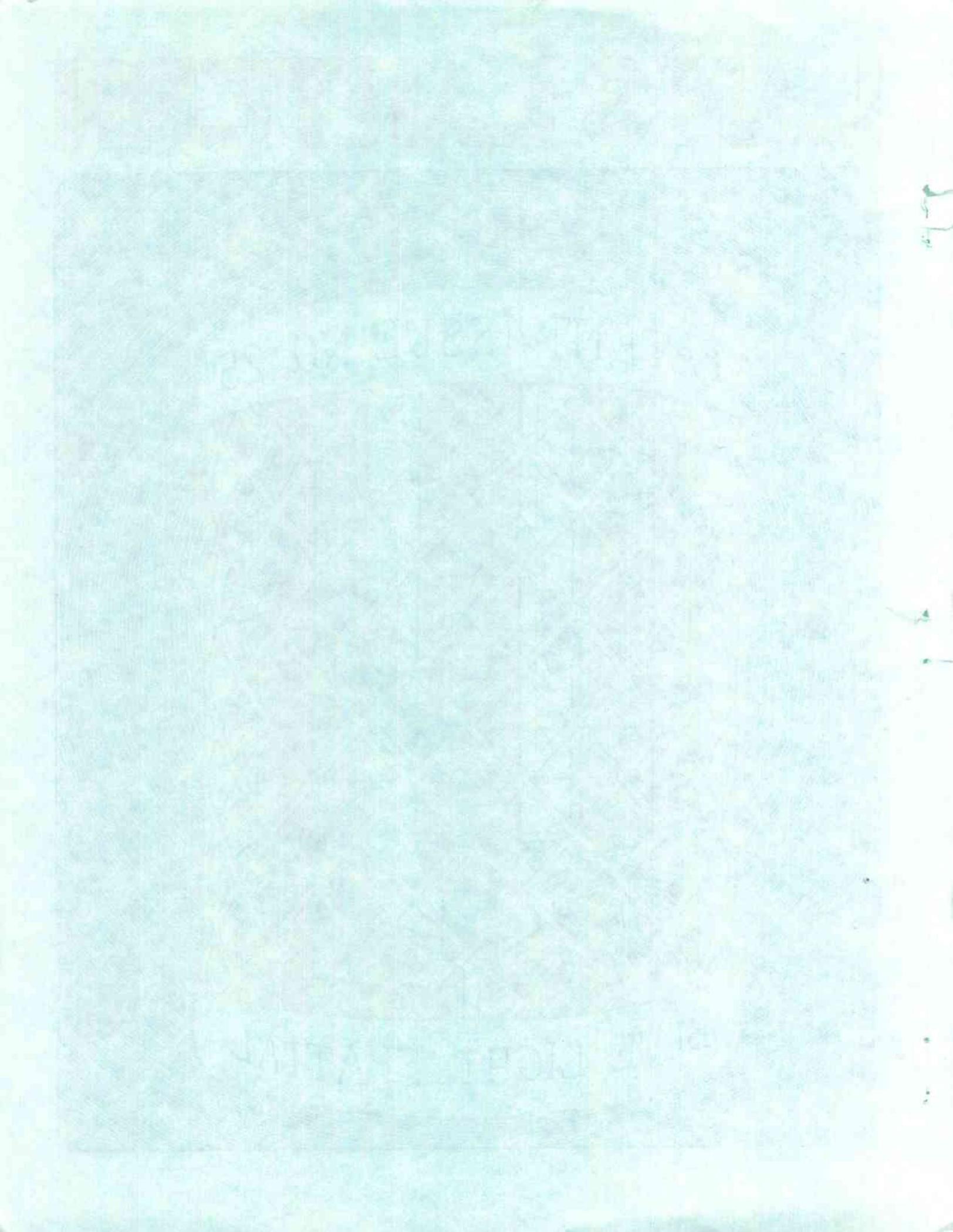


# LAN'S LANTERN





# Lan's Lantern 25

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## Dedication

To Maia --  
 For Everything

LAN'S LANTERN #25 is published and edited by George "Lan" Laskowski, 55 Valley Way, Bloomfield Hills, MI 48013 USA. Phone (313) 6425670. LAN'S LANTERN is available for articles, art, letters of comment, even money (US\$2 post paid) and the whim of the editor. The opinions expressed are those of the contributors, and may or may not be those of the editor. This is Lantern Publication #11, a division of LanShack Press Unlimited. LAN'S LANTERN #25 is copyright (c) February, 1988, by George J Laskowski Jr., except where otherwise noted. Contributions (art, articles, reviews, letters) become the property of LanShack Press, but will be returned upon request. All rights return to the contributors upon publication. Business manager: Maia Cowan.



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## Why You Are Receiving This

- Contribution (art, article, review, loc) in this issue
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- Trade  You wanted one
- We're in an apa together
- Mentioned in Letter Column
- Your book/zine is reviewed (see page 33 or 105)
- I thought you might find this interesting.
- I would like you to contribute to one of the special issues coming up -- see page 2.
- This is your last issue unless you do something

# From the Editor

## Late!

## But I Have An Excuse

by Lan

Yes, I know that the schedule I had established for Lan's Lantern over the past three years has been disrupted -- but not too much. I have been trying to get 3-4 issues out each year, and have been hitting 4 regularly. I did get 3 out in 1987, one of them the Special Issue on Frederik Pohl and L. Sprague de Camp. That has left me with a lot of material, but I'll get to that in a minute.

On May 29, the Friday of Memorial Weekend, Maia broke her leg, and the cast did not come off until September 8, the day after Labor Day. She was in a cast the entire Summer season, and all the work that she normally did (grocery shopping, laundry, house-cleaning, etc.) I had to do, as well as the other things I wanted to do -- gardening, working for HUB, fan activities (which included doing the fanzine), and so forth. A few things had to give, and the fanzine was it. But I did learn to appreciate all that Maia did (and I love her more than ever!!).

True, we did go to some conventions, and we did get to England for travel and the Worldcon, but the fanzine was left to simmer through the summer until Maia was back on both feet. Then school started, and even more time was eaten up as each of the teachers was assigned "just one more thing" to do. And being an assistant coach of the swim team this year, I lost about three hours of working time four nights a week (the other night was my dorm duty night).

When I finally squeezed out enough time to work on Lan's Lantern, and finished the review column with the reviews of books, magazines, and so on that had accumulated over some nine months, I was on page 105, had lots of other articles, and my own con-reports & ramblings and the trip to England yet to put in.

And the lettercolumn.

So I left stuff out this time around. A lot of stuff. Most of these articles will appear in the next couple of issues of LL.

So, you won't be reading the interview that Bill Unger did with Judith Moffitt, or Clifton Amsbury's convention reports from the West Coast, or David Shea's essay on fandom, or my Conreports and Ramblings, or Tom Easton's short stories, or our trip to England, or Mike Resnick's second trip report on Africa, or Kathy Gallagher's essay on office equipment, or various essays by Marc Ortlieb, Craig Ledbetter, Eric Bentcliffe and several other people, plus a bunch of other things that are on hold.

