

# Alouette

## The Newsletter of the Canadian Region of SFWA

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SCIENCE-FICTION AND FANTASY WRITERS OF AMERICA, INC.  
CANADIAN REGION

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## The Writers' Union of Canada

SFWAns working at book-length: I urge you to join The Writers' Union of Canada. Its monthly newsletter is the best source of information about government grants and programs for writers, tax issues affecting Canadian authors, and what's happening in Canadian publishing. As much as I value my SFWA membership, if I could only belong to *one* writers' organization, TWUC would be the one I'd chose. Dues may seem hefty compared to SFWA's, but doing just one booking a year through the Union's Writers-in-the-School's program will cover that cost (in Ontario, you get \$200 for a half-day school visit, or \$300 for a full day, plus travel expenses). And don't forget that it's because of The Writers' Union that you get Public Lending Right payments on your books.

Among the Canadian SF writers who are members: Lesley Choyce, Candas Jane Dorsey, Leona Gom, Phyllis Gotlieb, Monica Hughes, Eileen Kernaghan, Judith Merrill, Spider Robinson, Robert J. Sawyer, Élisabeth Vonarburg, and Andrew Weiner. And, of course, most of Canada's major mainstream writers belong, including Margaret Atwood, Pierre Berton, Farley Mowat, Peter C. Newman, Mordecai Richler, and W. O. Mitchell.

Founded in 1973, The Writers' Union of Canada has over 860 members residing in every province and territory of Canada. The objectives of the Union are:

- to unite writers for the advancement of their common interests;
- to foster writing in Canada;
- to maintain relations with publishers;
- to exchange information among members;
- to safeguard the freedom to write and publish; and
- to advance good relations with other writers and their organizations in Canada and all parts of the world.

TWUC keeps its members informed of issues and legislation affecting their profession and provides them with a means for collective action whenever a joint response to these issues is required. TWUC works to improve the writer's position with publishers, governments, booksellers and buyers. It can act on the writer's behalf when a dispute arises between members and their publishers. It also works to increase literacy in Canada and to promote Canadian-authored books in schools and libraries both at home and abroad. The *Who's Who in The Writers' Union of Canada: A Directory of Members* and the *Writers-in-the-Schools* brochure are used as references by teachers, librarians, reading- and lecture-series sponsors, journalists, and others.

TWUC offers its members the fellowship of other writers across Canada, a national and local forum for professional discussions, and

several specific professional services including help with contracts; a monthly newsletter; touring opportunities (including reading fees); volunteer group life and health insurance; and copies of Union reports and publications dealing with such topics as literary estates and archives, income tax law, literary agent agreements, grants and competitions, anthology rates, and a model trade-book contract. (Non-members can buy copies of these publications; a price list is available on request.)

A few achievements of The Writers' Union of Canada:

- In 1976, the Union reached an agreement with publishers on guidelines for simultaneous submissions, thus enabling writers to more efficiently market their works. In the same year, the Union set a royalty of 10% as the minimum standard for basic hardcover trade-edition books.
- In 1978, thanks largely to Union lobbying, the federal government implemented "Schedule C" — a regulatory weapon which prohibits foreign publishers from dumping remaindered foreign editions of Canadian-authored books that also have a Canadian edition into the Canadian market.
- In 1985, after years of Union prodding, the federal government funded a Public Lending Right system to reimburse Canadian authors for the use of their books in public libraries.
- In 1987, the Union initiated the industry-wide Community Against Censorship, which successfully fought the passage of the federal government's draconian censorship bill, Bill C-54.
- In 1992, the Union introduced its Royalty Audit Project, auditing, at Union expense, the publishers' records of royalty payments on randomly selected members' books (see my letters about this in SFWA *Forum* issue 123, page 21, and issue 127, page 13).
- Currently, the Union is lobbying for the preservation of government funding for the arts and for the removal of the GST on books and magazines.

To qualify for membership, applicants must be Canadian citizens or landed immigrants, and have a trade book published by a commercial or university press within the last seven years, or, if published earlier, still in print. Membership fees are \$180 plus GST annually.

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## STATE OF THE ART

**SF - Not!**

by Andrew Weiner

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*(Also published, in a slightly different form, in  
The New York Review of Science Fiction)*

Kurt Vonnegut. Walter Tevis. Doris Lessing. Margaret Atwood. Russell Hoban. Michael Crichton. Paul Theroux. Steve Erickson. Martin Amis. Invaders From Outer Space, all of them, from the point of view of the science fiction community. Invaders from the feared and desperately envied mainstream.

The usual rap against these mainstream invaders is that they write a kind of mock-SF. Ignorant of our great traditions, they constantly re-invent the wheel (nuclear holocaust! mutants! plagues! aliens!). Ignorant or careless of science, they make dumb, obvious mistakes. And so on.

But probably the greatest reason for resentment of these mainstream pretenders is that they are, apparently, more successful than the average producer of category SF. *Their* SF often scoops up big advances, hits the bestseller lists, gets turned into movies. And even when it is not commercially successful, it will at least get reviewed — sometimes favorably — in real newspapers and magazines.

Faced with such incursions, we will often see a closing of ranks, a spirited defense of the borders. Here, for example, that usually astute and open-minded SF critic Norman Spinrad, on Russell Hoban's *Riddley Walker*:

... even the journeyman genre writer would not perpetrate some of the howlers that Hoban has committed when it comes to the details of his future society. Here, for example, we have isolated British villagers at a very low technological level forever drinking tea and rolling hash in 'rizlas.' Hoban seems never to have considered that the tea and hashish would have to be imported from great distances, and that in such a society paper would be far too rare and expensive to use in rolling joints. (*Science Fiction in the Real World*, p.38)

To be fair to Spinrad, he concedes that "this would be mere nit-picking if the same lack of extrapolative rigor (indeed, I suspect, the ignorance of the concept of extrapolative rigor itself) did not infect the creation of the central core of the novel, the invented patois in which it is told" (especially, one must imagine, by comparison to the invented patois at the heart of Spinrad's own *The Void Captain's Tale*). But this is only to shift the focus from one small nit-pick to another, larger and equally fatuous.

