibilities and themes." She says finally that "space fiction, with science fiction, makes up the most original branch of literature now; it is inventive and witty; it has already enlivened all kinds of writing; and . . . literary academics and pundits are much to blame for patronizing or ignoring it."

Wonderful! we SF people say. (We knew it all along. Fans are slans. Etc.)

Unfortunately, *Shikasta*, while lofty in purpose and imagination, is neither good SF, nor a good novel.

Writing SF does not give you the freedom to break the rules of known

fact and common sense. I was trying to discuss Lessing's stumbling mis-use of various SF conventions and Von Däniken clichés, when the March 1980 issue of the *Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* arrived with Algis Budrys' careful review of the novel. I commend this to you.

Writing SF does not give you freedom to abandon the traditional values of fiction.

Listen, I like serious moral fictions; I enjoy George Eliot. But Eliot, Le Guin, Lessing in her earlier work, Stapledon whose influence is clearly visible here (though Lessing gets the title of *Last and First Men* wrong, while praising it) and Varley whom I'll be praising in a minute, know the difference between a muddy tract about Good and Evil, and a novel which embodies its ideas in believable characters, well-developed societies, and—oh, how philistine of me—interesting plots. *Shikasta* lacks these.

Johor comes to Shikasta-Earth. He sends back reports in purest bureaucratic. This is mistake number one.

I started to get very bored. People are only case-histories. Okay, we're involved with a sweeping vision spanning time and space, but so what? Stapledon makes the fate of galaxies matter to the little human reader. Campbell in "Twilight," surely the worst-written Influential SF Story ever reprinted, nevertheless communicates a powerful vision of humanity's rise and disappearance. It can be done: not here.

Two-thirds of the way through the book, Johor the superbeing is born as a human, George Sherban—to save the near-future world which is busily destroying itself. His sister Rachel keeps a journal. She's real. She talks about life as a privileged young white woman, daughter of doctors, in various third world countries. She faces suffering and death. "The reek of blood going up from this planet must be in somebody's nostrils. Somebody needs it." Who? Why? Why? Suddenly, these ideas matter. Then Rachel is disposed of, offstage, and the book dies with her. □

Marriages, in contrast, almost comes alive. This book is presented as a story, almost a fable, narrated by the "chroniclers of Zone Three." one of whom is a "genefather" to Al-Ith, Queen of the Zone. She has been ordered to marry Ben Ata, warrior king of Zone Four. As a first advantage, the book's style is interesting. Lessing captures the cadences of oral storytelling well. Also her stance allows her to explore some interesting questions about the relationship of life, truth and art. The narrator(s) frequently mention that a given scene is depicted, in popular art or story, in such-and-such a way, though

what "really happened" was much less symbolic (and generally a good deal more human and interesting). The stance also makes the narrator and society real, through an obvious sense of superiority to the barbarians down there in Zone Four.

Having established that an "exemplary marriage" is about to take place, the narrator then comments: "While this famous marriage was being celebrated in the imaginations of both realms, the two most concerned remained where they were. They did not know what was wanted of them." Exactly. The mysterious Protectors, and the author-as-God, have their own ideas. Human beings come alive, and matter more, in *Marriages* than in *Shikasta*, but not quite enough, in the end.

Though Zones Three and Four are well-developed as societies, for example, the overall context is not. Fine, the Chroniclers are writing for their own people, but Lessing is writing for *us*. Her science fiction convention is only that, a device to set a moral fable in motion. The Zones are real places; yet where are they, and who lives there? (Zone Six is where the souls of the dead on Shikasta go to await rebirth.) They are divided by an "invisible barrier" of air, denser in Four and more rarified in Two. Travellers cannot move between Zones without illness, unless they wear protective "shields." Again, this is an arbitrary device to explain lack of previous contact, not anything logical or convincing. When the marriage of duty turns into a friendship which changes both parties, a mysterious drum begins to beat; it ceases when king and queen must part. How, why, and wouldn't it drive everyone bonkers? The Protectors ordered Ben Ata to build a pavilion to certain precise specifications for his bride. Food mysteriously appears there for them when they imagine it; then it ceases. Why? Lessing could have used such mysteries effectively, having her characters question the forces directing their lives. Instead they are irritations, showing a fatal lack of concern with the reality of her creation.

Similarly the "marriages" between the Zones are symbolic, with some human reality, and not, alas, the reverse. Al-Ith, "queen by will of the people," is the incarnation of her realm and its values: civilized, sensitive (her race communicates with its animals), spiritual, sexually liberated, and so on. Ben Ata represents his race's problems: barbarian, uncouth, materialistic, sexually unenlightened (he doesn't know how to perform a sex act that isn't a rape) and so on. Both are created and used to discuss those values.

The marriage, which brings civilization to Four and challenge to decadent Three, is also primarily a symbol. The

title's a misnomer. The book concentrates on the relationship between Al-Ith and Ben Ata, the nuances of their emotions. Very late in the book, Ben Ata "marries" a barbarian princess from Zone Five so the symbolic social interactions can continue, while Al-Ith becomes an exile, entering mystic Zone Two.

There are some fine moments in *Marriages*. I especially enjoyed Al-Ith's meetings with the underground women's society of patriarchal, militaristic Zone Four. For example, in secret ceremonies, the women help each other to lift off the heavy helmets which people are forced to wear if they spend unprofitable time looking up at the mountains of Zone Three. Those helmets, though; that chosen lack of freedom to dream and aspire; that defiance, that mutual aid as women support each other's necks and gaze up, far away: they're powerful symbols but still not quite humanly real.

Still, as Al-Ith learns jealousy, dependence and other unhappy things in Zone Four, while Ben Ata (a bumbling but ultimately likeable figure) learns of love and friendship between the sexes, *Marriages* come alive. You can never forget it's a dramatization of ideas about marriage, civilization, the relationship of men and women and so on. However you can often feel and share these ideas, not merely appreciate them intellectually. □

WIZARD, by John Varley. Illustrated by Freff. \$10.95. 1980. Putnam/Berkley.

For me, Varley succeeds where Lessing does not, because he works from character into idea, and not the reverse.

Titan (first novel of a trilogy, of which *Wizard* is second and the unwritten *Demon* third) seemed to be two different books. One was the traditional SF-adventure novel, involving a group of Earth explorers journeying through the marvels of the world/entity Gaea, a great wheel whose outer rim sustains various life forms, especially Titanides, intelligent sort-of centaurs. This was the book you read in *Analog*, if you read that edited version. This is the book that Dick Lupoff reviewed here, and called "a disappointment."

The second book was the one I read and enjoyed. In it, the SF-adventure material was the background for the real story, in which Cirocco Jones, captain of DSV Ringmaster, discovered various things about herself, including the fact she'd rather be a hero than a responsible leader.

I'm not quarreling with Dick (or suggesting he read the edited *Titan*)! A book that's the same to every reader is

too shallow to be good. I am saying that a lot of contemporary SF, Varley's work included, is "SF" only because that's what the author enjoys writing. The author-as-God had a lot of fun setting up Gaea-as-world/god, and the result tickled my sense of wonder as few things have since the Heinlein juveniles. I enjoyed the clever touches, the movie references, the humour. What interested me (and the author?) more, though, were the people, and the human ideas which emerged from their interactions.

Titan, and much contemporary SF, can, I suggest, be read as adventure; and it can be read as Literature, to the enrichment of both and the happiness of the reader.

Wizard offers more of the same.

Seventy-five years have passed since Gaea agreed to make Rocky her Wizard. The happy ending has proved to have, as you might expect, some hidden clauses.

Gaea/God is increasingly capricious, cruel, and crazy.

Cirocco isn't in much better shape, thanks in part to Gaea and the responsibilities she inflicted on her Wizard. Rocky spends most of the book drunk or hung over, and it's as painful to me as it is to Gaby Plauget to watch her. (Freff's opening portrait, a sharp contrast to the "recruiting poster" which opens *Titan*, suggests it; suggests, too, her basic strength.)

Gaby, meanwhile, is beginning to wonder if Gaea is really God, or only City Hall. Can she be held to account for every injustice she's inflicting?

The Titanides, meanwhile, have discovered tequila, "death-with-a-pinch-of-salt-and-a-twist-of-lime." As Valitha, the book's chief Titanide character, tells her human lover, "Humans brought alcoholism to Gaea... Humans brought venereal disease, the only malady of Terran origin that affects us. Humans brought sadism, rape and murder." But the Titanides have to put up with humans, because Gaea likes them; she gets her jollies from watching them try to be heroes, and die in interesting

ways.

Into this mess come two visitors seeking miracles: Chris Minor, now Major, from San Francisco, and Robin of the Coven, from an all-woman society inhabiting an L-5 colony. Chris is subject to episodes of madness, in which his social controls vanish and he becomes your basic barbarian, intent on fighting and fornicating. Robin, thanks to a technician in a sperm-bank who didn't like lesbians, is subject to epileptic seizures, a transmittable genetic defect. (If Earth society is as medically advanced as it seems to be, with cloning possible in *Titan*, I don't know why the defect can't be edited out, but never mind.) Robin also has some interesting social conditioning to overcome, since she's never seen a man but has heard a lot of folk tales, none pleasant.

Neither Chris nor Robin like themselves much. Fortunately they're likeable. Once again, Varley sets up a real journey which then becomes a process by which the characters discover, deal with, and accept themselves.

Wizard, like *Titan*, is a book "about" being a hero. It's "about" power, which Gaea misuses and Cirocco is hiding from in her alcoholic fog. It's "about" responsibility, including the responsibility for acknowledging your own weaknesses, and "about" the power you gain from that act. It's a science fiction book because Varley starts with realities which embody his ideas. He starts with a being which can invent napalm to fry you, or send milk to feed your child. He starts with characters, and trusts you to do the abstract thinking.