And the reviews are still coming in. And letters. And material on the Special Issues for this year -- on Arthur C. Clarke, Lester del Rey and William F. Temple. These writers are celebrating their Golden Anniversaries this year, and the articles are starting to accumulate. So please help out.

I hope you enjoy this issue; it's been more work than usual to put together, but I think there's a lot of good material here.

Take care all, and write often.

\*\*\*\*\*

### Please Contribute

This year and next year, several authors are celebrating their 50th anniversary as writers of Science Fiction and Fantasy. Please consider submitting critical articles, artwork, cartoons, anecdotes, personal experiences, and reminiscences about these authors so they can be honored as they deserved. I realize that Theodore Sturgeon has died, but I think his contributions to the field have been such that I want to include him for the special issue(s) for 1989.

I am planning for these issues to come out in the fall of their year of celebration, so I will need the submissions by the 30th of June of 1988 and 1989 (which will give me the summer, if all goes well, to put them together). Please think about this and try to help honor these writers who have given us so much pleasure for a half century.

### 1988

William F. Temple  
Lester del Rey  
Arthur C. Clarke

### 1989

Isaac Asimov  
Robert A. Heinlein  
Fritz Leiber  
Theodore Sturgeon  
A. E. Van Vogt

Mike Glicksohn is a Big Name Fan from Canada, seen at many Midwestern conventions, and known world-wide for his perceptive letters-of-comment. He is also a winner of the Best Fanzine Hugo Award.

# It's Dead, Men —————

## Send for the Priest

An essay by Mike Glicksohn

Periodically material appears in a fanzine that transcends "mere" fanwriting in the impact it has on the SF community. Frequently this material is not recognized as the milestone it is destined to be. It is doubtful that any readers of the sloppily-produced TAPEWORM 6 read the short story "I of Newton" and said to themselves, "Over the next twenty plus years this guy will have a major influence on science fiction and will end up the Worldcon Guest of Honor in 1990"\* but such was indeed the case. Sometimes, though, the importance of the material is obvious, as was the case with the fanzine appearance of Alexi Panshin's critical articles on Heinlein (Although it is unlikely many predicted the acrimonious results of those appearances). And there has recently appeared a fanzine that is potentially the most explosive publication to impact the SF field in many years.

Twenty years ago, Harlan Ellison edited Dangerous Visions, certainly one of the milestone anthologies in SF history. Five years later he followed up with Again, Dangerous Visions, perhaps a less significant landmark, but still a fine collection of stories. And for the last fifteen years The Last Dangerous Visions has gradually taken on the mythic quality of science fiction's Holy Grail. Several generations of writers have grown up hearing about, submitting stories to, and waiting for the publication of, TLDV. Regrettably, several writers whose visions were accepted for the volume have died before seeing them in print. Now, Chris Priest, a writer who was actively pursued for a contribution to the book, has picked up his mantle as publisher of the excellent fanzine DEADLOSS and produced The Last Dead-loss Visions, a 26 page history of Harlan's massive collection coupled with an analysis of its present and future. It is, to put it mildly, dynamite material.

The first half of the expository part of the issue (there are several pages of letters from other contributors to TLDV along with lists of participants from various stages of the book's history) consists of a

detailed history of the collection, based largely on direct quotations from Harlan's letters and public pronouncements. Priest casts a mercilessly brutal light on the apparent inconsistencies and discrepancies these contain, all written in a tone of icily-polite investigative journalism. He tends to shed his impartiality when making suppositions as to Ellison's motives and thought processes (which have to be pure speculation on his part) but the facts as presented seem incontrovertible.

In the second half of the fanzine, Priest ponders the current status of TLDV and speculates on its future. While many of his conclusions are necessarily completely subjective his overall belief that TLDV is not only an albatross tied around Ellison's neck with bonds of emotion and ego, but also a very dead albatross at that, has the painful ring of truth to it. Perhaps someone with a greater knowledge of the world of SF publishing might refute Priest's claim but coupled with the fifteen year history of the book's non-appearance it is hard to conceive of a rebuttal to his case.

The first publication of The Last Dead-loss Visions was distributed at the Brighton Worldcon and should be out of print long before this article sees print. Priest has stated that he'll be producing a second edition once the initial print run of 70 has sold out and fanzine fans and those who are interested in How Things Happen in the world of Science Fiction should send a minimum contribution of at least \$2 to Chris Priest, 78 High Street, Pewsey Wiltshire, SN9 5AQ, ENGLAND and ask for a copy. Priest may have an axe to grind but he grinds it into a scapel and welds it with deadly precision.

This is not a publication to be missed by anyone interested in the often bizarre and sometimes seamy underside of the SF edifice. David has hurled this stone; it remains to be seen if Goliath will fall.

\* Joe Haldeman, if you didn't catch the reference.

I met Jim at CONFEDERATION as he will tell you here. This is his first fannish article (as far as I know).

# A Priest in

There is a Catholic priest in the United States who has begun to write science fiction. His name is a household word, because his non-SF novels about the Roman Catholic Church are widely read and enjoyed. Fr. Andrew M. Greeley, the Irishman from the Archdiocese of Chicago, who currently holds a position on the faculty of the University of Arizona, has written two science fiction novels: God Game (TOR, 1986) and The Final Planet (Warner, July 1987). His short stories have been appearing in The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction.

I am another SF priest. My association with SF has been through the world of fandom, and I have been having a heckuva good time! The editor of this fanzine has been asking me to tell my story since I met him in the summer of '86; I do so now with the desire to stimulate the interest of people who see a place for sane Christianity in the science fiction world -- a place where science fiction people may play a role in helping the planet Earth become a better place.

I have also been working on writing SF for just over two years, but have not submitted anything for publication -- yet. In my first two years of priesthood I served as associate pastor of a large church in Austin, Texas, and found out what "paying your dues" means. The job was difficult, but I would not trade that experience for anything. The people were a pleasure to serve, and I learned a lot about ministry and about people. The long workdays, however, left me little time for writing.

Lately, though, God has pushed me uncanonically into the world of SF in a way that has allowed me to continue ministry and to attempt a writing career.

As I write this, I am sitting next to John Maddox Roberts, an established writer of SF. My IBM-PCjr sits on John's desk, glowing with cyan text, while John types his manuscript the old way with carbons. He is learning on mine, and I give him a few more weeks to convert. (I will not proselytize -- John will have to want to move to computer writing on his own. But the more I style-edit in front of him, the more his eyebrows raise!) Rows of John's novels -- Cloak of Illusion, Cestus Dei, King of the Wood, The Island Worlds -- hang on the bookcases which cover the walls.

With his loving wife Beth, John has taken me into his home and given me the chance to contribute simultaneously to the Church and to science fiction, in the role of priest. My bishop has given me his blessings and a sabbatical to go full-time into the world of fandom. I like to think of my position as a missionary one. There isn't any real precedent for this kind of thing, you know. God only knows what will become of me now.