Faced with such criticism one can only imagine Russell Hoban responding: Who gives a fuck?

This is, more or less, what the late Walter Tevis told me when I interviewed him a decade ago for the *Toronto Globe and Mail*. Tevis, perpetrator of a Planet On The Other Side Of The Sun (in *The Man Who Fell To Earth*), and of other lapses in extrapolative rigor, told me that he was "not in the least interested" in traditional hardware-based science fiction, "but the furniture of fantasy delights me. I see in it possibilities for psychological realism. I'm also very drawn towards mythology and folklore and religion. Science fiction, as far as I'm concerned, is something of a religious medium. You can't make any logical or rational distinction between an angel and a visitor from another planet."

To evaluate books like *Riddley Walker* or *The Man Who Fell To Earth* in terms of their adherence to genre traditions is to utterly miss the point. These people are not playing the genre game at all. Nor are they, for the most part, chasing after our (relatively puny) core

readership. Instead they are writing Science Fiction For People Who Don't Read Science Fiction.

"Science Fiction For People Who Don't Read Science Fiction" is a clumsy term that yields no catchy acronym. But what else can we call this stuff? "Mainstream SF"? "Literary fantasy"? "Scientific Romance"? "Visionary Fiction"? For lack of a better term, I propose to call it (after *Wayne's World*) "SF — Not!"

Works of SF — *Not!* range from books of high literature (Huxley, Atwood, Tevis's *The Man Who Fell To Earth*) to literate popular entertainment (Crichton, Tevis's *Steps of the Sun*, Deighton's *SS-GB*). But they share certain characteristics:

- They are usually much better written than comparable genre works (hence the expression "if it's good, it can't be science fiction:" a proposition that contains at least some uncomfortable truth).
- They usually don't have the words "science fiction" (or a picture of a spaceship) on the cover.
- They feature interesting characters, or at least well-drawn archetypes.
- They are, as the late James Blish/"William Atheling" observed some thirty years ago, typically "about something" whereas "very few science-fiction stories, even the best of them, are about anything ... They show no signs of thinking ... about problems that mean something to everyone." (*The Issue At Hand*, p.145) Thirty years later this is, if anything, truer than ever.
- Science, accurate or otherwise, is incidental to their program, although they may be inspired by scientific and technological imagery.
- They are more widely read and reviewed than all but the brand leaders within category SF.
- People Who Don't Read Science Fiction *do* read these books. They will then say, in all sincerity, "but (*Brave New World*) (*The Handmaid's Tale*) (1984) (etc.) isn't *really* science fiction."

When People Who Don't Read Science Fiction say "but it isn't SF," what they mean, of course, is "this is good. SF isn't good." The Moon landings, the *Star Wars* movies, the persistence of *Star Trek*, the bestsellers by Clarke and Asimov and Herbert, the movies and TV shows, the explosion in paperback SF production, the high fashion gloss of cyberpunk, the upsurge in academic interest in the field ... none of this has done anything to alter the basic flaky public image of science fiction (unless *Star Trek* and the like have reinforced that image).

We can berate these readers for their ignorance and prejudice. We can insist that there *is* good stuff in science fiction (some of it even better than the works of SF — *Not!* I have referred to above), if you look hard enough. We can say all this (as we have been saying it for at least twenty years). But we will not be heard.

Much has been written about the New Wave battle to bring SF out of the ghetto and into the mainstream. Actually, "ghetto" may be a little too strong — too *dignified* — in this context. "Suburb" is probably closer to the truth. By the late 1960s, science fiction was already a comfortable, largely arid suburb of world literature.

I won't rehash those battles now, except to sum up the outcome: We lost. Science fiction remained in the suburbs (although with a new bathroom, and a three-car carport). It never did move to the inner city. It didn't want to.

In a sense, the SF field has said to People Who Don't Read Science Fiction: "We don't need you. You couldn't possibly understand what we're doing, anyway." And in doing so, we have left the field way open for SF — *Not!* Because even People Who Don't Read Science Fiction are at times starved of wonder, and will seek it out one way or another.

There is, though, a certain permeability at the border between SF

and SF — *Not!* Some SF authors (Bradbury, Ballard, Ellison) have been able to cross over to the other side, just as some mainstream writers (like the Jack Womack of *Ambient*) have made the reverse migration.

And even those who publish strictly within category SF may occasionally encounter an SF — *Not!* response, on a purely local level, from friends and acquaintances who Don't Read SF, but who *did* read their stories or books. ("This isn't really science fiction, is it?")

This happened to me, after the publication of my Canadian short story collection, *Distant Signals and Other Stories*. At first, my reaction was puzzled, even a little annoyed. Although lacking the words "science fiction" on the cover, the book boasted a suitably ugly approximation of Sci-Fi Art, and contained stories which had mostly been published in recognized category SF markets. There were not too many spaceships in these stories, but there were plenty of aliens, and a fair bit of time travel. Initially, I would insist that it *was* science fiction, if perhaps of a slightly idiosyncratic nature. Later, though, I learned to go with the flow. Who was I to disagree? Maybe I had been writing SF — *Not!* all along. Maybe, I thought, I should be flattered.

I know of at least one writer who has experienced an SF — *Not!* response from his publisher: Terence M. Green, whose latest novel, *Children of the Rainbow*, is being published by McClelland and Stewart, Canada's largest and most respected mainstream house, as "literary fantasy." (McClelland, you see, does *not* publish "science fiction.")