Wizard isn't as upbeat as *Titan*. People survive; they even triumph sometimes, mostly over themselves. Yet the joyous adventure of floating down the river singing "We're off to see the Wizard" quickly becomes grim. The style, reflecting this, lacks the Besteresque flashes of invention in Varley's earlier work. (The chapter titles, though, are all taken from Sousa

marches; he and Bach are the Titanides' two favorite human composers. Those clever touches are there.)

Wizard's main problem is that it isn't a novel. It's the middle third of a novel. You may learn more about Titanide reproduction than you care to know, but unless you've read the earlier, uncut book, you won't understand the scenes with Gene at all. Unless you have more patience than I do, you'll be annoyed by the obvious cliff-hanger ending. Nevertheless, the Titan trilogy, even incomplete as yet, demonstrates how to write good SF which is also good fiction. □

THE SNOW QUEEN, by Joan Vinge. \$10.95. 552 pp. 1980. Dial.

In a sense it doesn't matter what I say about Joan Vinge's new novel, *The Snow Queen*. Vinge is, deservedly I think, emerging as a Big Name: Hugo winner for her *Analog* cover story "Eyes of Amber," a frequent convention GoH and so on. The Dial/Dell machine is gearing up to promote *The Snow Queen* like crazy. And it will sell. It's a big book, literally and figuratively, crammed with things that readers are bound to love: romance, adventure, strong female protagonists, exotic locales, a mother-goddess religion and spaceships plunging through black holes, young lovers tragically parted and happy endings.


It also has a stunning cover by Leo and Diane Dillon. I hear rumours of a special book of their artwork in preparation; does anyone know about this? Meantime, I hope Dial/Dell prints this painting as a poster, and sends me one!

The Snow Queen, in short, is going to be 1980's *The White Dragon*.

My comparison (made before Dial's publicity people said the same thing!) is based on more than potential best-sellerdom. Vinge and McCaffrey are writing "SF"; but their strength and appeal, I think, are the stuff of fantasy: in

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McCaffrey's case, the power of dragon lore, and in Vinge's case the power of the triple goddess figure. The book is dedicated "to the Lady, who gives, and who takes away"; the acknowledged sources include Andersen's "The Snow Queen" and Graves' *The White Goddess*; and the myth is embodied in three figures, girl, woman and queen of death, who are unforgettable.

I find the "science fiction" elements of the novel less than convincing, when I think about them. It is the very-far-future (and people still wear wrist-watches?). The planet Tiamat supplies the Hegemony (a loose planetary federation replacing the Old Empire) with "the water of life," an immortality drug gained by slaughtering the *mers*, intelligent sea creatures. In return, the Winter clan, centred mostly in the great city of Carbuncle (jewel and pustule of the world, yes) is given some of the toys of technically advanced worlds (there's a wonderful robot character) but is generally kept in its backward state. Every 150 years, as the planet's twin suns become unstable, the Black Gate, the local black hole which provides access to other worlds, becomes unusable. The offworlders leave with their technology, the Winter clan falls, the Snow Queen and her consort are sacrificed, and the primitive fisherfolk, the Summer clan, assume power.

This *Change* is due, as the novel opens. Arienrhod, Snow Queen for nearly 150 years, schemes to maintain power and save her world from barbarism, if not directly then through her secret clone, Moon Dawntreader Summer. The double society is, for me, a device rather than a fully-realized world. (The highly structured society of the nearest planet, Kharemough, is more convincing, especially as its restrictions are shown through police officer Gunhalinu.) Moon is a sibyl; and, given the importance of this idea in the book ("magic" which turns out to be "technology") I feel her training needs to be shown more fully. Her reactions—a shy, unsophisticated young tribal woman, separated from her family and her lover, her world and her Lady—seem unconvincingly calm. Her family background and her Summer heritage need more development too, since it's her upbringing which distinguishes her from her other self, Arienrhod: that, and innocence opposed to long years of holding power.

The Snow Queen is a hugely ambitious novel. Words, characters and ideas spill out, and five hundred pages can't deal with them all. Also, I found that the novel began slowly. But the characters of Moon, the Snow Queen, and Jerusha, an offworld officer in the Hegemony's police force, wouldn't let me stop reading.

Vinge's strongest achievement, in her

second novel, is her characterization. Moon—young, alone, in love, with her pale hair and moss-agate eyes—is an obviously appealing figure. Yet so is cold, cruel, complex Arienrhod; she's not a Wicked Witch, and Vinge makes her both understandable and forgivable. The Queen tries to ruin Jerusha, by giving her unwanted power as Commander of police, a woman trying to do a man's job in a sexist environment (after all those years?) Jerusha remains human. She's joined by a wealth of other characters, male and female, drawn vividly in Vinge's lush (sometimes over-ornate) prose.

Vinge's luck was to tap into a powerful archetype. Her novel is flawed, mostly by its own ambitious scope; and it will, I suspect, appeal to fantasy lovers more than hard-core SF readers. Nevertheless, between the Lady and Vinge's own developing skills, it becomes a memorable book. I have criticisms of it; but I also loved every minute of reading it. □

AN INFINITE SUMMER, by Christopher Priest. \$8.95. 208 pp. Scribner's.

IN THE MIST and Other Uncanny Encounters, by Elizabeth Walter. \$8.95. 202 pp. 1979. Arkham House.

In Christopher Priest's short story "Negations," a young man—a would-be poet drafted into a faroff and meaningless war—has been greatly influenced by a book of literary criticism. "In it, the author made out the case that the act of reading a book was just as important and creative an act as writing one. In some respects, the reader's reaction was the only completely reliable measure of the book. What the reader made of the book became the definitive assessment, *whatever* the intentions of the author." That critic could have been speaking of Priest's own work.

The five stories from 1976-79 collected in *An Infinite Summer* are elusive, impressionistic. They deal in nuances, they invoke feelings. Little "happens" as such. The reader looking for plot and action, for space ships and strong statements about Humanity's Destiny in the Stars, should look elsewhere. Yet surrendering to these puzzling, subtle stories was, for me, a creative act.

What does "happen"? In the title story, an Englishman in his 60's stands contemplating the Thames, remembering his courting days on Richmond Hill—and seeing mysterious tableaux, people "frozen" in time by mysterious visitors with strange devices. Lloyd himself, frozen in 1903 at the moment of proposing to his beloved Sarah, has woken in 1935. This accounts, apparently, for his unique ability to see the freezers and their victims, including Sarah who remains beside the Thames, amid the falling wreckage of exploding

German bombers in 1940.

It's a fascinating idea, this, but Priest presents it as an arbitrary convention, not explained. His focus is on Thomas Lloyd, on love and fidelity, and on that lost youthful world of the sunlit Richmond meadows beside the Thames. It's a moving story, and Anita Siegal's cover serves it well.

"Whores," in contrast, is a chiller, a short horror story about a soldier with synaesthesia. "Paley Loitering" also involves time-travel and displacement, youth and age, love and loss, in the Flux Channel Park: both an SF wonderland, with its bridges to Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow, and, somehow, a proper English park (I kept expecting to find a statue of Peter Pan around a bend in those neat paths). "The Negation" suggests, in precise details, a brief but significant meeting between an impressionable young man and an older woman novelist: a Le Guinian fable about the unbuilding of walls. Yet the Dik who is inspired "to act in symbols," to scale the wall, is above all, real. Finally "The Watched," an award nominee in 1979, is a long, challenging account of an anthropologist watching alien rites, drawn into them: one of the best treatments of "the alien" who is ourselves I've seen recently.

Priest is most commonly described as a "sensitive" writer, a "stylist." I'll use those terms too, as a warning to potential readers, and as praise.

Elizabeth Walker, while hardly in Priest's league, also excels at creating atmosphere. The seven stories in her collection *In the Mist* (no previous publications are credited) are "stories of the supernatural." They're not chill-a-minute horror stories of the North American type, but quiet, even over-long accounts of the intrusion of one supernatural event (often an unquiet spirit) into a quiet, civilized British or European world. The collection includes

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Walker's own introduction, a Fabian frontispiece, and an ugly, inappropriate cover, also by Fabian. These stories, despite the garish jacket, do not focus on violent action, though it's there. They deal with mood, nuance, and human relationships. Within their chosen limits, they are quite finely done. □

NEW YORK, N.Y. 10022, by Steve Kahn. \$2.50. 311 pp. 1979. Pocket Books.

THE OFFICIAL STAR TREK® TRIVIA BOOK, by Rafe Needleman. \$2.25. 206 pp. 1980. Pocket Books.

New York, N.Y. 10022 was an interloper in a batch of SF books, a thriller whose title isn't a date, but a zipcode. It's a fast-paced, ingenious account of a mail heist, told in fragments as the thieves, police and postal workers go about their activities, and especially as various anxious people wait for their share of the two million pieces of mail normally ready for the carriers on Monday mornings in NY 10022. Like any ordinary SF novel, it depends on its idea and fast plot for impact; the characters are stereotypes, but it did keep me reading. It may interest SF people simply because of its premise. Ever since "fandom" generated itself from the lettercolumns of Gernsback's *Amazing*, SF people have been mail junkies. We get our fanzines and books, build our paper personalities, make our friends and live our love lives through the post office. SF writers, worse off, wait for the cheque or the returning manila envelope: joy or misery, through the mail slot. Both writers and fans have been defined as people who become sexually aroused by the sight of a mail truck. And there are all those people in NY 10022, waiting . . . and waiting . . .

In Canada, we call it a mail strike.