How did this all begin? I'll try to explain....

## INJECTION INTO FANDOM

Labor Day Weekend, 1985. St. Louis Catholic Church, Austin, Texas. Transferred in Friday evening, quick intro to the staff on Saturday, prepare a sermon, then six Masses on Sunday. It's Sunday evening, and I am sitting on the floor of my room, surrounded by boxes, wondering what to do with a holiday in a city where I knew no one.

Experience (and the loneliness of transience) taught me to always hook up the radio first. I searched out a good rock station, then dug into a box of clothes. Engrossed in the confusing task of setting up house yet once more, I froze in mid-sort when the words "science fiction convention" jumped out of the speakers. I suddenly knew what to do with my holiday.

Monday: NASFiC. Only four miles away! I paid too much money for a one-day pass to a convention which was beginning to wind down even as I walked in. My only contact with SF up till that fateful Monday had been through SF books and the camaraderie of the group of seminarians who read them. There I was, in a real live con, without the vaguest idea of how to proceed.

I wandered the halls with trepidation, poking my head into a panel or two. Discomfort soon vanished. The people were friendly there! Overcome by a sense of having accidentally been teleported into a world I had only been dreaming would exist, I found myself attempting conversations with C. J. Cherryh, L. Sprague deCamp, Chad Oliver, Steven Gould. What little sense of priestly professionalism I tried to clutch vanished into childish awe.

I ended up in a big room of merchants

by Fr. Jim Deaconson  
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# Fandom

wearing badges proclaiming themselves "Shady Huxters." Soon I found myself offering to drive a friendly magazine salesman to dinner at the "original" Lone Star Cafe. He was from New York, didn't drive, was in Austin for the first time, and wanted to eat at the Austin restaurant which had spawned a New York counterpart back when things Texan were all the rage. His name was Andy Porter; little did I know that he was about to permanently change the course of my life!

The intense but jovial New Yorker listened patiently to my excited conversation as I earnestly recounted the experiences and feelings of those first few hours of fandom. He patiently explained to me that he was actually the publisher as well as a "salesman" for Science Fiction Chronicle. Later, we went to visit the Texas State Capitol where my guest happily examined the rotunda wall with his camera. Returning to the hotel, Mr. Porter invited me to my first con party -- the '85 NASFiC "dead dog" party! He turned me loose, and I soon found myself sitting cross-legged on the floor, peering out over South Austin, popping SF questions to Beth Roberts while she probed me with religion questions I found that friendships begin fast in fandom.

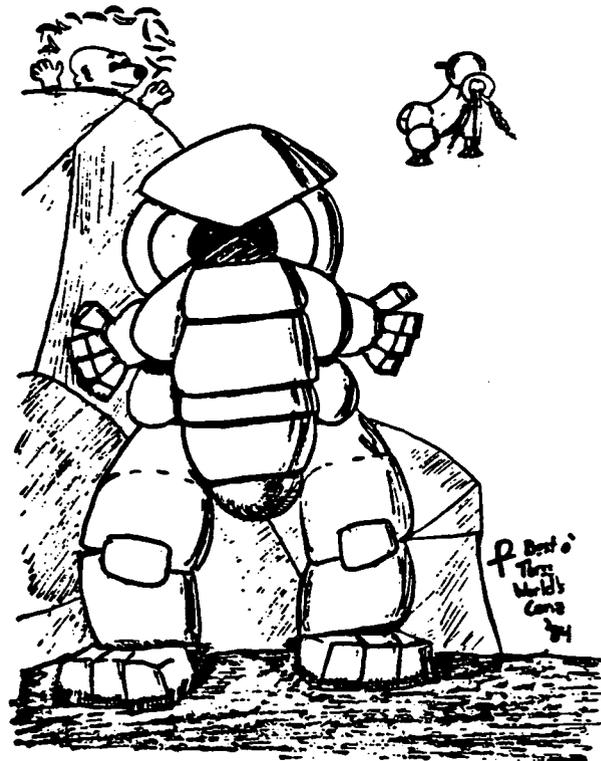
Beth insisted that I should chase my star -- to investigate the notion that SF was indeed a religious experience for many fans -- an experience which both seeks explanation and nurturing. She encouraged me, with an eye-twinkle of understanding, to pursue my desire to research and name once and for all that fleeting feeling of "oneness with the Ultimate" experienced after a particularly good read or movie. She invited me to be their guest at the Worldcon in Atlanta in '86.

#### ON TO ATLANTA

A year later I was on the road to Atlanta in caravan with the Roberts family. It took some luck to get August for a vacation-slot (all the other priests got to pick first). By then I had read a lot more SF, both fiction and non-, and had chased my star a little further. Tired from a year of hectic six-day workweeks, I relished the thought of escaping into the stimulation of a six-day Worldcon.

I obtained a hotel room by phone from a guy named Uncle Timmy, leader of a group of Tennessean fans. Uncle Timmy (AKA Tim Bolgeo, chairman of CHATTACON XII, LIBERTYCON I, and a longtime fan from Chattanooga who is well-known and respected by writer and fan alike) takes his Catholicism seriously, and, upon hearing that I was a Catholic priest, requested a Mass on the Sunday of Worldcon. I thought it would be a good idea to include God in fandom, and as a priest needed to say Mass anyway, so I unhesitatingly agreed.

We checked into the Downtowner Motor Inn across the street from the Con hotels--where disaster struck immediately. The eager bellman dropped Beth Roberts' twenty-five-year-old dulcimer on the concrete floor, snapping off the neck! I grabbed the Yellow Pages and immediately searched for an Italian name under "stringed instrument repair," for some



strange reason. Why Italian, I can't quite explain -- perhaps I was carried away by my religious bias. But there it was: An Italian stringed instrument repair shop, listed in the Atlanta Yellow Pages! I realized that the Spirit was with us when we found that the shop was only two blocks from the Science Fiction & Mystery Bookshop where John was to be at signing that very evening.

The dulcimer and I rode to the repair shop in the car which shuttled writers back and forth from signings. Two days later, you couldn't even tell that the instrument had been wounded. Miracles do occur! (Beth was able to swallow her heart again.)

On the first night I found myself eating at a Russian restaurant as the guest of the Roberts' family, feeling a little bit like Rasputin; later that night I was offered a hall award for being dressed as a priest. At the Hugos I found myself sitting two rows behind Ray Bradbury, whose white-on-white suit contrasted eerily with my blacks. At the masquerade, of course, I felt right at home.

The friendliness of writers and fan continued to impress me at the many parties. The Berkeley party after the Hugos was my most memorable. There I met the editor of this zine, beaming from brim to brim in his coonskin cap. I asked him to autograph my program. Observing Lan's modesty as he graciously complied, I casually inquired as to how many autographs he had given out so far. "One," he replied, "this is my first." The Lan offered to let me hold his Hugo Rocket. I will remember Lan's sharing of his joy as a high point in my journey into fandom. (I treasure also the unsought bonus of owning his first autograph.) Remember the Berkeley party, Lan?