Norman Spinrad has encountered the SF — *Not!* response, too, and found it quite a disorienting experience. In another essay in *Science Fiction in the Real World* (the most important book of SF criticism of the past decade, for all my own nit-picking above), Spinrad describes the reaction to his novel *Child of Fortune*:

"Many people who are not regular SF readers expressed the same kind of surprised pleasure. 'I don't like science fiction, but I like this book; but then *Child of Fortune* isn't science fiction, is it?'" As Spinrad ruefully observes, *Child of Fortune* "is set several thousand years in the future and takes place on four planets and three spaceships. If that isn't science fiction, what is?" (p.22)

What indeed?

Spinrad's response is to affirm that *Child of Fortune* is science fiction... "But it is not sci-fi." Sci-fi, that is, in the sense of the action-adventure/Scott Meredith Plot Skeleton/pulp-based children's literature that currently fills up so much of the racks.

Spinrad makes some useful distinctions between science fiction and sci-fi. But he recoils from drawing the logical conclusion: that science fiction (as opposed to sci-fi), hardly exists anymore, and what does exist is almost marginal to the real business of the field. The real business of SF is sci-fi (that is, entertaining action-adventure books, with a sympathetic protagonist pursuing a clear-cut goal through a series of escalating crises, preferably packaged in series and with appeal to adolescents). Perhaps it always has been, although never so single-mindedly as today.

As SF has concentrated on sci-fi, the centre of gravity of the field has shifted. Works that would once have been readily identified as science fiction, but that fail to conform to the current run of product, will often excite a *Not!* response from within the field, although in this case an unfavourable one. If they are not criticized (for unsympathetic protagonists, slow pacing, technophobia), they are often simply buried beneath the mounds of sci-fi flooding the racks.

It's true that genuine, serious science fiction can still be found in the short-fiction magazines; and also at novel length, although from a diminishing number of publishing houses. From time to time we will even get books (like Spinrad's *Child of Fortune* or Kessel's *Good News From Outer Space* or Womack's *Terraplane* or James Morrow's work) with aspirations to match those of the most high-minded examples of SF — *Not!* But finally, such books are marginal items. And, even for the serious SF reader, increasingly hard to find. People Who Don't Read SF will never find them at all (except maybe in Vintage Paperback after the death of the author, as with Philip K. Dick's best work).

To take one recent example, John Kessel's *Good News From*

*Outer Space*. When I read it, I thought "this is like early Vonnegut, but in some ways even better." Kessel's book was published in a dignified, sober way, with no garish sci-fi trappings. It has been well-reviewed within the field. Presumably it has reached its potential audience within category SF: literate SF readers who Don't Read Sci-Fi. But this is a small slice of an already small core readership. And outside the field, the book is all but invisible to a potentially larger audience: people who read Vonnegut (and Tevis, and Martin Amis) but who Don't Read... you know the rest.

So I can't help wondering whether a book like *Good News From Outer Space* might not do as well or better if it could forsake the SF tag altogether and take its chances out there in the bigger world of SF — *Not!*

It would be a long shot, no doubt. Even assuming a sympathetic mainstream publisher, Kessel would have to go out there as a virtual unknown. Within SF, on the other hand, he has name recognition with at least a segment of the readership. The same would be even truer for a writer with as hefty an SF track record as Norman Spinrad.

Moreover, as Gordon Van Gelder pointed out in his editorial in the April 1992 issue of *The New York Review of Science Fiction*, mainstream writers don't necessarily have an easier time of it. Atwood and Vonnegut are the exceptions; obscurity and equally low advances are the rule. And no doubt there are powerful market forces driving outsiders like Jack Womack or James Morrow *into* the field, even as others yearn for escape. To pursue the SF — *Not!* readership may be to chase after a chimera. So it's not for me to urge Kessel or Spinrad or anyone else to plunge into the mainstream.

But I do wonder whether some people might prefer at least a quiet and dignified obscurity to one involving publication with spaceships on the cover. And I wonder whether those people might include me. \*

## MEMBER PROFILE

### John Park

Dr. John M. Park, partner in an Ottawa scientific consulting firm, came to Canada from his native England in 1970 to be a grad student in chemical physics at the University of British Columbia. He spent three years as a Research Assistant with the National Research Council, and has contributed to several prestigious journals. John attended the Clarion Workshop in 1978 (see his reminiscences in the November 1992 *Alouette*). An article by John on writing SF in Canada appeared in *The SFWA Bulletin* in 1982; it's reprinted on page 8 of this *Alouette*. His first SF novel, *Janus*, is currently under submission.

#### John Park SF Bibliography:

"Cages" in *Galaxy*, December 1976

"Der Geist und die Maschine" ("The Ghost and the Machine") in *Kopernikus 11* (Moewig, Rastatt, Germany, 1984)

"The Software Plague" in *Far Frontiers II* (Baen Books, New York, 1985) and in *Cities in Space* (Ace Books, New York, 1991), and, in a French translation, as "La peste logicielle," in *Solaris*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (May-June 1990)

"Retrieval" in *Tesseracts*<sup>2</sup> (Press Porcépic, 1987)

"Spring Sunset" in *On Spec*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (Spring 1990), reprinted in *Tesseracts*<sup>3</sup> (Press Porcépic, 1990), and, in a French translation, as "Printemps — Coucher de soleil," in *Solaris*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (Autumn 1991)

"Falconer" in *Tesseracts 4* (Beach Holme Press, 1992)

"Andor's Whale" in *Tomorrow Science Fiction* (forthcoming) \*

## THE BUSINESS OF WRITING

## Self-Promotion

by Tappan King

*These comments were originally posted in the "Marketing" topic of the GENIE Science Fiction Round Table (SFRT) on December 1, 1992 (Category 6, Topic 1, Message 61). They are copyright © 1992 by Tappan King and may not be reproduced in any form without the express permission of the author.*

Publishers do very little market research, though they do pay attention to market research done by others. The best-informed publishers have a fairly good picture of who buys what books, but very rarely have modern "deep research" tools, like focus groups and sample modeling, been applied to publishing, let alone SF publishing.