In the same package was *The Official Star Trek® Trivia Book* "by Trivia Master Rafe Needleman (Orgonian)." Now who am I to trash a book by a 15-year-old, which asks such meaningful questions as "Do Vulcans drink alcoholic beverages?" and "What is the last line of 'The City on the Edge of Forever'?" Answer: I'm someone fed up with the trashy merchandising of ST and other least-common-denominator skiffy. *Star Trek®* the novel was abysmal, but it had a reason for existing, as do the Enterprise blueprints and other items. But I'm tired of the spinoffs and ripoffs: *I am Not Spock*, *Chekov's Enterprise*, the gushy *Making of the Trek Conventions*, the mostly-talentless *Startoons* (redeemed by Shiffman, Stiles and Gilliland), and etc., cluttering up the shelves and wasting good paper. Will people actually buy *The Official Star Trek® Trivia Book*? Will Pocket make a mint with it? Will it use the money to

support editor David Hartwell's efforts to publish *good SF*? □

WONDERWORKS, by Michael Whelan. \$13.95 hc, \$7.95 pb. 119 pp. 1979. Donning.

This column's prize for impressive packaging goes to *Wonderworks*, a collection of Michael Whelan's SF and fantasy cover art, from Donning's "Starblaze" line edited by Polly and Kelly Freas. I confess that, til recently, I was only vaguely aware of Whelan's work, associating him with the numerous others who turn out pictures of pneumatic women who are unclad (*Lamarchos*), semi-clad (*Gate of Ivrel*) or chafingly clad in impractical "armour" that would surely never let you sit a horse in comfort (*Well of Shiuan*). His charming cover for *Amazons!*, within the heroic fantasy conventions yet redefining and challenging them, changed my mind. Then *Wonderworks* made me re-evaluate Whelan again, as the creator of other covers I'd enjoyed. Within the restrictions of the genre (and those are considerable) he's established himself, since 1974, as a distinctive artist.

The first collection of his work showcases over 50 colour paintings; the 8½x11" format and quality printing do them justice. They are accompanied by black and white preliminary sketches, and Whelan's comments. They're divided into six categories—science fiction, sword and sorcery, romantic fantasy, horror, heroines and aliens—each with an appropriate introduction by an author whose work Whelan has illustrated—Anderson, Moorcock, McCaffrey, Gerald Page, Cherryh and Alan Dean Foster. Moorcock's praise for Whelan's combination of fidelity to the text and ability to capture an appropriate atmosphere is especially well-deserved; the "Stormbringer," "White Wolf" and "Sailor on the Sea of Fate" paintings are very effective. Oh, and it was Whelan, was it, who did those cute Fuzzy covers, those chilling *Year's Best Horror* covers, and . . . ? oh!

Whelan has been nominated for both the Hugo and Howard (World Fantasy) awards. He'll win one or both soon, especially with this collection to enhance his reputation. The book is well designed, with an attractive, uncluttered text. A special collector's edition, signed, numbered and boxed, is available for \$30; the regular edition is already in a second printing. □

RECOMMENDATIONS

THE DARKOVER CONCORDANCE, by Walter Breen. Foreword by Marion Zimmer Bradley. Illustrated by Melisa Michaels. \$8.95 pb, \$17.95 hc. 163 pp. 1979. Pennyfarthing Press, 2000 Center St. # 1226, Berkeley, CA 94704. This is a must for Darkover fans: complete and

detailed. It's also an extremely attractive book, a good example of quality small-press publishing. □

OTHER CANADAS: An Anthology of Science Fiction and Fantasy. Edited by John Robert Columbo. \$7.95 pb, \$15.95 hc. 360 pp. 1979. McGraw-Hill Ryerson. I don't necessarily agree with Columbo about what he means by "Canadian," "SF" or "fantasy," but I enjoyed this collection of stories, poetry and essays. It might make a dandy textbook. □

FIREFLOOD and Other Stories, by Vonda N. McIntyre. \$10.95. 281 pp. 1979. Houghton Mifflin. There are 11 finely-wrought stories here, on loneliness, alienation, human contact—including the award-winner "Of Mist, and Grass, and Sand" and the marvelous "Aztecs." Enjoy. □

AMAZONS! Edited by Jessica Amanda Salmonson. \$2.25. 206 pp. 1979. DAW. By standing the conventions of heroic fantasy on their heads, to create stories about women warriors, 12 writers—Andre Norton, Tanith Lee, C.J. Cherryh and others who'll become equally famous—have created some very enjoyable stories. Added bonuses include editor Salmonson's excellent introduction, Joanna Russ' presentation of Emily Bronte's "The Death of Augusta" and a list of recommended reading. Elizabeth A. Lynn's story "The Woman Who Loved the Moon" is the gem of the collection, a gem of the year in fantasy. I only wish that DAW had proofread the book! □

BULLETIN OF THE SCIENCE FICTION WRITERS OF AMERICA, vol. 14, no. 3, Fall 1979. \$3.00. 100 pp. Editor John F. Carr has put together a special issue on "Science Fiction Future Histories" with essays by Heinlein, Anderson, Niven, Bradley, Asimov, Sky, Pournelle, Varley, Dickson, Card and himself. It's available to non-members from Carr at 10512 Yarmouth Ave., Granada Hills, CA 91344 (cheque payable to SFWA). Get it! I especially enjoyed the Varley article, "1955," perhaps because his dates so closely match mine. He made me remember vividly the years I spent getting the other kids to play "Sputnik," the day I was the only kid in the class who knew who Yuri Gagarin was, the day the library clerk looked at *Lucky Star and the Moons of Venus* and *The Rolling Stones* and said "You can't read those. They're boy's books". . . . □

VECTORS, by Charles Sheffield. \$2.25. 432 pp. 1979. Ace. Fourteen enjoyable stories here, with introductions, by the author of *The Web Between the Worlds*. I agree, by the way, that "The Treasure of Odirex" is "SF," not "fantasy." □■

—Susan Wood, Dept. of English, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, B.C., Canada V6T 1W5

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THE MAGAZINE ABOUT SCIENCE FICTION

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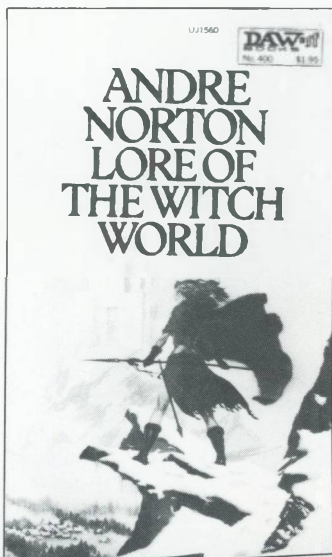
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tells secrets of SF editing
we were Not Meant To Know

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A World Remote in Space and Time

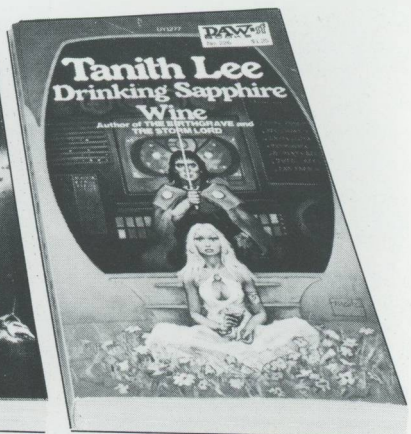
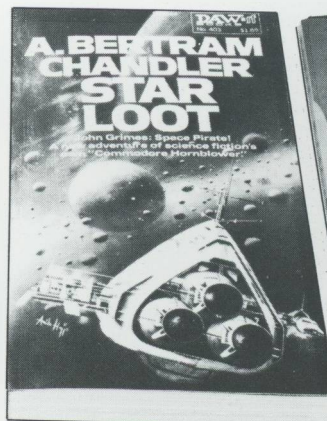
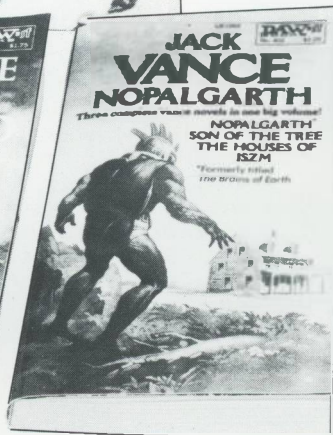
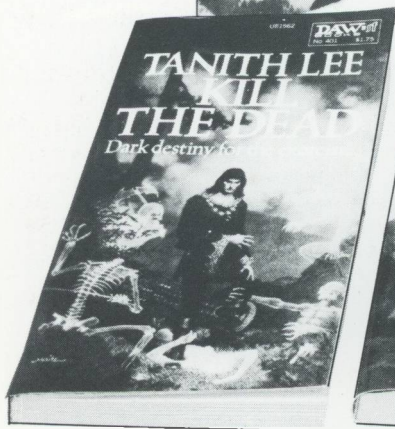
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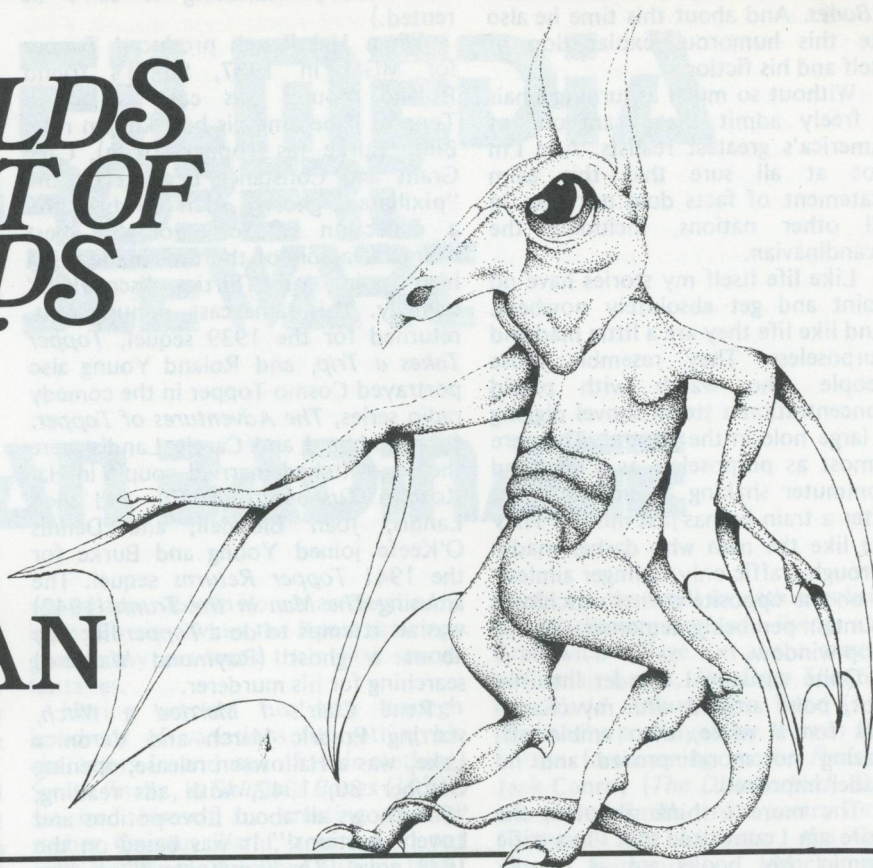
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WORLDS OUT OF WORDS