For most of those hectic con days I did my exploring in jeans, passing relatively unnoticed through the dealers' room, panels, and so on. Having discovered the work of Michael Whelan quite by accident at a now-closed gallery back in Austin, I couldn't resist dropping a few shekels at his dealer's table. My little badge sticker allowed me access to the SFWA suite, where I had many intriguing chats with roomful of pros who liked to debate theology. The combination of little sleep and intense conversation reminded me of those "crunch weeks" at the ends of semesters in graduate school -- "con mode", the fen call it.

The Worldcon Mass was my most memorable experience. Over sixty people jammed into the CHATTACON suite on Sunday morning for a worship event that passed most of those I have ever attended. Present were Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopal and Baptist Christians, joining Catholics in the commonality of Scripture and shared vision. Writers, editors and fans stood as equals, united by the solemn informality and the rarity of the occasion. The beautiful music, provided by several accomplished liturgical musicians (including Beth Roberts, an Episcopalian, who celebrated the resurrection of her dulcimer with an Appalachian creedal hymn during communion) captured the mood of the gathering and brought tears to many eyes. God was joyfully and mysteriously present in a way which unintimidatingly beckoned love. I hope that happens again during my lifetime. Fandom makes a great parish.

I served as moderator of a panel called "The Role of Catholicism in Fantasy." (I didn't know that neofans were not supposed to be panel moderators!) I was talked into subbing for Berkeley editor Susan Allison who was called out-of-state. I found myself sitting with a bunch of established writers, in front of an audience of well over a hundred people, across the hall from Orson Scott Card's "Secular Humanist Revival."

Luckily, I had spent my last two years in seminary directing my private research into the academic side of SF, and was able to do something constructive with a very heated topic. In the SF world, I discovered, people like to sharpen their claws on the edifices of religious structures. The uniform of a priest added a special effect. My Benedictine schooling was put to the test, turning potshots into teachable moments. Actually, I enjoyed the many well-posed questions, especially when I was able to "punt" them from one writer to another.

On the drive home to Texas from Atlanta after the con, words from a song from the Tears For Fears album Songs from the Big Chair stuck in my mind. "...Living a boy's adventure tale...." I wore it out.

#### MEANWHILE, BACK IN AUSTIN...

Back in Texas, I hung the Whelan prints on the office wall and settled back into the parish routine. The many visitors to my office at St. Louis Parish began to enjoy the company of Hari Seldon and the Mule, Arkady and Golan Trevize gazing over at them from the wall. The principal's office of the parish school became more "user friendly" once

Alexa Whelan began smiling down on the kids in her Miss Piggy Spacesuit. Mr. Whelan graciously dedicated that print of "The Ultimate Sandbox" to the school: "Never stop looking onward and upward...." Alexa, who must be going on eight years old, printed her name in silver ink next to her daddy's. (Thank you, Whelan Family, for brightening up many a schoolchild's day!)

Now, a young priest tends to attract the younger members of a church congregation no matter where he serves, and what with outfits like IBM and Texas Instruments being within the parish boundaries, I got to know many young engineers and computer types in my work. Some of the couples hit on the irony of preparing for marriage in a Church which some compared to Trantor (don't tell the Bishop!). Many of the parishioners read science fiction and recognized Hari Seldon staring down from the wall, so the topic of conversation often shifted during counseling sessions. People started bringing in their favorite novels and books to share with me. Word got around.

These young engineers had friends in fandom. Some of them had taken science fiction courses at the University of Texas. I started collecting business cards. Soon I had to add a little basket to the stack on my desk labelled "SF". I started a bibliography of recommended SF books dealing with religion. I discovered that a book many readers consider to be the quintessential Catholic SF novel, A Canticle for Liebowitz, was written in a neighboring town. A parishioner who was an attorney for the state fell in love with the Chief Bard of the College of Bards in the Texas SCA. And so on. I began to realize that science fiction is a subculture which could use a chaplain or two.

ARMADILLOCON is Austin's local con. I drove back and forth from church to hotel numerous times on that October weekend. Talked into going to the masquerade in a pig-werewolf suit, I was sitting at a table with a writer I met earlier at a panel (Carole Nelson Douglas), when the judges came up and awarded us a prize for being "Beauty and the Beast"! The priest beast felt a little self-conscious. I'm glad the Bishop never found out, or I'd have ended up assigned to a faraway desert parish.

Advent season rolled in, then Christmas. Knights of Columbus, liturgy committee, the schools, altar boys, and other activities added to keep me away from too much science fiction. Then came AGGIECON 18 in April.

#### THE "WARLOCK" UNLOCKED

AGGIECON is held at Texas A&M University in College Station, my alma mater. Christopher Stasheff was a special guest. We had been keeping in touch since meeting at the Worldcon panel, so we arranged a rendezvous. The Holy Spirit paid me another visit there. A two-hour talk with Chris (he is on his parish council back in New Jersey and knows the ways of ecclesiastical politics) convinced me of what I needed to do: finagle a way to get a sabbatical of some sort to write, and to write about, religious science fiction.

Chris helped me to see fandom as a new

kind of parish -- intelligent young people who read have needs which a traditional church congregation can't always meet. If you want to "change the world", feed your young sheep; the old ones have generally become too practical, or else have given up. Besides, kids (and pros, too) are too busy at cons to spare the time to locate and attend a church in a strange town. So why not bring church to the con? Anyone who's read Stasheff's Warlock novels will begin to get the gist of this idea. Nurture your gifted children, and when they grow up the world changes! Artist P.D. Breeding, upon hearing of my yearnings, convinced me not to let fear-of-unorthodoxy get in the way of a dream: "The human heart is the final arbiter," she said.

#### SCIENCE FICTION TEACHING LEAVE

By the end of May 1987, I had permission to move to the mountains of southwest Virginia -- the heart of Appalachia. I proposed a fourfold agenda: ministry in fandom, teaching at a local college, helping Beth and John establish a local library, and of course writing. Of course, I didn't go out of my way to dispel the stereotypical American image of Appalachia as "poor mission territory." My colleagues needed a rational explanation for my actions. I arrived just after Independence Day.

I travelled with John the following weekend to LIBERTYCON I in Chattanooga on three day's notice. Boy, was Uncle Timmy surprised! I was taken aback, too, to meet several Christian fen who had been to the Worldcon Mass and panel -- they remembered me! I complied with their request for a Mass, which drew about twenty people. At con's end, Uncle Timmy invited me to come to the '87 WORLD FANTASY CON in Nashville as a staff person, to celebrate another Mass (Christians of all faith-traditions have always been invited to these, of course).

The weekend after LIBERTYCON, I found myself in Annapolis, Maryland, as UNICON. I ran into familiar faces again within fifteen minutes of entering the hotel, in the art

room this time. A Mass was requested again, and arranged posthaste. On Sunday morning only five attended the service, but it was at 8:00 AM. Linda Haldeman, a Catholic writer, took me to breakfast where we schemed and dreamed of the possibility of getting together an association of religious SF writers. We sat together at the religion panel she moderated later that morning. The fact that I was the only unpublished person on the panel seemed to matter little. Ironically, Linda had been on the Worldcon religion panel I moderated!