If it sounds like most SF publishers are following the seat of their pants, they are. There are forces of selection at work; if you guess right consistently, you get to keep your job.

What about authors marketing their own work? T. Jackson King's essays in the SFWA *Bulletin* are a very good starting point, but there are some things to bear in mind:

First, the biggest mistake authors make is trying to look like professional marketers, and failing. A good example of this is the ads that authors produce and pay for which try to imitate ads designed by commercial artists. They never end up looking like "real" ads, and as a result, resemble the vanity pieces they are.

Authors who wish to promote themselves should turn their "amateur" status into an asset, and try to project the most genuine side of themselves that they can. I can think of one horror author who produces wacky cut-and-paste flyers on da-glo paper that are so gonzo that they instantly convey naïve enthusiasm.

As to whether or not this sort of self-promotion works, it depends on what you do. Appearances at conventions, on panels, at autographings, have a definite impact on sales. Any time you can give your work a human face, you will be likely to win over readers. I can't count the number of times I've heard someone say "I started buying [author's] books after I heard [him/her] speak at a convention."

Whether ads in program books or fanzines, or flyers on tables, or homemade posters and such work is another matter. It's not clear just how much good the professional equivalents of these things do, so the amateur versions are even harder to quantify.

There are two basic ideas to bear in mind when you're promoting yourself. My nicknames for them are the Momentum Principle, and the Rule of Three.

The Momentum Principle says that an author's reputation is a huge, inert object that needs to be set into motion with a lot of small, repetitive pushes (panels, news stories, meetings with booksellers, GENIE appearances) that ultimately get things going.

The Rule of Three says that people tend to believe things they've heard from three or more apparently unconnected sources. (That's why publishers use advertising, publicity, and sales promotion to sell books. All three set the fourth source, "word of mouth," in motion.)

The bottom line is that there's no way to quantify the effect of any single action, but you can be fairly sure that you'll make yourself more successful if you embark on a consistent, long-term program of self-promotion. \*

## SELLING YOUR BOOKS

## Thunder Books

Leonard J. DeVulder runs a science-fiction mail-order business called Thunder Books in Thunder Bay, Ontario. He's interested in getting new, autographed copies of titles by Canadian authors. Unfor-

tunately, he doesn't have accounts with many publishers, so he'd like to get books directly from authors. I've sold him 10 copies of each of my books at 40% off cover (no returns); I don't make any money doing this, but he does give the books a good push in his catalog, and tells me that all the copies have sold. Terence M. Green has recently started supplying DeVulder with books, too. If you're interested in reaching a few new readers, contact:

Leonard J. DeVulder, Thunder Books, 144 Cox Crescent, Thunder Bay, Ontario, P7A 7K8, (807) 345-9560. \*

## READERS WANTED

## The Idler Pub

The Idler Pub in Toronto holds free public readings every Sunday night, for an audience of 60 to 70 people. They're looking to have Canadian SF and fantasy writers participate, and particularly welcome out-of-town writers who might be passing through Toronto.

The Idler does not pay readers (although you do get \$20 worth of credit for food and drink), but you can bring along a stack of your own books and sell them to the audience. Also, if you're a member of The Writers' Union of Canada, you can apply for a reading fee under TWUC's National Public Readings Program (this is another fine reason to belong to TWUC).

The Idler is located at 255 Davenport Road (Davenport and Avenue Road). They like to have three readers in an evening, and each reading usually runs 20 or 25 minutes. The whole event lasts from 8:00 to 10:00 p.m., including time for autographing and book-selling. If you're interested (either alone, or in combination with other writers you know in any field, including poetry), contact Stan Rogal at his home, 24 Silver Avenue, Toronto, M6R 1X8, (416) 538-244. \*

On Sunday, February 28, at 8:00 p.m., Robert J. Sawyer, Edo van Belkom, and Terence M. Green will read at The Idler Pub, 255 Davenport Road, Toronto.

## CAMPBELL AWARDS

## Canadians Eligible

A reminder to Hugo nominators: Canadian SFWAns **Don H. DeBrandt** (*The Quicksilver Screen*), **Barbara Delaplace** (many anthologies), and **Michelle Sagara** (*Books of the Sundered*) are eligible for this year's John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer. \*

## WORLD FANTASY AWARDS

## Judges Announced

World Fantasy Awards are given for best novel, novella, short story, anthology, and collection. The judges for 1993 will be:

Roland J. Green, 4447 N. Ashland, #2, Chicago, IL 60640

Diana Wynne Jones, 9 The Polygon, Clifton, Bristol, BS8 4PW, UK

Kathryn Ptacek, P.O. Box 97, Newton, NJ 07860

Steve Rasnic Tem, 2500 Irving Street, Denver, CO 80211

Brian Thomsen, P.O. Box 1261, Lake Geneva, WI 53147 \*

## MARKET REPORT

## Response Times

by Edo van Belkom

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There's nothing more exasperating than having to wait to find out if the story you've just put your heart and soul into is any good. Sometimes you can wait as long as four months just to learn that the magazine you've submitted to has been overstocked for over a year.

There used to be a time people submitted to *Asimov's* because they knew they'd get a personal response from George Scithers within two weeks. But times have changed and with fewer magazines and more writers, lengthy response times (RTs) have become the norm in the SF field.

There are plenty of reasons for long RTs and every magazine has a favourite excuse. In the small press, long RTs are the result of a number of things, most of which have nothing to do with reading slush piles or the production of the magazine. For example, the following was taken from a small-press magazine's update in a 1991 issue of *Scavenger's Newsletter*: "My husband's job was transferred to Atlanta and we are now pretty much settled in our new home. I'm mostly caught up with correspondence, but if you've written me in the last few months and still haven't heard from me, then send a postcard and I'll get back to you ASAP."