SUSAN WOOD



Last night, I finished doing my research and notes for my current column for Andy Porter. I went out for dinner with Peter, an Australian-born friend who teaches Canadian studies, and who is helping Bertram Chandler do research for the big, serious novel for which he recently received a research grant from the Australian Arts Council. It's to be an alternate-world novel, in which Ned Kelly, the Australian folk hero, leads a successful war of independence in 1885 (with a little help from Europe and North America). John F. Kennedy gets into the novel too. I hope to give further details when and if Mr. Porter, editor, sir, publishes my interview with Chandler. (One of the spin-offs is that Peter and I, discussing conditions in *Canada* in 1885, when there was an almost-successful rebellion in the West, have been inspired to write our own alternate-world historical fantasy.)

But I digress.

In my fortune cookie, after dinner, was the motto: "Literature does not lead men astray." It seemed a good omen to begin writing this column, in plenty of time to get it done, revised carefully, and into the mail long before my deadline.

PUBLISHERS PLEASE NOTE: I live in *Canada*. Paperback distribution here is spotty, hard-cover rare, and small-press virtually nonexistent, except that finally we have both a decent SF/fan-

tasy store, and a used-SF store which carries some collectors' editions, in Vancouver. Nevertheless, I rely on publishers' generosity to help me do this column.

In general, you have been remarkably generous. Jim Baen of *Ace*, I apologize again for taking out my frustrations with your firm, on you. Thanks for sending *Thieves' World*, edited by Robert Asprin (*Ace*, 1979, \$1.95, 308 pp), eight stories by the likes of John Brunner, Lynn Abbey, Poul Anderson, Joe Haldeman and M.Z. Bradley, all set in the same universe. It came as I was marking final exams, and got put onto the "real soon now" shelf; but it looks fascinating, and I will certainly consider the stories when, as a judge, I'm making recommendations for the World Fantasy Awards.

Atheneum seems to have cut me off their review list after several years (perhaps because I praised two of their books, two columns ago?). Macmillan never seems to send out review copies. Nor does Gollancz, or any other British publisher, even though a review here *might* help make a North American reprint sale.

You small press people are superb.

All of you please note: books should go to my *work address*, where there is always someone to receive the mail, and keep it out of the rain. The university has just (grrrr) changed our mail address, so it's:

Susan Wood
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#597, 1873 East Mall
Vancouver, B.C. V6T 1W5
Canada

While I still have your attention, dear publishers, may I remind you of a basic fact? Packaging matters. You want a casual reader to pick up an SF/fantasy book and *buy it*.

Packaging matters especially to those of us who know that much of SF is NOT junk, is not "sci-fi," but is intelligent, well-crafted literature. I can still remember Robert Silverberg saying that he was quitting SF in part because he was trying to write "real literature" —and was damned tired of publishers who "issued it with jelly-fish blobs on the covers, that scare off the people who *would* enjoy my books."

As the SF panel at the Modern Language Association conference (*the* big academic conference) last December was reminded, most readers are trained to distinguish the good books from the junk, the serious novels from the drugstore paperbacks. Most readers do not have that mechanism for SF. On the basis of the covers, they assume it's *all* junk, AND THEY DO NOT BUY IT.

Last week, at the reception for the Governor General's Literary Awards (Canlit's Hugos, sort of), I assured local

SF writer Crawford Kilian that I would never pen a book on the basis of its cover. I'm about to break that promise.

Sorting through the pile of review books, I picked out some examples of books which I, as an intelligent and sympathetic reader of SF, would dismiss immediately, unread, on the basis of packaging alone.

BUG-EYED MONSTERS, edited by Bill Pronzini and Barry N. Malzberg. Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich (who should know better), 1980. \$4.95. 273 pp.

The title is reinforced by a hideous wrap-around cover of a multi-coloured, drooling Thing, and by a blurb which says "13 stories of dripping, creeping, gurgling, purling, trilling, oozing, seeping, gushing deadly monsters." Thanks. If anyone at school saw that, they'd revoke my tenure immediately (you teach that?).

The anthology is edited by two respected professionals, and does contain some Big Names, all of whom are probably ready to commit mayhem in the offices of HBJ. I'll give this one a try, actually, which is more than I can say for *Locusts* by Guy N. Smith (Paperjacks Canada, 1980. \$2.75, 230 pp.). "A winged nightmare of swarming terror," it promises, with an illiterate blurb and lots of ugly green insects dripping bright red blood. Junk. □

THE CLONE REBELLION by Evelyn Lief. Pocket, 1980. \$2.25. 210 pp.

This first novel has half-decent cover art, but it's ruined by an awful blurb, which I will not inflict on you. The advance proofs came while my SF class was studying Kate Wilhelm's *Where Late the Sweet Birds Sang*, a sensitive, well-written extrapolation of a clone society. The students were genuinely moved by Wilhelm's exploration of what it meant to be "human." I read them the *Clone Rebellion* blurb. By the end of the first paragraph, they were doubled over laughing, saying "The book sounds like a bad parody of *Sweet Birds*." "It sounds like it's got every clone cliché around." We won't buy that."

Sorry, Evelyn Lief. Sorry, David Hartwell at Pocket. Get angry with your art/advertising departments for me, please? □

Editors, art directors, publishers: are you listening? Look at the cover of . . .

ALIENS, edited by Gardner R. Dozois and Jack M. Dann. Pocket, 1980. \$2.25. 305 pp.

. . . to see how to present a book right. The *uncredited*, dammit cover (Whelan, at a guess; interior illos are by Gaughan) is charming, the blurb is intelligent, and the whole package makes you want to buy what turns out to be an excellent anthology indeed, probably the defini-

tive book about aliens to date.

One final note, to a specific publisher, Doubleday. I could not have compiled this column, or taught my SF class, without *The Science Fiction Encyclopedia*, edited by Peter Nicholls (Doubleday, 1979, \$12.95 paper, 672 pages). I've already praised that book here, as have innumerable other reviewers, fans, SF teachers, bookstore owners and so on. It's been nominated for the 1980 special Hugo Award for Best Nonfiction, and I hope it wins, despite the fact that it's up against *The Language of the Night: Essays on Science Fiction and Fantasy* by Ursula K. Le Guin (Putnam, 1979, \$9.95. 270 pp.)—edited by Susan Wood.

Someone High Up at Doubleday cancelled the planned companion encyclopedia on fantasy. We need that book—and we will buy it. Please publish it!

Those of you out there who agree with me might write to Doubleday, 245 Park Ave., New York, NY 10017, and repeat these sentiments. □

THE MAGAZINE OF FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION: A 30-Year Retrospective. Edited by Edward L. Ferman. Doubleday, 1980. \$10.00. 310 pp.

GALAXY: Thirty Years of Innovative Science Fiction. Edited by Frederik Pohl, Martin H. Greenberg, and Joseph D. Olander. Playboy Press, 1980. \$10.95. 465 pp.

THE BEST OF OMNI SCIENCE FICTION. Edited by Ben Bova and Don Myrus. Omni, 1980. \$3.75. 144 pp. Large format paperback.

There are a number of books on my review shelf right now, billing themselves as "the best of . . ." Has the 90% crud really been removed? In two of these anthologies, the answer would seem to be yes.

Since I teach SF, I have been trying to bone up on The History of the Field. Yet, despite much research in the pulps, much reading (since I discovered Lucky Starr when I was 8), a sub to *F&SF* since 1968, and a dozen years of hanging around at conventions hearing people talk about the Good Old Days, there remains one problem. I was born in 1948.

The general consensus, from people who were in the SF field before I discovered it, seems to be that, in the Golden Age from 1938 to circa 1950, John W. Campbell and *Astounding* dominated the field. When Terry Carr indicated this in his excellent collection *Classic Science Fiction* (Harper and Row, 1968, \$14.95, 445 pp.) A.J. Budrys jumped all over him in *F&SF*. I'm not denying that other magazines were around, or that they were important, but. . .

James Gunn, in *The Road to Science Fiction* #3 (Mentor, 1979, \$2.75, 656 pp; the third volume of an excellent series I'm using in my SF class next year) says that, in this period, "The consensus was shaped by Campbell. Mostly he defined what science fiction was by the stories that appeared in his magazine . . ." (p.3). And so on.

Then, with the new decade (I quote Gunn again) "Other directions emerged . . . with the appearance of *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, edited by Anthony Boucher (1911-1968) and J. Francis McComas (1910-1978) and of *Galaxy Science Fiction*, edited by H.L. Gold" (p.9). Frederik Pohl, in his preface to *Science Fiction of the '50's* (Avon, 1979, \$4.95, 438 pp., another excellent collection I've praised elsewhere) credits these two new magazines with beginning "a perfect explosion of new science-fiction magazines" and thus helping to bring important new writers into the field (p.xii).