#### LOOKING AHEAD

I will be driving down to Atlanta to attend WEAPONSCON with John and Beth: John is MC. I am not on the program, but will have to bone up on my "thoelogy of just war" and will lug along a copy or two of the Bishops' Peace Patoral, just in case.

Sunday of FANTASYCON '87 is All Saints' Day, the day after Halloween, a Catholic High Feast Day, coincidentally(?). Wearing a Staff Badge, I guess I'll be holding the position of Con Chaplain. If Chris Stasheff and Linda Haldeman both attend, maybe some progress will be made organizing a Christian writers' league -- something like High-Tech Imklings.

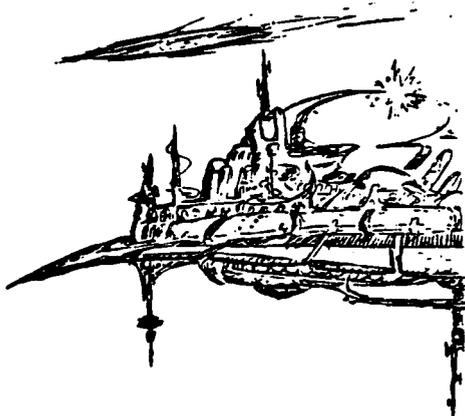
Interesting . . . this thing seems to be working!

When I go to a con, I will be there as a priest as well as a fan. I hope to be on the list of writers someday soon, God willing. I've done counseling, heard confessions, and discussed annulments at cons, and get genuine satisfaction from serving the people of God who have chosen the science fiction mode of spiritual growth. When first colonists embark upon that years-long voyage someday in the future, they're going to need to live with each other in close quarters. The type of love which Christ spoke about (and the prophets and leaders of other religions, too!) will be needed to keep the culture's spirit from waning. Why not take the first steps now, in fandom?

---

#### REALITY

by Sam Atwood



Tempt the junta!  
Be relieved, my guide.  
Search the globe for my murdered.

My enemy celebrates in his presidium.  
My soul spreads before its celebratory traitor.  
Sympathy die.

The royalists rise, annoying,  
My political costars.  
An unpopular advisor pacifies the elegant laboratories.

Disintegrate the junta, my bourgeois coworkers!  
Blue costars do not surrender placidly in laboratories.  
When they do, we drown them,  
Uncharitably, beneath the missile launchers.

Then, amused, we replace our leaders, and  
Give charity to terrorists.

Oh, joy! Oh rapture! A new Star Trek series on TV! What could they possibly do to surpass the old one?

Well, that question's yet to be answered. Yawn.

Star Trek: The Next Generation has an amazing amount of potential. The trouble is, they aren't using the potential that's there. It's amazing, with people like Gene Roddenberry, D.C. Fontana, and even David Gerrold (whose writing I like, even if some don't agree with me) that the show isn't even good.

Let's take the characters first.

Jean Luc Picard

This man has obviously studied at the James T. Kirk school of command. He's one of the few characters on the show who is actually very good. He's charismatic, he gives his orders crisply, and everyone either respects him a great deal and/or is in awe of him. Unfortunately, he should have stayed just a little longer at the JTK school. He overlooks obvious courses of action, and is a little quick to order his crew to fire on other vessels.

Ryker

So far, he hasn't had much to do. He's a little stiff, but I think he's trying to impress Picard. Part of the reason he's on the show is to give the women something to go ga-ga over. They could have done better.

Troi

A ship's counselor (councilor), I always thought, would be someone to whom crew members could go to discuss their problems. What they gave us instead was a wimpy little twit who always looks on the verge of tears -- and a telepath to boot. Her powers are totally useless, since they have all this wonderful equipment (not used to best advantage) at their command. And the past (or current) relationship between her and Ryker is too much a rip-off of the relationship between Decker and Ilia from the first movie. She isn't anything except a plot device

(\*Wait ... I feel pain ... great pain), and why does she sit next to the captain on the bridge? She should have an office. She's obviously on the show just so the men have something to ogle.

Worf

Wow, a Klingon on the bridge! What a novel concept! (The Fish and Ships Players did it first!) Boy, this ought to be great! What a lot of potential! There's that word again, the one they don't use. He doesn't get to be a Klingon, just a controlled alien. They may as well have put an Orion or a Tellerite there instead. He needs a better personality and better lines! This could actually be said of most characters, so I won't bother repeating it in every paragraph.

Dr. Crusher

I really like the doctor. She's one of the neatest characters on the show. She obviously cares about people a great deal, and seems competent at her job. I hope she maintains a professional relationship with the captain, and doesn't jump in the sack with him. I also want to know who Wes' father was and why she's so upset with Picard about the man's death.

Wesley Crusher

And speaking of Wes, what is he doing on the ship? I know -- it's a generation ship (we won't go into why that's a bad idea yet). I was going to give scathing comments about Wesley, how he brags, is too smart for his own good, and doesn't know enough to stay away from the bridge when the captain tells him to. But now that I've seen "Where No One Has Gone Before," I'll be more tolerant. I noticed Wes growing up a lot in that episode. The Traveller saw something in him no one else did, and that could say a lot for why Wes was acting like such a shit. We'll see how he gets along now that he's got more responsibility.

Lt. Tasha Yar

This is another character who has no personality. They should have combined her with Worf and made a female Klingon security officer. She fluctuates between looking on the edge of crying, or looking mad as hell. Her fighting movements all look choreographed and slow. She doesn't have the air of command necessary to be in charge of others, or to make her enemies respect her.

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by Laurel Gugin

The Next Generation

## Geordi La Forge

Geordi's cool. I like him. There really isn't anything else I can say about him since they haven't given him anything to do. I do respect him for his willingness to put up with constant pain to wear those classes. It's easy enough to say, "Well, what else can he do?" but how many of us would do the same?

## Data

Data has potential (oops, there's that word again). Unfortunately, he currently seems to be a replacement for Spock; someone who doesn't understand emotions, and who can question human colloquialisms. He's an android, and he should be of much greater use to that starship than he is.

Okay, that takes care of the characters. Now let's look at the episodes. As of this writing, I've only seen up to "Where No One Has Gone Before."

## "Journey to Farpoint"

This, to date, is one of the best episodes. There were some neat interplays with the characters, even though their introductions could have been better. We didn't really learn anything about them. There were two lines which could have been changed to make the characters more interesting. The first was Warf's. When he almost phasered the viewscreen, and Picard bawled him out, he should have said, "I'm sorry, sir, I can't help it. I'm a Klingon." And Data, when discussing whistling with Ryker in the holochamber, said, "I'd give it all up if I could just be human." It would have been better if he'd said, "I'd give it all up if I could just whistle."

The worst part about the episode was the Trelane clone who said, "You have to do this, or I'm going to kill you all." That entire side-plot was completely unnecessary.