Other reasons for slow RTs are similarly personal in nature and often include things like loss of employment and ill health. Sometimes a small-press editor gets in over his head, gets behind in his publishing schedule, allows manuscripts to pile up and finally neglects to respond, period.

Chris Lacher, editor of the semiprozine *New Blood*, is a classic case. Here's two bits from the "Slim Pickins" section of *Scavenger's*, an informal reporting on various magazines by the newsletter's subscribers.

*New Blood*: They lost one story and held another for 150 days, yet the letter that finally did come encouraged the writer to send more material.

*New Blood*: sent a letter saying an issue would be out in June (1991), but nothing has happened as of this writing (October 1991.)

I happen to be a subscriber to *New Blood* and can report that, according to the cards sent out whenever a subscriber writes to enquire, Lacher is *still* hard at work — 18 months later — preparing the next issue of the magazine. As far as I know, he's is still accepting submissions.

The trick with small-press magazines is finding one whose editor acts in a professional manner. One easy way to tell is if the magazine has lasted more than five or six issues.

Fortunately for professional writers, most pro magazines have RTs in the area of one month.

*Amazing* has, without a doubt, the longest response times of any SF magazine. In the most recent "Random Numbers" sampling in *Scavenger's* — a listing of shortest, longest and average RTs for dozens of magazines — *Amazing's* average was 103 days. In *The SFWA Bulletin*, Greg Costikyan keeps track of response times in his "Short Fiction Response Times" column. He reports that *Amazing* is getting quicker, but the average turnaround time is 128 days. In other words, more than four months.

The quickest responses these days come from the new kids on the block. Scott Edelman at *SF Age* has been responding in about a week, prompting some to wonder if he's actually reading submissions. Personal comment on the submissions, however, is proof that he is.

The other quick draw is Algis Budrys at *Tomorrow*. A.J. had been giving personal responses within seven to 14 days, but was so swamped with manuscripts that he is now overstocked. He is still looking at manuscripts, but says not to send anything unless it will kill you not to.

Here's a ranking of magazines solely by their average RTs as

reported in *Scavenger's* and the *SFWA Bulletin*. (The *Bulletin* average RTs are in brackets.)

<i>SF Age</i>	21	(13)
<i>Dragon</i>	22	(26)
<i>Analog</i>	32	(39)
<i>Omni</i>	33	(40)
<i>MZB's Fantasy Magazine</i>	34	(14)
<i>F&amp;SF</i>	47	(64)
<i>Asimov's</i>	55	(46)
<i>Aboriginal SF</i>	64	(57)
<i>Amazing</i>	103	(128)

Unfortunately, *Tomorrow* hasn't been around long enough to show up on these surveys. *Weird Tales* and *Pulphouse* are currently overstocked and not reading.

Of course, these are average RTs. If you want to wait around for a response, try submitting a novel. According to "Random Numbers" the average response from Del Rey is 108 days, while a response from DAW takes about 307 days.

But if you really like to twiddle your thumbs, consider the longest single response time reported for DAW Books, a whopping 1,325 days. The manuscript, no doubt, was lost in the mail. Either that, or it was keeping someone's desk from toppling over.

New markets this time are scarce, but there are a few things of note, one of which should be of particular interest to Canadian writers.

Zebra Books hasn't earned itself the best of reputations among professional horror writers — for more on this ask your friendly neighborhood member of the Horror Writers of America — but they are expanding their publishing operation to include two new lines of young-adult horror fiction.

*SCREAM* and *The Nightmare Club* are series slated to compete with the popular *Fear Street* YA series by Christopher Pike. The guidelines are quite extensive. Those interested in giving this a try should send a SASE for complete guidelines. Zebra says their payments rates are competitive.

Open 'til May 1993 is *Air Fish*, an anthology of new and reprint short fiction from Omega Cat Press. The antho will include a broad range of speculative fiction with short stories to 7,500 words, poems from 50 to 2,000 lines, and vignettes from 250 to 1,000 words. Payment is three cents per word and the 300-page publication is scheduled for late 1993.

Announced in early October is *Rocket Songs*, a poetry anthology about space and space exploration for elementary school kids, edited by Jane Yolen. Poetry can be rhymed or unrhymed, published or unpublished, but must be appropriate to the readership — not simplistic but apprehensible. No closing date announced yet.

And finally, *Northern Frights* is a hardcover anthology of Canadian dark fantasy edited by Don Hutchison and published by Mosaic Press of Oakville, Ontario. The first volume was published in October and has so far met with enthusiastic response and good reviews. Hutchison is currently reading for *Northern Frights 2*, and says he's looking for chilling horror rather than splatter and that all stories must have a Canadian context. The anthology is also open to American writers, but submissions coming from south of the border must be a truly "northern" fright.

Deadline for submissions is May 1993, while publication is slated for October. Payment is \$100 per story for first publication rights.

Take your pick —

- *Air Fish*, Richard Singer, fiction editor, 355 W 85th Street, #24, New York, NY, U.S.A. 10024; Joy Oestreicher, poetry editor, 904 Old Town Court, Cupertino, CA, U.S.A. 95014-4024.
- Zebra Books, Alice Alfonsi / John Scognamiglio, 475 Park Ave. South, New York, NY, U.S.A. 10018.
- *Rocket Songs*, Jane Yolen, Box 27, 31 School St., Hatfield, MA, U.S.A. 01038.
- *Northern Frights 2*, Don Hutchison, 585 Merton Street, Toronto Ontario, M4S 1B4.