My impression is that, while Campbell emphasized scientific accuracy, *F&SF* stressed (as it still does) literary quality; while *Galaxy* stressed entertainment and psychological exploration.

(Well, Andy, this ought to provoke a lively lettercolumn, at least.)

Anyone doubting the importance of *Astounding/Analog*, *F&SF* and *Galaxy* should check, for instance, the first appearances of the stories in the *Science Fiction Hall of Fame* volumes.

Anyone interested in good SF and fantasy should immediately buy the *F&SF* volume, first issued as the 30th anniversary issue. There are notable omissions (Varley, especially), as Ferman explained in the magazine version, but still . . . This book contains stories like "Fondly Farenheit," "Flowers for Algernon," "A Canticle for Leibowitz," "The Women Men Don't See," "Jeffty is Five," "Born of Man and Woman," "Sundance," "We Can Remember It for You Wholesale" and "The Quest for St. Aquin"; Gahan Wilson cartoons; an Asimov story and introductions; and much more. There are 24 stories and poems by most of the best people who ever worked/are still working in this field. There's a fascinating introduction by Ferman; I didn't know, for instance, that his father was general manager, and later publisher, of Mercury Press, which publishes *F&SF*. A glance at current issues indicates that Edward L. Ferman is maintaining the high quality established by his predecessors, and revealed by this volume.

The *Galaxy* collection is less impressive as a volume of "classics," though it does have "Coming Attraction," "The Lady Who Sailed the Soul," "The Day Before the Revolution" and "Slow Sculpture," among other goodies. What it does have is 27 entries (including a

Budrys book review) by, again, most of the major writers in the field. Most important, it has a marvellous introduction by Pohl; "Gold on *Galaxy*" by the founding editor; and "memoirs" from most of the authors represented, discussing their stories. Again, this is both an entertaining book, and a good reference source for anyone who cares about SF. Alas, it makes you weep to look at *Galaxy* now, even assuming you can find a copy. I wonder if they ever *did* pay Varley for his three stories, including "Overdrawn at the Memory Bank," reprinted here?

The *Omni* volume, with a hideous cover by Pierre Lacombe, proves once again that this is the magazine for people who not only don't read science fiction, but probably can't read to begin with. My increasingly-irritated notes reveal that I found Sheckley's "Body Game" and Ellison's "Count the Clock that Tells the Time" still interesting, Bester's "Galatea Galante" amusing but irritating in its socio-sexual assumptions, and the rest—routine work, by good authors (Card, Haldeman, Asimov, Zelazny and Martin, whose "Sandkings" here just won a Nebula) who not only *could* do a lot better, but, at the rates *Omni* pays, *should* have done better.

The focus, of course, is on the slick graphics, which I generally found boring in the extreme. The Arthur C. Clarke interview was ok. *Must* I mention that, except for Kathleen Stein, who did a very brief text for a "pictorial," there seem to be no women represented at all—this despite the fact that Suzy McKee Charnas' "The Ancient Mind at Work," currently being talked about as a World Fantasy Award nominee, was first published in *Omni*?

Anyone who thinks we don't need any more of this equality talk had a) better think again, and b) look at any current issue of *Omni* or *Analog*, not to mention 75% of the crud published each month as SF, that I don't review here because it's too offensive to any thinking human being.

My SF class doesn't buy *Omni*, either, any more. □

THE BEST OF WALTER M. MILLER, JR. by Walter M. Miller, Jr. (Editor uncredited, but probably David Hartwell, who did a Miller volume—was it this one?—for Gregg Press.) Pocket Books, 1980. \$2.50. 472 pp.

THE ISLAND OF DOCTOR DEATH AND OTHER STORIES AND OTHER STORIES (yes, that really is the title, and I love it). By Gene Wolfe. Pocket, 1980. \$2.95. 410 pp.

THE VAMPIRE TAPESTRY. By Suzy McKee Charnas. Simon and Schuster, 1980. \$11.95

SAN DIEGO LIGHTFOOT SUE and

other stories. By Tom Reamy. Earthlight Publishers, 5539 Jackson, Kansas City, Missouri 64130, 1979. Trade edition \$14.95, slipcased edition \$25.00. 237 pp.

These four books are my personal "bests" for this column.

Walter M. Miller, Jr. won a Hugo for "The Darfsteller" in 1955, and another for *Canticle for Leibowicz*, three linked stories from *F&SF*, in 1961. Then he vanished from the SF scene (for various reasons), leaving about 40 published short stories and a classic novel. This collection reprints 15, not only of his best, but of the best, short stories of the '50's. I could quarrel with some selections, but won't.

The best news, however, comes from Pocket Books editor David Hartwell. Miller has resurfaced, and is working on the sequel to *Canticle*. (My SF class cheered.)

Gene Wolfe is one of our best, most complex, and most consistently underrated writers. Other people get the awards, though he won a Nebula for "The Death of Dr. Island" in 1973, after placing second to "no award" in the 1970 Nebulas, with "The Island of Dr. Death." These are included in his collection, along with "The Doctor of Death Island," "The Eyeflash Miracles," and that marvellous award-losing novella "Seven American Nights." The latter is marvellous in the true sense; it deals with marvels, as a young Arabian man travels through a post-holocaust America; and I marvel at it.

Wolfe's wry humour, his ironic vision, and his ability to transform traditional mythology and culture into new SF/fantasy/horror terms, are apparent on every page. Maybe that's his problem. It helps to be educated to appreciate Wolfe, a man who'll use the Bible and *The Wizard of Oz* as background, and who'll use quotations from Proust and Virgil to introduce stories which then reproduce, convincingly, ordinary slangy American conversation.

I think there are 14 stories here, and I think I have the dates right; the Pocket advance proofs left out copyright information and the table of contents.

Suzy Charnas' "The Ancient Mind at Work," the first of five linked stories which make up *The Vampire Tapestry*, opens quietly: "On a Tuesday morning Katjie discovered that Dr. Weyland was a vampire, like the one in the movie she'd seen last week."

The point is, of course, that poor Edward Lewis Wayland is nothing like the traditional "I vaant to trink your bloood" vampires of movies and popular fiction, with their clichés and their overtones of sadomasochistic sex. He's just an ordinary being in contemporary New York—with an unusual

problem. Charnas makes him real, and likeable. As a bonus, there are well-done women characters, especially Dr. Floria Landauer, Wayland's psychiatrist.

Tom Reamy was well-known to fandom as the editor-publisher of the graphically-impressive magazines *Trumpet* and *Nickelodeon*, before he won a Nebula in 1976 with "San Diego Lightfoot Sue," his second professionally-published story. He also won the John W. Campbell Award as best new writer that year. He produced a handful of excellent stories—"Twilla" and "The Detweiler Boy" among them. His first novel, *Blind Voices* (a Hugo nominee last year) was off at the publishers when he died, suddenly, in 1977.

Yes, we lost a good, and potentially great, teller of chilling fantasy-horror stories, when we lost Reamy. We also lost a good person. Harlan Ellison and Howard Waldrop say it better than I can in their articles in *San Diego Lightfoot Sue*, a collection of 11 stories lovingly assembled by Tom's friends, and graced by a gorgeous (and of course appropriate) wrap-around cover by Leo and Diane Dillon, who also did the endpapers. Some of the stories are fragments; the best will live. This volume is a beautiful memorial, a collector's item, and, most important, a book to enjoy.

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS:

MATILDA'S STEP-CHILDREN. By A. Bertram Chandler. Robert Hale, London, 1979. £4.35. 208 pp. I discovered, and enjoyed, the Horatio Hornblower stories when I was a teenager. Then I discovered that Capt. Chandler had re-incarnated Hornblower as John Grimes, and put him into space. The Grimes books are fun, and this one is no exception. *Matilda's Stepchildren* has not yet found a North American publisher; I am sure all of Grimes' many fans will be as puzzled about this as I am. □

ZELDE M'TANA. By F.M. Busby. Dell, 1980. \$1.95. 316 pp. Zelde is a street-tough black woman, who fights her way up to become a starship captain. She's great. There's lots of action, adventure and entertainment in her story. □

THE FIFTH BOOK OF VIRGIL FINLAY. Edited by Gerry de la Ree. Edited and published by Gerry de la Ree, 7 Cedarwood Lane, Saddle River, NJ 07458, 1979. 128 pp. \$15.75. I confess to extremely mixed feelings about Virgil Finlay's artwork. However, I have nothing but admiration for the fantasy art books which Gerry de la Ree produces superbly. Collectors and art-lovers, take note of this one. □

THE IRON LAW OF BUREAUCRACY. By Alexis Gilliland. Loompanics Ltd., P.O. Box 264, Mason, Michigan 48854, 1980. \$4.95. Alexis Gilliland, many-

times Hugo nominee, is a cartoonist who can do as much with a single black line as Bill Rotsler can. In addition, his cartoons have wit and vitriol (perhaps as a result of Alexis' real-world job as a Washington bureaucrat; I'm sure cartooning, brilliantly, is one of the things that keeps him sane). This excellent collection has an introduction by Rotsler. Send for it, and enjoy, enjoy, enjoy. □

SCIENCE-FICTION STUDIES. Edited by Angenot, Elkins, Philmus and Suvin. 3/\$11.50 Canadian, \$10 US (cheques payable to SFS Publications) from Prof. Marc Angenot, Science-Fiction Studies, Arts Building, McGill University, 853 Sherbrooke St. W., Montreal, Quebec, Canada H3A 2T6. This journal is the "heavy" (in all senses) in the academic SF field. I particularly recommend, in #19 (November 1979), the symposium with Greg Benford, Samuel Delany, Robert Scholes, Alan J. Friedman and John Woodcock, ed., on teaching science fiction; and Delany's review of the Gregg Press reissue of *And Chaos Died*, by Joanna Russ. Issue #20 (March 1980) turned out—by accident, not design—to be an issue about SF on women, and by women. For me, the highlight is Joanna Russ' article "*Amor Vincit Foeminam*: The Battle of the Sexes in SF." There's also a thoughtful, readable study of Frederik Pohl by David N. Samuelson, a critic whom I respect very much. □