Having McCoy there was kind of neat. Makes you wonder where everyone else from the original Enterprise is.

I was hoping the entity changing the structure of things (which turned out to be a giant jellyfish) was Charlie Evans. When the Prefect of the colony said to it, "If you do that again, you'll be punished," I was reminded of Charlie. This episode was a rip-off of both "Charlie X" and "Squire of Gothos."

## "The Naked Now"

I liked the fact that they connected it with the original episode by mentioning the other Enterprise and Captain James T. Kirk. But it didn't have nearly the character development of the original. All the women just got horny, and all the guys just tried to resist and found they couldn't. And Wes got into engineering, closed it off, and announced they were going to have ice cream for dessert. Where have we heard this before? Also, Data should not have contracted the disease. If he can get this, there's nothing he can't catch, and his role as an android is severely limited.

## "Code of Honor"

"No, I don't want to stay with him."

"But you are attracted to him?"

"Well, of course! Who wouldn't be?"

Like gag me with a horta. Yar's movements and the wife's during the fight looked too choreographed. The fighting area was stupid -- just give them a couple of knives and an open field and let them go at it! The idea of having some new woman kill the established wife so the husband can keep the property is neat. They should have gotten James Earl Jones for the husband, though. This episode was a rip-off of "Amok Time."

## "The Ferengi"

I know that isn't the real title, but none of my friends can remember the real one, or much of the episode (it would have helped if there had been a plot to remember). Need I say more? It was a rip-off of "Balance of Terror" and "Errand of Mercy" (not to mention an alien concept rip-off of C.J. Cherryh's Chanur books).

## "Where No One Has Gone Before"

This is far and away the best episode. I really like the Traveller. He was very charismatic, and he didn't look stupid, either. The other guy -- the scientist -- was a scream (shades of Daystrom)! The whole episode actually went somewhere. Making Wes an Ensign was not necessarily a good idea, but it should mature him, at least. I don't want to talk about how they ripped-off other episodes in this one, but unfortunately they did (even the best have their problems). "Where No Man Has Gone Before" is obviously one of the offended episodes, and "The Ultimate Computer" is another.

Now let's talk about this generation ship business. What's to keep the enemy from going after the section housing the families when the hulls separate? Having families on the ship is a stupid idea anyway; with faster-than-light travel (as established in the first series), there really isn't any need. Keeping families with the ship as it explores uncharted, unknown dangers poses too much threat to their lives; there should be plenty of history in their computer banks to tell them about all the ships lost and people killed while exploring the unknown.

It says something about a program when I, who is usually content with just about anything, (I like Three's Company) have something critical to say about it. Like I said before, the potential is there, but they aren't using it. Just because it's Star Trek doesn't mean we have to enjoy it; we must not be afraid to say we're not happy with The Next Generation, or we might never get the quality of the old Star Trek back.

I am going to continue watching Star Trek: The Next Generation in the hopes it will get better. After all, there were some pretty lousy episodes in the first series too. Still, it worries me when the lousy episodes of the new series happen consecutively within the first few weeks. It disturbs me to think what the "next generation" of Star Trek fans will be willing to settle for if they aren't demanding quality now.

# DYING A Y

by Mary Lou Lockhart

If you knew Tom Sherred, you know he led an interesting life. I shared thirteen years with him and they weren't dull. It's been two years since he died, I've remarried, and I'd like to lay some memories to rest.

When Tom died, it took several months to feel secure enough to think my own thoughts. Until then I wrote to him in a journal. I thought I wrote more about the actual day he died, but looking back I only found a page and a half, and that was written three weeks later. It's still clear, though. All the dumb little things. Memory is funny. You want to hold on to every detail.

It was April 16, 1985. I don't know what time I got up that day. Birds were just starting in when I left the apartment in Shelby to get down to the hospital in Detroit. Tom always quoted Jimmy Durante kicking a tree and loudly muttering, "If Durante has to get up, no boids sleep."

Dequindre to I-696 to I-94 to Moross. The route seemed cleaner at that hour. I'd been doing it for two weeks, but it was always afternoon because visitors couldn't be there before 4 PM. This time I got there at 5:30 AM. The car radio played "One More Night." I heard it again the other morning and it still makes me shiver.

The hospital was sleeping except for a few people paid to stay awake. Tom had been awakened or maybe he hadn't slept. His roommate pretended to be asleep but he said good-bye when we left. There's no way of knowing you'll never see a person again.

I was scared but trying not to show it. The unknown is always scary, and all I'd ever experienced was getting wisdom teeth yanked. Probably someone somewhere dies of oral surgery, but it never crossed my mind as life-threatening. This was a heart bypass, supposedly as routine as taking out an appendix or tonsils. Only a ten-percent risk factor, but if you're in that ten percent, good-bye.

God knows what Tom felt. Did he think about being in the ten-percent that don't make it? He didn't say. We sat and whispered. "Did you watch the rest of Airplane last night?...They want me to take the rest of your stuff to cardiac recovery....I'll take the get-well balloon and leave the flowers for your roommate....I love you."

About the last thing he said was, "I'm the luckiest guy in the world." The ultimate compliment. Then they wheeled him out and I followed to the elevators and that was it. Surgery was on the second floor; I waited on first. That's where Judy came in.

Thank God for friends. Judy came early and we just sat and graded papers all day. What a great millage sales pitch to waste on a Catholic hospital. A woman waiting for an-

T. L. Sherred was a science fiction writer in the 50's. I met him 8 years ago through his wife, Mary Lou, when we struck up a conversation about teaching. I regret not having sat and talked more with Tom.

other patient had her grade book too, and we all kept cranking.

The only real talker in the place was Sister Eleanor. I still remember her line: "It's the day you'll never forget and he'll never remember." How true. She was regularly assigned to cardiac families in the waiting room. Nice lady. Cheerful, even. She felt so bad in the end, like she believed so hard in the perfection of the surgery. I felt bad to see her faith shaken.

Then there was Mary Beth, the nurse assigned to running back and forth keeping families posted. I remember her because my best friend in junior high was named Mary Beth. Funny how some things stick in your head.

My friend Phyllis came after school. Then it was the three of us, still sitting, still grading. It had to be about 8 hours since surgery started. I kept pushing out of my head what they'd said about it being a 4-hour operation.

Along came a volunteer, a fiftyish candy-striper. But maybe she wasn't a volunteer. Maybe there was a secret locked wing for the feeble-minded and she'd escaped. Imagine this: we sat there with red pens and scads of dittos and notebook paper and she stopped and said, "Oh, are you teachers?" And she couldn't stop. "My kids used to bring home these papers and the teacher didn't correct them. She didn't care. I'd send them back corrected." Why the hell didn't she proof-read them in the first place? "Finally we sent the kids to DeLaSalle. They really care." We sat and blinked at her. Phyllis sat there waiting; I said nothing.

When Mary Beth came back for the umpteenth time, she said they couldn't get Tom's heart going again. I don't know if they needed my say-so, but I told her anyway: "Don't keep him alive with machines. If he's dead, let him die."