## THE BUSINESS OF WRITING

## Notes for the Artist

by Robert J. Sawyer

If you've been to my home since last March, you can't have missed seeing the original cover art for my novel *Far-Seer* hanging in my living room. Obviously, I'm quite pleased with the art: the artist, Tom Kidd, got almost all the details correct. There's a reason for this, beyond Tom's professionalism. I took an active roll in the creation of the cover.

Now, I don't have cover control, or even contractual cover consultation, but it is possible for an author to nonetheless have input into the process. Garfield Reeves-Stevens suggested that I prepare notes for the cover artist and submit them to my editor as soon as the book had sold. I did just that, and my editor at Ace was glad to pass them along to the artist.

The response was better than I could have possibly hoped for. The artist, pleased to have such comprehensive material, phoned me from Connecticut to discuss various details, faxed me several rough sketches, and then sent me a photocopy of his final sketch, so that I could make suggestions before he began painting.

I was delighted with how well this went, especially after the truly revolting cover on the paperback of my *Golden Fleece*. I also provided cover notes for *Fossil Hunter*, my new book that comes out this May. Artist Bob Eggleton and I ended up having several long phone conversations about that cover, and he, too, faxed me preliminary sketches.

One very important thing to keep in mind: don't suggest cover compositions, and don't send sketches. The last thing the art director or artist wants is a paper trail showing that the actual appearance of the book cover — the thing they were paid to provide — was somebody else's idea. Limit your proffered input to *written* descriptive points: what such-and-such an object might look like, should the art director, in his or her own best judgment, decide to include that object as part of the cover.

Below are the notes I submitted to Ace for *Far-Seer*. (Oh, and for those who haven't read *Far-Seer*, please be advised that these notes give away a lot of the plot.)

...

## QUINTAGLIOS: The Main Characters

### Evolutionary History

Although not explicit in the first book in this series, the Quintaglios are descended from Earth's dinosaurs. It's common in current Science Fiction to follow the suggestion of Dr. Dale Russell of the Canadian Museum of Nature and suggest that intelligent dinosaurs evolved from small, big-eyed, slender, bipedal dinosaurs, such as *Troödon* (formerly known as *Stenonychosaurus*).

However, this is *NOT* the model I used for the Quintaglios. Rather, the Quintaglios evolved from dwarf tyrannosaurs. That is, their ancestors had the same basic body plan as a miniature version of *Tyrannosaurus rex*: massive heads; short, muscular necks; a stooped gait; stocky torsos; relatively small forward-facing eyes; thick, powerful tails. Unlike troödontids, which kill with their clawed feet, all tyrannosaurs, including Quintaglios, kill with their powerful jaws.

Quintaglios vary from tyrannosaurs in several significant ways, however. Tyrannosaurs have tiny arms, with only two clawed fingers. All terrestrial vertebrates on Earth now have or evolved from creatures with five digits on each hand or foot. In the case of the Quintaglios, the development of the third, fourth, and fifth fingers is no longer suppressed. They have well-developed arms with dexterous five-fingered hands (four fingers and an opposable digit). Unlike humans, though, most Quintaglios are left-handed. The fingers terminate in retractable curved claws, which extend reflexively when the

Quintaglio is threatened, but also are under individual voluntary control (making it possible to extend or retract them in any combination).

Quintaglio feet are much like tyrannosaur feet: somewhat bird-like, with three splayed, clawed toes, and an additional claw spur coming off the heel.

### Skin

Quintaglio hide is much tougher than human skin. It is dry and leathery. As humans have lost most body hair, so Quintaglios have lost most scales and scutes (bony processes embedded in the skin), but these may be present in individuals. Quintaglio skin is almost entirely green, although it may be freckled, mottled, or splotched with brown or yellow in some individuals, and with black in old individuals. The skin tone is darker on the back and upper surface of the tail than it is on the belly and lower tail surface.



### Facial Features

The Quintaglio **head** has a high cranial dome and a drawn-out **muzzle**. The **mouth** is a simple lipless slit running the length of the muzzle, and the nostrils are near the tip of the muzzle. **Teeth** are replaced throughout life and consist of only one type: curved, pointed, with fine serrations on the trailing edge. Quintaglio **eyes** are oval and solid black. Quintaglios have no external ear flaps, but simply have a kidney-shaped **earhole** on either side of the head. Quintaglios have a small salt-secretion gland beneath the surface of the muzzle, but the aperture for it is simply a very tiny hole — almost a large pore — halfway down the side of the muzzle. Except in an extreme close-up view, it would be all but invisible.

### Clothing

Because the Quintaglio hide is so tough and because they live exclusively in a warm, equatorial climate, Quintaglios do not normally wear clothes or shoes for protection, except in special circumstances. However, most do wear decorative **sashes**, which cross over from one shoulder to the opposite hip. At the hip, the sash may contain a carrying pouch. Priests conducting services wear flowing robes instead of sashes; when not conducting services, priests wear sashes marked with bands of color. Members of the royal family, including Dybo and his mother Len-Lends, wear blood-red sashes. Most priestly robes are decorated in swirling patterns of brown, yellow, white, and orange,

representing the banded cloud patterns of a Jupiter-type planet. Master mariner Var-Keenir wears a special gray sash, about eight inches wide at his shoulder, narrowing to four at the hip. Keenir and other members of the *Dasheter* crew also sometimes wear red leather caps over the dome of their heads.

Most sashes are made of leather, not cloth. Saleed's sash is blue-green. Afsan's is yellow and brown. Imperial staff wear orange-and-blue sashes.

## Tattoos

Adult Quintaglios have a variety of dark purple or black patterns tattooed into the side and top of their heads. Note that Afsan, the main character of the first novel, is a juvenile when the novel begins, and so doesn't have any tattoos at first. Specifically, during the hunt scene, he has no tattoos at all. During the first part of the ocean voyage aboard the sailing ship *Dasheter*, he has a **hunt tattoo**. After the ship actually comes to rest beneath the Face of God, he gets a **pilgrimage tattoo**. During all later scenes — including the battle with the sea-serpent, Kal-ta-goot, he should have both of these tattoos.