FOUNDATION. Edited by Malcolm Edwards (who has since resigned, leaving no successor as of this date). 3/\$7.50 surface mail to Canada/US, cheques payable to The Science Fiction Foundation, North East London Polytechnic, Longbridge Rd., Dagenham, Essex RM8 2AS, U.K. I always enjoy *Foundation*—it's the chattiest and most writer-oriented of the serious/academic magazines. I especially recommend #17 (September 1979) in which D.G. Compton, Fritz Leiber and Philip K. Dick all have fascinating autobiographical pieces. **THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK.** By Donald F. Glut (really? Is this a real name or a reference to the glut of SF-movie books and junk on the market?) Ballantine, 1980. \$2.25. 214 pp. Why, oh *why* did the publishers send me this two weeks before the movie opened? I refuse to read it before I see the film—why spoil the suspense?—but this decision is *really* straining my willpower. The cover manages to combine elements of pop-culture skiffy (blazing lasers, occult flying-saucer craft, and of course the robots and Chewie) with those WWII fighter planes and a passionate embrace straight off the bodice-buster "romances," all of it backed by a brooding Darth Vader. It's awful, but it'll sell, to people who think that this is what SF really is all about.

Finally, with Andy's and your indulgence, I'd like to publicize a project dear to me. I have just finished guest-editing a special issue of a local women's literary journal, devoted, this time, to women's SF and fantasy. I didn't get paid a penny for this (and it was a lot of work); I did it for love, and I am proud of the result. I think you'll enjoy it too.

The issue contains, among other good things, stories by Jessica Amanda Salmonson (who just sold *The Tomoe Gozen Saga* to Ace; there's a portrait of Tomoe Gazen by Wendy Shultz in the issue, and a review of Jessica's anthology *Amazons!*); by Eileen Kernaghan (the prequel to her fantasy novel *Journey to Aprilioth*, forthcoming from Ace; the story here has a gorgeous frontispiece by Hugo nominee Victoria Poyser); by Eleanor Arnason; by Elinor Busby, the first woman to win a Hugo (for co-editing *Cry of the Nameless*) and by a number of other people who are going to be very famous soon. (This is a little-mag, and I could only pay \$10 a story; Le Guin and Russ were not available, sorry.)

There's poetry by Terry Garey and Lois Wickstrom (of *Pandora*), among many others. There is artwork by Hugo nominees Jeanne Gomoll and Joan Hanke-Woods, among others. There's an

excellent long study of Joanna Russ, by Seattle writer Marilyn Holt. Debbie Notkin, who is co-owner and manager of The Other Change of Hobbit, an SF bookstore in Berkeley, put together an excellent, readable 17-page (in ms.) guide/bibliography which tells you everything you might want to know about women's writing in SF now (and including those male writers who are portraying real human characters). Said bibliography is so complete it includes plugs for *Starship* in general, and for my women-in-SF piece in particular. If the collective finds the money, there will be pages of photos of the women in SF, by me.

The journal is called *Room of One's Own*, published by the Growing Room Collective, P.O. Box 46160, Station G, Vancouver, B.C. V6R 4G5. Subscriptions are \$7.50 a year in Canada, \$8.50 to the US. The special double issue, which should be out in early fall 1980, will cost \$4.00 in Canada, \$4.50 in the US. Not bad for 150 pages of what is, in my opinion as a critic, a lover of SF and fantasy, and a woman who read two full cardboard boxes of manuscripts, a very fine collection.

Advance orders, especially from bookstores, would make the Collective, which is very poor, very happy. □

—Susan Wood

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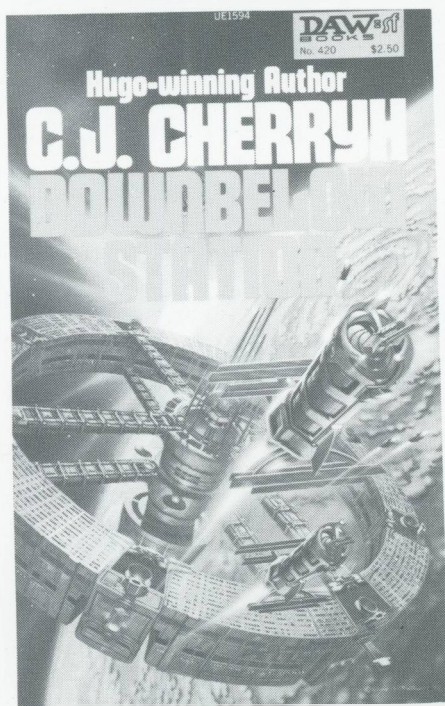


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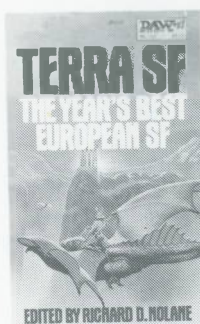
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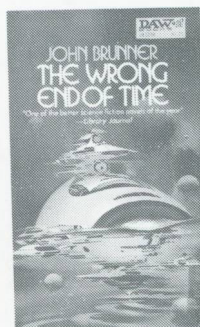
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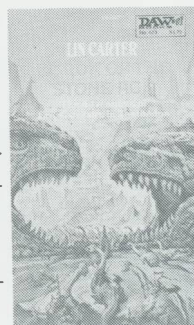


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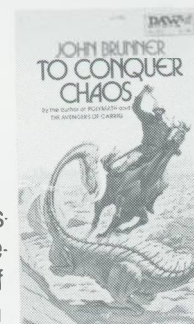
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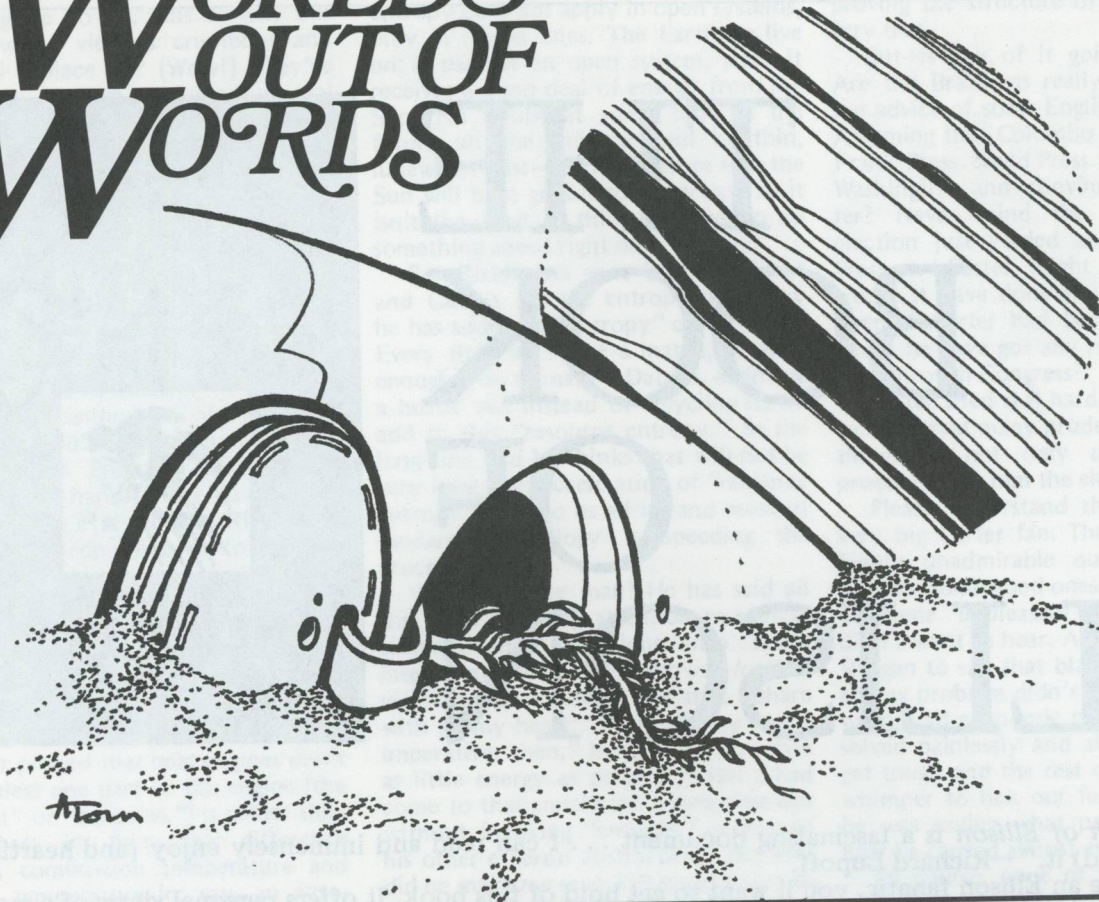
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WORLDS OUT OF WORDS



SUSAN WOOD

WARHOON 28, edited by Richard Bergeron, "being a special issue of Warhoon devoted to Walt Willis' life, times and work." 1 W. 72nd St., New York, NY 10023. 618 pp. \$25.00.

Once upon a time, a rainbow made up of wit, outrageous puns, and shrewdly-sympathetic observations came shimmering up out of Northern Ireland. It was rooted in a legendary fan magazine named *Hyphen*, and it spread out through a column in *Quandry* and elsewhere, called "The Harp That Once or Twice" by Walter A. Willis.