She said, "Right." Then she left us in a little room, a working office. No Grosse Pointe volunteers, just good mess and signs of work. When Mary Beth came back a final time she said Tom had died.

It was pretty much a blur after that. I had to hang on Judy for a while. Phyllis said, "You just weren't ready, were you?" I guess you never are.

The surgeon came in looking like death.

"I'm sorry," he said. "What can I tell you?"

"Would he have lived without the operation?"

"No. There was no way."

"Thanks. That's all I want to know."

"Do you want to go in and see him?"

"No."

And I never did again.

# Who's Winning Science Fiction Awards

An article by Robert Sabella

When Harlan Ellison won his Hugo Award for "Paladin of the Lost Hour" in 1986, it occurred to me that he had won quite a lot of little spaceships. I began wondering who, if anybody, had won more than him. That generated a whole stream of questions in my mind: what author has won the most Nebula Awards? Or combination of Hugos and Nebulas? On a whim I took out such handy-dandy references as Franson & Devore's History of the Hugo, Nebula and International Fantasy Awards, Locus, and the Noreascon Two Memory Book (the most recent Worldcon I attended) and began compiling some interesting statistics on Science Fiction's leading award-winners.

First some ground-rules: I restricted myself to the Hugo and Nebula Awards. Otherwise it would be chaotic keeping track of International Fantasy, John W. Campbell's Memorial, Philip K. Dick Memorial, Jupiter, Pilgrim and World Fantasy Awards! It also seemed fairest to restrict myself to awards for specific works of fiction. That eliminated Nebula Grandmaster Awards, both Hugo and John W. Campbell Best New Author Awards and Best Dramatic Presentation Awards. The reason for the latter was my dilemma over whether credit should go to authors whose work won Best Dramatic Presentation Awards although the authors themselves had no participation in the film.

Finally, for simplicity's sake, I limited my consideration to authors who had won at least three Hugo or Nebula Awards combined. That in itself led to an interesting statistic: twenty-five authors have won three major awards, only five of whom were women. The most-awarded female SF authors are:

Ursula K. LeGuin	7 awards
James Tiptree, Jr.	5 awards
Octavia Butler, Vonda N. McIntyre, Connie Willis	3 awards

What is probably most interesting about the above list is how many major female science fiction writers have not won three awards: C.J. Cherryh (who won two), Anne McCaffrey (2), Joan D. Vinge (2), Kate Wilhelm (2), Joanna Russ (2), Marion Zimmer Bradley (0), Leigh Brackett (0), and C.L. Moore (0), to name a few.

The most-awarded male SF authors are:

Poul Anderson, Harlan Ellison	10 awards
Fritz Lieber	9 awards
Roger Zelazny	8 awards
Robert Silverberg, Arthur C. Clarke, Isaac Asimov, Larry Niven	6 awards
Samuel R. Delany, George R.R. Martin, Frederik Pohl, John Varley	5 awards
Gordon R. Dickson, Robert A. Heinlein, Spider Robinson, Clifford Simak	4 awards
Greg Bear, David Brin, Joe Haldeman, Jack Vance	3 awards

While a lot more male science fiction authors won three awards, there are still several notable omissions from the above list: Brian W. Aldiss (2 awards), Michael Bishop (2), Philip Jose Farmer (2), Frank Herbert (2), Walter M. Miller, Jr. (2), Theodore Sturgeon (2), Gene Wolfe (2), Philip K. Dick (1), Thomas M. Disch (0), Cordwainer Smith (0), and Ray Bradbury (0).

One immediate observation, and an obvious reason for some of the omissions, is that the proliferation of Hugo/Nebula Awards the past twenty years have tilted the total number of awards toward writers popular in the seventies and Eighties as opposed to those the bulk of whose careers were in the forty years prior to that. Why else would a Spider Robinson have won more Hugos and Nebulas than Theodore Sturgeon and Philip K. Dick combined?

\* \* \*

Next I decided to compare the SFWA's choices to the fans' choices. The list of the leading Hugo winners does not differ much from the list of total award-winners:

Poul Anderson, Harlan Ellison	7 Hugos
Fritz Lieber	6 Hugos
Roger Zelazny, Larry Niven	5 Hugos
LeGuin, Asimov, Heinlein	4 Hugos

However, the list of leading Nebula winners is quite different:

Robert Silverberg	5 Nebulas
Samuel R. Delany	4 Nebulas
Anderson, Ellison, Leiber, Zelazny, LeGuin, Clarke, Tiptree, Jr.	3 Nebulas

Only two writers have won four Nebula Awards while eight writers have won four Hugo Awards. Obviously the Nebula Awards have been spread among more winners. But the most revealing statistic is that the two leading Nebula winners have won a single Hugo Award each! Obviously Silverberg and Delany are much more writers' writers than fans' writers.

\* \* \*

Next I broke up the awards into book-length fiction versus short fiction. Since the short fiction awards account for three quarters of Hugos and Nebulas, it is not surprising that the list of short fiction winners is fairly similar to the list of total awards:

Harlan Ellison, Poul Anderson	10 awards
Fritz Leiber	7 awards
Roger Zelazny	6 awards
Silverberg, Martin, Tiptree, Jr., Varley	5 awards

For the list of book-length fiction winners, I included the one-time award for "Best All-time Series" awarded at TRICON in 1966. These totals were quite interesting:

LeGuin, Clarke, Asimov, Heinlein	4 awards
Frederik Pohl	3 awards

The book-length award-winners' list became even more interesting when I eliminated duplicate winners and considered how many different novels have won Hugo/Nebula awards:

Robert A. Heinlein	4 novels
Isaac Asimov	3 novels
Leiber, Zelazny, LeGuin, Clarke, Delany, Pohl	2 novels

It has been twenty years since Robert Heinlein won his last Hugo Award, yet he can still lay claim to being the most popular SF novelist ever. And Isaac Asimov, for all his detractors, is still the runner-up. With Clarke tied for third place, the "Big Three" have not yet been eclipsed in the eyes of award voters.

\* \* \*

Finally, I eliminated duplicates entirely and considered how many different works each author has won Hugo/Nebula awards for:

Harlan Ellison	8 stories
Poul Anderson, Roger Zelazny	7 stories

Fritz Leiber, Robert Silverberg	6 stories
LeGuin, Niven, Delany	5 stories
Clarke, Asimov, Martin, Pohl, Tiptree, Jr., Dickson, Heinlein	4 stories

\* \* \*

Next I turned my attention away from the individual authors and toward the prozine/anthologies where the award-winning fiction originally appeared. The only judgement I made was to give credit to a prozine/anthology if an award-winning novel appeared in large part there. The sources where most novels first appeared proved somewhat surprising:

<u>Galaxy Magazine</u>	7 awards
<u>Astounding/Analog</u>	6 awards
<u>Fantasy &amp; Science Fiction</u>	5 awards
<u>Worlds of IF</u>	3 awards
<u>Asimov's SF Magazine</u>	1 award

This was most interesting because Galaxy Magazine has not been a major source of award-winning fiction for a dozen years, the period in which the most Hugo and Nebula awards have been selected. Yet it still leads all prozines as the source of most award-winning novels.