The tattoo of the hunt, as described in the first novel, goes above the left earhole. The pilgrimage tattoo also goes on the left side of the head, although its exact position is never specified in that novel.

## Size

Like modern crocodiles, Quintaglios continue to grow throughout their lives. There is no one "adult" or "mature" size. Rather, Quintaglios simply get bigger and bigger until they die. A young adult Quintaglio, such as Afsan, might be five-and-a-half feet tall. An old Quintaglio adult, such as Var-Keenir (captain of the sailing ship *Dasheter*) or Tak-Saleed (the master astrologer), might be close to eight feet tall. (Note: Keenir and Saleed are creche-mates, meaning they are the same age, and, therefore, about the same size.)

## Posture

In a relaxed "at-ease" posture, Quintaglios lean back on their thick, muscular tails. In a walking posture, the back slopes forward at an angle of almost 45 degrees. When running, the back becomes horizontal, parallel to the ground, and the tail flies up behind, lifted completely off the ground.

## Individual Variation

Afsan: about 5'5" tall, thin but in no way frail

Dybo: just slightly shorter than Afsan, but quite rolly-polly

Saleed: close to 8' tall, old and wrinkled, somewhat frail. His skin is mottled with yellow and black age spots.

Keenir: also 8' tall, but much burlier. Most of his tail is gone early in the novel, although it grows back during the course of the action. The regenerating tail growth is yellow, and Keenir must use a cane or otherwise support himself. He has a ragged yellow scar running from the tip of his muzzle to his left earhole.

## OTHER ANIMALS: Dinosaurs

Most animals on the Quintaglio world evolved from and still strongly resemble dinosaurs or other animals from Earth's Cretaceous period:

- **shovelmouths** are hadrosaurs (duckbilled dinosaurs);

- **thunderbeasts** are sauropods (brontosaurus);
- **Kal-ta-goot** is a long-necked plesiosaur;
- **wingfingers** are pterosaurs (flying reptiles, such as *Pteranodon*);
- **hornfaces** are ceratopsians such as *Triceratops*;
- **spikefrills** are also ceratopsians, but modeled after *Styracosaurus*;
- **armorbacks** are ankylosaurs.

## THE FACE OF GOD

The Face of God is a Jupiter-like planet, **striped vertically** (from the perspective of people on the deck of the sailing ship *Dasheter*) with bands of beige, yellow, orange, and white cloud. It covers one-quarter of the sky (that is, its widest part extends over 45° of the sky), but goes through **phases** (from top to bottom). The Face does *not* have a ring around it.

## OTHER OBJECTS IN THE SKY

Also visible in the sky are other **moons** of this Jupiter-like planet, which will show visible disks or phases in the sky and cast round shadows in a band up the centre of the Face of God. The Quintaglio **sun** is Vega, a very bright white (not yellow) star. The Quintaglio world is much farther away from it than Earth is from its sun, so Vega appears as not much bigger than an incredibly bright point. The Quintaglio **sky** is pale violet, not blue.

## THE DASHETER: A Sailing Ship

Much of the novels action takes place aboard a large sailing ship, the *Dasheter*. The ship consists of two diamond-shaped hulls, joined by a short connecting piece. The hulls are each four decks high. The *Dasheter* has four masts, two on the port side of the fore-hull, two on the starboard side of the aft-hull. Each mast supports one giant red sail. One depicts Larsk's cartouche, an Egyptian style symbol; another shows his name in hieroglyphics; the third shows Larsk's head silhouetted against the swirling Face of God; and the fourth shows the crest of the Pilgrimage Guild. \*

## MEMBER PROFILE

# Spider Robinson

by B. D. Wyatt

Spider Robinson was born six feet tall and weighing one hundred and thirty pounds, a physique he has maintained to this day through a daily regimen of rigorous neglect. The birth took place over three days, his parents having decided to handle him in sections, resulting in the confused horoscope which explains so much of his history and personality.

His parents moved frequently in his youth, but he always found them again. He learned about sex by trail and error, and in fact is currently on trial for one of those errors. In a moment of carelessness he lost his virginity in 1965, but it was returned to him nearly at once.

An English major, confessed folksinger and failed sewer guard, who once spent time in prison for something he didn't do (wear gloves), he became a starving writer in 1972, because he was attracted by the symmetry of spending his time between hot plate and plot hate — and the rest, as they say, is social studies. He has a rabid

lifelong hatred of hatred, power cords, power chords, yum-yums who hang up on answering machines without leaving either message or apology, copy editors who believe in serial commas and people who spell adrenalin with an “e” on the end. His hobbies include paralogism, parataxis, paramnesia and uxorious parabiosis involving purberism and ptyalism.

Some of his less successful early works appeared in *Galaxy* magazine under the name “B. D. Wyatt” — a house pseudonym coined by editor Jim Baen for feeble stories purchased out of charity: an anaphone for “Y. D. Buyit?” — and so when no one else would volunteer to write this bio, he dusted off the name and started typing.

I alternate between writing hilarious books with stark themes that are very popular and lucrative (it is no accident that my name is an anagram for PRODS ONE IN RIBS), and serious novels sprinkled with puns that win Hugos and Nebulas (my name is also an anagram for BORN SO INSPIRED), a phenomenon which simultaneously amuses and depresses me ... and thus reinforces the cycle. The funny stories take place in bars and whore-houses on Long Island (anagram: BONER DIPS? NO SIR!), and are set in the present or near past; the serious stories take place in New York, Halifax and High Earth Orbit, in the near future. It is harder to write a bio than I thought it would be.