Now, after a promise made in February 1969, we've found the other end of the rainbow, in New York City. The pot of gold is the long-promised "Willish," *Warhoon 28*, an elaborately-bound collection of the best of Willis' fanwriting, edited by Richard Bergeron.

If you understand why fandom is a way of life, you've already ordered this volume. If you don't, but want to know—or if you simply enjoy good writing and finely-crafted books—place

an order before Bergeron sells out his printrun.

Willis wrote for love, and egoboo, to entertain his friends. His only major "pro" venture was a history of Ireland, *The Improbable Irish*, under the pseudonym "Walter Bryan." Bergeron's "Notes for a Walt Willis Bibliography" take up eight double-columned, single-spaced 8½x11" pages.

Bergeron published this issue, all 618 pages of it, with shamrock-covered endpapers and a gold-stamped green binding, for love too. He did the research. He solicited about 100 pages of extra material from Willis' fellow-fans from the '50's and '60's, including full-colour artwork by himself, Lee Hoffman, Bob Shaw and other legends. He typed the thing. He duplicated it. He'll send it to you, by mail or UPS, if you send him US\$25.

Energumen, *Innuendo* and *Void* (if Ted White is really serious about the latter) could all share next year's fanzine Hugo ballot with *Warhoon*.

And if Chicago wins the 1982 worldcon bid, we could have another Willis fund like the ones that brought him to Chicon in 1952 and 1962. □

THE BERKLEY SHOWCASE: Volume 2. Edited by Victoria Schochet and John Silbersack. New York: Berkley, 1980. 200 pp. \$2.25.

I knew I'd been reading too much formula fantasy when I opened the *Berkley Showcase*, second in a series of original story collections, and found Glen Cook's "Soldier of an Army Unacquainted with Defeat." The soldier Tain has deserted from the army of the Dread Empire. The opening scene, which has him methodically disposing of four mountain barbarians and their shaman, contains lines like "A man's scream butchered the stillness," "Similar blades had taught half a world the meaning of fear" and "The third celebrated his passing by plunging downhill in a clatter of pebbles." If you like this sort of thing, Cook does it well.

But would an uneducated shepherd boy in a remote fantasy land really say "Gosh, this's good"?

"Child of Darkness" by Pat Hodgell also takes on various clichés: gang wars, student violence, the craziness on any campus in exam week, the End of Human Civilization. She makes them work. Her future society and its slang are convincing; and Jame Talissen, med student, Kencyrath kitten, and lots more, is a good person to have around. Remember this story at award-nominating time.

"Doll's Eyes" by Karl Hansen is almost as effective, though it substitutes despair for the Hodgell story's manic energy. Speaking of hyperactivity, R.A. Lafferty's "Lord Torpedo, Lord Gyroscope" careens along in a style appropriate to the lives of its protagonists, Karl Riproar and Emily Vortex. The *Showcase* contains nine original stories: SF, fantasy, humour, and a Grim Warning from Tom Disch. I read it at one sitting. It also has whacko biographical notes, and an excellently presented interview with Barry Longyear by Shawna McCarthy. From this sample, Berkley has an excellent series going. □

STILL FORMS ON FOXFIELD by Joan Slonczewski. New York: Ballantine/Del Rey, 1980. 214 pp. \$1.95.

Still Forms on Foxfield is an enjoyable first novel by, Heaven help me, a doctoral student in molecular biophysics at Yale. Do all SF people have fifteen fascinating talents, or am I only imagining it after reading *Berkley Showcase* biographies?

Joan Slonczewski (who's also eight years younger than I; oh well, maybe I can turn into another Tiptree when I retire from university teaching) is also a convert to Quakerism, and a member of the New Haven Friends Meeting. Hence came the inspiration for her novel.

In 2022, following the inevitable global war, a small group of refugees (Friends, this time, not Catholics) fled to a habitable planet, Foxfield, orbiting Tau Ceti. Aided by the friendly alien inhabitants, who are biotechnological wizards, they have maintained a functioning society, sustained by their faith. Now, four generations later, a United Nations ship has made contact, promising reunion with Earth, ftl travel, "psychic adjustment" for all, and the dubious benefits of advanced technology. Complications ensue.

First novels are allowed to be predictable. Rarely are they redeemed, as this one is, by smooth writing, competent planet-building, and good characterization, especially of the viewpoint character, Allison Thorne, the planet's technical director whose call into the void brought the UN ship to Foxfield. The Quaker background, deft-

ly handled, is fascinating. (I wish H.R. Van Dongen, the cover artist, had read the book. These are practical colonists; men and women wear trousers or denim, not picturesque, but cumbersome, "traditional" dress.)

Occasionally, the author slips. The dialogue tends to contemporary North American slang, and I can't accept that "smart aleck" and "frisbee" would be common terms on a colony in 2133. Still, it's a most readable book, one that should make Joan Slonczewski a strong contender for the John W. Campbell Award.

Speaking of the Campbell Award, I have two more contenders. One is William Gibson, who actually sold his first story to *Unearth* in 1977. However, that issue also carried Somtow Sucharitkul's first story, and he was ruled eligible this year. Bill just sold his second story to Terry Carr's *Universe* 11, another to *New Worlds*, another (in collaboration with John Shirley) to Charles N. Grant's *Shadows* ... and another, also with Shirley, to *Omni*. That very first story was written for my SF class at UBC. I am proud of Bill.

Terry Carr's *Universe* 9 carried "The Back Road" by Mary C. Pangborn. Yup, Edgar's sister. Her first story. She's in her 80's, has another story forthcoming in *Universe* and one in Marta Randall's *New Dimensions*. Watch for them; I think she's very good. □

ASCENDANCIES, by D.G. Compton. London: Gollancz; New York: Berkley/Putnam and Toronto: Academic Press, 1980. 224 pp. \$12.95US.

I admire the work of British writer D.G. Compton, but have always found it unrelentingly bleak. I once, in a marathon session, re-read *all* of his SF in two days, for an introduction to *The Continuous Katherine Mortenhoe* (Gregg Press, 1980) and ended up with acute depression. Now I take Compton in moderation.

It's a pleasure to report that his new novel, *Ascendancies*, is a delight. Witty. Clever. Subtle. Very British.

It's also not really "SF."

Compton seems, here, to have combined his other identities: Frances Lynch, who writes entertaining romances in the comedy-of-manners mode; and Guy Compton, who writes mysteries. *Ascendancies* (the title refers to a game of one-upmanship which everyone "plays" in some form or another) is a thriller set in the near future. By 1998, Earth has experienced 15 years of falling "moondust," a mysterious substance which provides safe energy and fertilizer. The catch is that Earth also experiences the Singing. The sound of children's voices fills the air, along with the scent of synthetic roses—and people Disappear. These

phenomena are never explained (part of Compton's comment on human nature). Their effect in individuals is clearly shown.

Like most Compton novels, this one is a study of character: wealthy, aloof Carolyn Henchard, whose husband has Disappeared, and Richard Wallingford, the insurance agent who discovers that Caroline has substituted a body. Twists and tensions mount as Richard plays private detective, investigating the "Disappearances Advisory Service." Twists and tensions, complicated by the nuances of the British class system, also mount as, over a few days, the characters fence: "two people no longer strangers" without "apparently even the smallest possibility of anything *unsuitable*" happening. Compton uses that phrase and others like a chorus. His language (except for a rather arch opening and closing) is as dry and ironic as his plot, shading in nuances of language and social class, revealing character in a line of dialogue. Yet Compton, and his characters, ultimately celebrate compassion and hope.

Oh, and the book is witty: Jane Austen crossed with Evelyn Waugh and the early Len Deighton.

Ascendancies is not a book for every taste. Don't look for rayguns, flashing swords, or conclusions: just people, and the muddle of living. □

MAGICAL CHANGES by Graham Oakley. New York: Atheneum, 1980. n.p., \$12.95

From British verbal wit, I'll pass to British visual wit. Graham Oakley, creator of the "Church Mice" series of large-format picture books, has taken a device long familiar in children's books: that of cutouts which, as each page is turned, combine to create new pictures. The results are, indeed, "magical changes." Each large-format page is split horizontally. Each reveals a different scene: longhaired sculptors finishing a town monument to Scumbleton's mayors (four large sharks); swans on a pool; dignified businessmen with brollies; matrons in Marks and Spencers clothes gossiping over the back fences of Council houses under the washing. Flip the half-pages, though, and the gents are carrying the laundry, the sharks are growing out of a suburban garden, and so on. This is a kid's book for adults. I had to fight off Sharon and John (in their 30's) and Chris and Burt (8 and 9) to get it back so I could write this review.

Buy it as a Christmas present. Indulge in another for you. □

THE BARBIE MURDERS AND OTHER STORIES by John Varley. New York: Berkley, 1980. 260 pp. \$2.25.

Update: I showed John Varley my review of *Galaxy*, the 30-year "best of"

volume I discussed last column, to verify whether he *had* been paid for his stories before that tale saw print.

He looked ... pained. Then he explained that not only had he not been paid; but Playboy Press never bothered to send him a copy of the *book*.

I handed him the bound page-proofs of *Barbie Murders*, a collection which presents, well, the best of the rest of Varley except "Options." [You are doubtless tired of hearing me say that I think Varley is the best short story writer to hit SF since Tiptree. If you buy the book, you can decide.] Now, bound page-proofs are often sent to reviewers in advance of hardcover publication; and they are generally sent to authors as a courtesy. Varley looked even more pained, and inscribed the book "I really hate to sign copies of something I don't own." He also did not receive pageproofs of *Wizard*, sequel to *Locus* Poll winner *Titan*. I did not get pageproofs, nor did *Locus*, though the reviewer for Neil Barron's defunct review magazine did. Varley found out *Wizard* was actually in print when a local bookseller brought him a copy. These are minor discourtesies. Another writer I know was, this summer, trying desperately to begin a new book, proofread galleys (a horrible job) and fend off the bank, which was threatening to foreclose because a \$9,000 cheque from Pocket Books was months overdue. (It finally came.)

Look, I'm not *blaming* anybody, least of all Victoria Schochet and John Silbersack, editors, and poor overworked Melissa Singer, editorial assistant at Putnam Berkley. I would just like to observe that publishing is one of the least efficient businesses I've *ever* seen, including the Ottawa civil service (though not our postal "service."). As for writing: as one writer, drinking himself to death in Hampstead, observes to the hero of *Joshua Then and Now*, "It's a mug's game." □

JOSHUA THEN AND NOW by Mordecai Richler. New York: Knopf; and Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1980. 435 pp. \$16.95 Canadian.

THE GREAT PURSUIT by Tom Sharpe. London: Pan, 1979. 253 pp. 80p U.K., \$2.95 Canadian.

Writing is also a fascinating game, and an addictive one. For anyone who contemplates literary life with appalled amusement, I recommend two non-SF books.

Joshua is the first novel in 9 years from Canadian Mordecai Richler, author of both the novel and the screenplay *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*. Like all Richler's work, it contains a large element of autobiography. Joshua Shapiro, once a grubby teenage car thief from Montreal's St. Urbain St., is now a

reasonably successful writer, journalist and sportscaster. He has a Westmount house, a happy marriage to the beautiful *shiksa* Pauline, and all the problems and doubts of middle age, as youthful follies join with midlife follies to nearly ruin it all. The book flashes deftly back and forth through Joshua's life, showing the accidents and the breaks that have made his life what it is—the same accidents and breaks that have put this Ottawa Valley *shiksa* in Vancouver to tell Jewish kids reading *Duddy Kravitz* about bar mitzvahs and the Holocaust.

Joshua's mother does a striptease at his bar mitzvah. He's humiliated on Ibiza, returns as the author of an international bestseller on the Spanish Civil War, to find his enemy dead. He drinks too much at the World's End in Chelsea, at the Rideau Club in Ottawa, and at the parties given by the old gang from Fletcher's Fields High, hungry boys who are now rich, powerful and unhappy men. The constant themes of his life are a search for integrity, represented by the Civil War heroes; the necessary compromises we make to survive; and the need for love. It's a wise, funny, and moving book.

Joshua is also the biggest Canadian Joke since the *National Lampoon's* "Canada: Retarded Giant of the North" issue. Maurice Richard. Cornwall, and Plattsburg. The Grey Cup in Ottawa in 1967 (technically, Mordie, founded not by American lumber baron Philemon Wright, who settled in Hull, but by Nicholas Sparks. Sparkses have our pride, too). And, oh heaven, there's William Lyon Mackenzie King, the old humbug, Canada's longest-governing Prime Minister, who got us through WWII by communing at night with the spirits of his dead mother ... and his dead dog. The book takes on everything sacred, from the Bible onward, and mocks it: everything but Josh's love for Pauline, his family and friends.

In particular, it takes on the insane world of writers, from Hampstead to Hollywood, New York and Montreal. I loved the book, stayed up til 4 am reading it and giggling, felt I knew Josh and Pauline by the end, and put it down with a little more hope that we'll all survive with some grace.

Grace is precisely the quality lacking in the world Tom Sharpe dissects in *The Great Pursuit*. A scathing satire of international publishing, it reveals a world corrupt to the core.

Frensic is a failed British novelist turned literary agent, a profession he chose because agents live "interesting, comfortable and thoroughly civilized lives ... they met novelists [and] they showed an encouraging lack of literary perspicacity. In addition they seemed to spend a good deal of time eating and drinking and going to parties."

Frensic and his partner, Sonia Futtle, persuade an unknown and abysmal writer to travel through the U.S. impersonating the author of a steamy bestseller. All havoc breaks loose. There's not a decent human being in this book, but there's a lot of savage wit and slapstick. It's great bedtime reading.

THE HITCH-HIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY by Douglas Adams. London: Pan, 1979. (Forthcoming from Harmony Books, 1980.) 159 pp. \$2.50 Can, 80p U.K.

Don't panic! It's in the book!

BBC's smash hit series, the worthy successor to *The Goon Show* and *Monty Python*, is now a book. Reading the *Guide* is no substitute for rolling around on the floor, laughing hysterically as your friends play it for you, though you can do that too by sending £6.99 plus 50p. postage to Megadodo Productions, P.O. Box 101A, Surbiton, Surrey KT6 5AX, and asking for the double l.p. (I always thought Surbiton was so respectable, but then, I expect Aunt Lily listens to *Hitch-hiker's Guide* too.)

The *Guide* opens with Earth being destroyed for a hyperspace express route through the neighborhood, and gets better from there. I'm waiting to hear the second series. □

THE SHADOW OF THE TORTURER by Gene Wolfe. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1980. 303 pp. \$11.95

There seems to be a lot of transatlantic comedy, mixed with Serious Literature, in this column. I'll end with Serious.

Gene Wolfe, like Compton, is a writer for whom "science fiction" and "science fantasy" provide some convenient devices, and a publishing label. *Shadow of the Torturer* introduces his most impressive work to date, *The Book of the New Sun*, planned as a tetralogy.

The setting appears vaguely European-medieval, until Wolfe drops enough hints that it's the southern continent of a far-future ice-age Earth, where some technological marvels survive in a degenerate society. His hero, Severian, is introduced as a child, adventuring at night in a graveyard where he saves Vodalus, archenemy of the Autarch who rules the vast walled city of Nessus. Severian is an apprentice torturer, an executioner, soon exiled for the crime of showing mercy after enforcing the law.

We know Severian is on a quest to find his identity. We know, early on, that he will inherit, or "back into" the Autarch's throne. Yet Wolfe's skill reveals every popular "quest" novel for the cliché it is. The plot is a thread; the quest is for nothing less than the nature of reality itself, under all the dreams and illusions of life. Wolfe, as "trans-

lator," allows Severian to conduct us through the squalors and marvels of his "posthistoric" world, until the torturer, hated by all, is revealed literally and metaphorically as both an actor in someone else's play, and the author of his own life. "I know little of literary style; but I have learned as I progressed, and find this art not so much different from my old one as might be thought," he writes.

Of course Gene Wolfe, torturer, is making us wait for the next three volumes, though *Shadow* is satisfying in itself. It's as dazzling and mysterious as that magic blue stone, the Claw of the Conciliator (title of the sequel), a relic

of the Master who could transcend reality and negate time: like Wolfe himself. □

FAR RAINBOW/THE SECOND INVASION FROM MARS, by Arkady and Boris Strugatsky. \$9.95. 240 pp. 1979. Macmillan. I have never understood the popular misconception that Russian SF in general, and the Strugatsky brothers' SF in particular, is dull or arty or hard-to-read. "Far Rainbow" is a delight, and my choice for best novella of 1979. It doesn't do anything startlingly new, for Western readers: it shows the reactions of various people as, through indifference and bureaucratic

fumbling, they destroy the ecological balance of their world—and face the consequences. Ah, but the authors handle the idea so well, with such economy, and with such insight into their characters that anyone should be impressed. "Second Invasion" is a rather heavy-handed satire; but fun. □

WHO FEARS THE DEVIL, by Manley Wade Wellman. \$2.25. Dell. 239 pp. 1980. Dell. The "Silver John" stories have been reissued, with Tim Kirk illustrations. Again, enjoy. □■

—Susan Wood

SUSAN WOOD

Susan Wood died suddenly November 12th at her home in Vancouver. The cause of death was not immediately established, awaiting the results of an autopsy. She was 32.

Susan shared a Hugo award with Mike Glicksohn, then her husband, at TorCon, the 1973 World SF Convention, for the fanzine *Energumen*. *Energumen* was a Hugo nominee in 1971 and 1972 as well. Susan was a Hugo nominee for Best Fan Writer in 1974, 1975, 1976, 1977, and 1978, winning the award in 1974 and 1977. A many faceted critic and reviewer, writings by her appeared in numerous magazines and fanzines including *The Washington Post*; *Amazing* (where she conducted a fanzine review column); *Locus*; *Starship*, where in addition to long articles, one of which won a Ditmar award, she conducted "Propellor Beanie," a fanzine review column and lately "Worlds out of Words," the review column in which she replaced the long-established Dick Lupoff; her own *Amor de Cosmos*, a personalzine; and literally dozens of other publications, ranging from the smallest fanzine to the most literary



Susan Wood at Norwescon.

of Canadian journals.

She received a Masters Degree from Carleton University in Ottawa, where she was born, and a Ph.D. in Canadian Literature from the University of Toronto. After teaching at the University of Saskatchewan in Regina, she moved to Vancouver, where she was a tenured member of the English Department at the University of British Columbia.

Somewhere in there Susan found the time to be half fan-guest-of-honor, with Mike Glicksohn, at the 1975 World SF Convention in Australia. She also found the time

and energy to act as the celebrated Wood Hotel, hosting numerous fans and professionals during their stays in Vancouver.

Per her will, she was cremated. A memorial service was held in her honor November 21st at the University of British Columbia, to which her collection of Canadiana was donated. A scholarship fund in Susan's name will be established.

I knew Susan quite a long time, as fannish relationships go, beginning at the 1968 Boskone, where I introduced her to bagel's at Bulkie's. I visited her and Mike several times, staying at their apartments on St. George Street and Maynard Avenue, and served with Susan on the committee to bring the 1973 Worldcon to Toronto.

Susan's last column for *Starship* appears this issue. An interview with A. Bertram Chandler, which Susan was working on at the time of her death, will also appear soon.

That such a brilliant scholar, such a warm and fannish talent should be taken from the world is a great tragedy. I am devastated. We have lost one whom we can scarce afford to lose.

—Andrew Porter