Things I’m proudest of: Having been born to Charles and Evelyn in New York in 1948. My eighteen-year marriage to Jeanne (with whom I share, among other wonders and joys, a truly wonderful daughter named Terri, two novels called *Stardance* and *Starseed* — with a third novel in the oven we’ll call *Starwind* — and a pair of Hugos and Nebulas). Having been associated with Jeanne’s Nova Dance Theatre from 1981-1987, and assisting her work as a dancer until her retirement in ’87, and her choreography right up to the present. Six compliments from Robert A. Heinlein, two of them in public. Surviving for twenty years on science fiction writing alone — surely one of the longer running OOMEs (Out-Of-Mind Experiences) on record — with fourteen of my eighteen books still in print. Two other Hugos, a John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer, NESFA’s Skylark Award, the Pat Terry Memorial Award for Humorous SF from the Sydney Science Fiction Foundation, and four grants from The Canada Council. Outpunning Theodore Sturgeon once (and only once). Having a brother in Orlando and a sister in Smithtown, New York, that I genuinely like. Not having lost my hair yet. Being a slushpile discovery, and subsequently friend, of Ben Bova. Being both the first, and possibly the last, Western writer to be paid for use of my work in the Soviet Union. Having been called “the new Robert Heinlein” by *The New York Times Book Review* (bullshit ... but what fragrant bullshit, eh?) Owning a guitar that has been played and praised by Frank Zappa, “Spider” John Koerner, Amos Garrett and Donn Legge. Surviving thirteen Nova Scotia winters. Having been asked to write both the liner notes for Amos Garrett’s R&B album *I Make My Home In My Shoes* and the introduction for Stephen Gaskin’s memoir *Haight Ashbury Flashbacks* (formerly titled *Amazing Dope Tales*).

I have never liked Elvis, seen the movies *Batman* or *Dick Tracy*, or used the word “Not” as a sentence, and it’s too late to start now. I do not believe that we’re all doomed and good riddance, or that nothing happened back in the Sixties, or that a housing development despoils nature any more than a beaver dam, or that any thing of any sort should ever be censored for any reason whatsoever. Some of my favorite writers are Heinlein, Sturgeon, Pohl, Niven, Ellison, Varley, John D. MacDonald, William Goldman and Donald Westlake. I own every recording Ray Charles ever released, and some he doesn’t even know about. I know a coffee almost as good as Blue Mountain at a third of the price, and I won’t tell you what it is. I also know where the best coffee in Australia is located and I will tell you if you’ll promise to score me a couple of hundred pounds when you go. (Geb won’t go near a post office. Interesting man.)

The only other thing I can think of that you might like to know is my new novel *Lady Slings The Booze* came out in November 1992 in Ace hardcover. It opens with the words, “It was noon before they finished scraping Uncle Louie off the dining room tables,” and gets sillier from there. \*

## CLASSIC REPRINT

# Doing Business from the Suburbs of the U.S.

by John Park

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First published in *The SFWA Bulletin*, May 1982

If, as Algis Budrys suggests, Evanston, Illinois, is the limbo of North America science fiction, I wonder what Ottawa is. Merely to establish contact with the quivering heart of the SF organism, to find out that a market has closed, one has to run the gauntlet of two postal services. One of these (the expensive one) has the right to strike, and has been known to exercise that right, at length, leaving manuscripts languishing for weeks in a place like Illinois.

As a city, given that it is further south than Seattle, Ottawa is quiet. I have no real fear of being mugged, or of having my stereo lifted behind my back. The worst that has happened since I moved here was a series of thefts from the apartment block mailboxes. I lost the contents of a return envelope from *Omni* then — not a cheque, fortunately, though I never did find the manuscript; I suppose my readership was up that week by a couple of mail thieves.

Another feature of living in Canada is that I don’t have to change the spelling I learned in England. A sentence such as “The grey centre of the sulphur-coloured amoeba was a metre across” is perfectly good Canajan. I still haven’t got, or even gotten, used to the idea that I should meet *with* a person, and idioms such as “centre around” make me wince.

This starts to become relevant when I try to picture my audience. Can I use a reference to the game of cricket when my readership probably doesn’t know that deep extra cover is between wide long off and cover point? Can I even get away with mentioning the Montreal Canadiens? True, I could ship the story across the Atlantic, or try one of the local markets (and most Francophone Canadian SF writers have to do one or the other), but in the first case the expense and delay of the postal service are inconvenient, and in the second the rewards in terms of dollars and circulation are limited. On the other hand, I can’t write authoritatively about the United States.

If a story calls for a well-realised contemporary setting, the temptation is to compromise, to say, “What the hell, the border’s only an hour away; setting the piece up here will only confuse them” — and produce a generically North American setting (in my case often with transatlantic overtones).

I don’t think I’m alone in this. I recently did a quick survey of half a dozen SF volumes by Canadian residents, looking for discernible Canadian content. I came up with one reference to Hudson Bay and two to the Gaspé peninsula.

I don’t claim this result is definitive, but I think as an order-of-magnitude estimate, it’s not bad. (And I’m sure that a similar survey of Australian SF would yield very different results.) In some cases there were good reasons why Canada should be absent — stories set on other worlds or a remote future, for instance — and in some cases the authors were evidently using their original (British or U.S.) back-grounds. But when a contemporary urban environment did appear, it was either anonymously North American, or explicitly set in the U.S.

In a far more extreme form, the same phenomenon appeared in the movie *The Changeling*, where Vancouver, B.C., had to be disguised as Seattle. I suspect that this reflects laziness on the part of the writer, and assumed laziness of the part of the audience, and I think the trend is pernicious.

If we are going to compromise by fabricating an anonymous setting rather than depicting a real one, purely in order to meet the reader more than half way, we are confirming prejudices when we should be questioning them. We risk homogenising our universe and coming to believe that Canada, Europe, the world, and Hell itself, are no more than suburbs of Chicago. \*