The results for short fiction are similar, if somewhat more diverse:

<u>Astounding/Analog</u>	29 awards
<u>Fantasy &amp; Science Fiction</u>	27 awards
<u>Asimov's SF Magazine</u>	13 awards
<u>Galaxy Magazine</u>	9 awards
<u>Universe</u>	6 awards
<u>Orbit, Dangerous Visions, New Dimensions</u>	4 awards
<u>New Worlds, Omni</u>	3 awards
<u>Worlds of IF</u>	2 awards

The above statistics make it obvious that Hugo/Nebula Awards dominated by the three leading prozines at any given time: Astounding/Analog-Galaxy-F&SF from the 50s through the mid-70s, followed by Analog-F&SF-Asimov's since. This domination can best be illustrated by considering Galaxy's and Asimov's awards jointly (a reasonable grouping since they had virtually no overlap as leading prozines). Combining novels and short fiction, the results for the various prozine "groups" are:

<u>Astounding/Analog</u>	35 awards
<u>Fantasy &amp; Science Fiction</u>	32 awards
<u>Galaxy/Asimov's</u>	30 awards
All original anthologies combined	18 awards
All other prozines combined	11 awards

\* \* \*

What conclusions do I make from all the above statistics? Science fiction's formative years from 1927 to the origin of the Nebula Awards in 1965 have not been given nearly the kudos they deserve. Perhaps what is needed is some type of retrospective

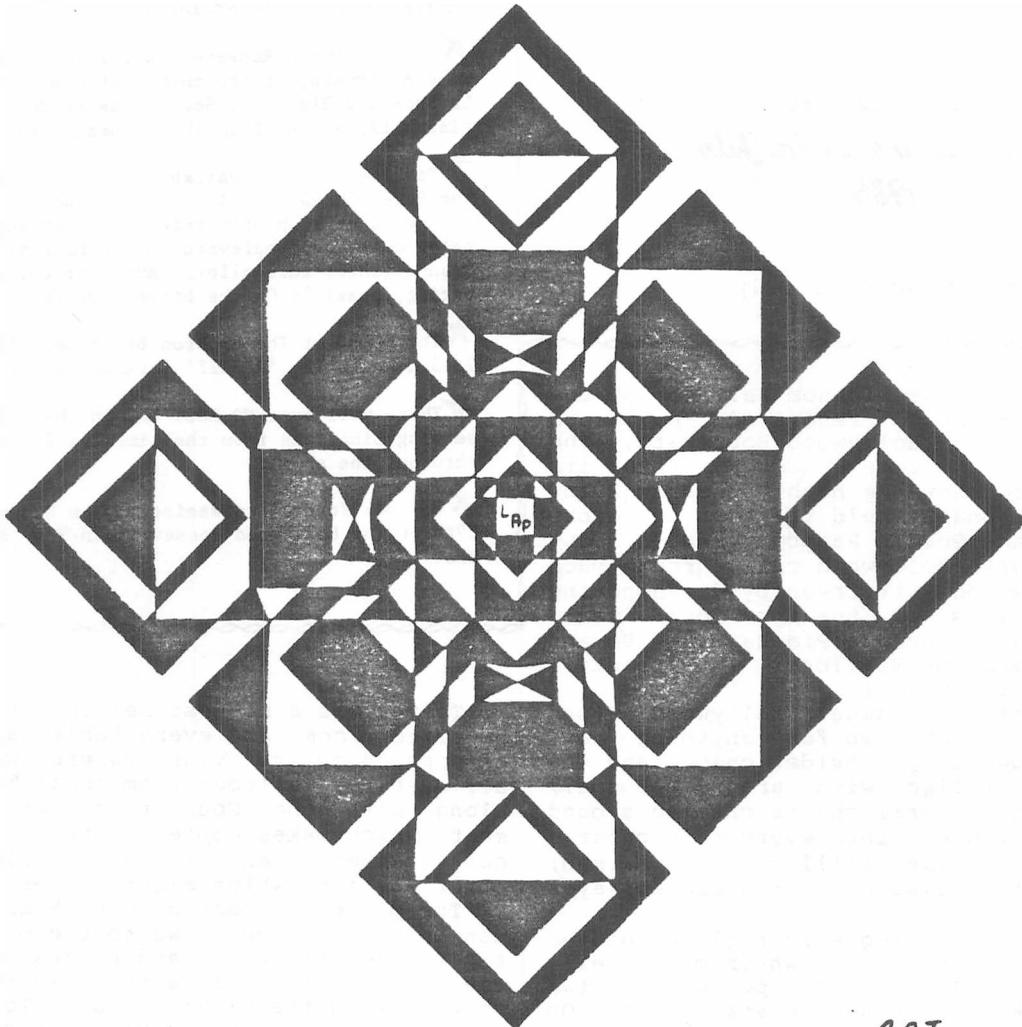
award to celebrate the best works that were overlooked before the recent award explosion. The Science Fiction Writers of America attempted such a thing with their two-volume Science Fiction Hall of Fame. The only attempt the Hugo Awards made at such retrospective recognition was the single Best All-Time SF Series given at TRICON.

I wonder if further retrospective awards are possible? One obvious problem is that attendance at Worldcons has grown tremendously in recent years. How many attendees have even heard of most of the great stories and writers of the past? In a retrospective award, would they give undue credit to writers still active at the expense of such greats of the past as Stanley G. Weinbaum, C.L. Moore, Henry Kuttner, Cyril Kornbluth, Cordwainer Smith and Theodore Sturgeon?

Even giving retrospective awards through

the Science Fiction Writers of America would have a similar handicap. When the SFWA chose their Science Fiction Hall of Fame in the 60s, there were fewer members, most of whom were familiar with the field's rich past. Now SFWA's membership has grown as well, mostly with young writers, many of whom are not familiar with much of science fiction's history. They might be tempted to award their peers as to consider the Kuttners and Weinbaums of the past.

If there's a solution, I don't know what it is. Sadly, I envision a time when even devoted science fiction fans will be unfamiliar with many of the field's most important writers. Already many of their important works are out of print. Without even award recognition to remind us of them occasionally, it might become a case of "out of sight, out of mind."



A.O.T.  
12:27 A.M.  
6-21-86

# The Golden Raspberry Award Foundation

PRESENTS THE

## 7<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL RAZZIE AWARDS

### *Dis-honoring Worst Achievements in Film 1986*

A report by Kris Gilpin

As held in the Blossom Ballroom of the legendary, recently renovated Hollywood Roosevelt hotel on Hollywood Boulevard, the seventh annual Razzie Awards presented its ritziest-ever show the night of March 29th, 1987. Traditionally held the evening before the Oscars, the Golden Raspberry Award Foundation of North Hollywood cuts through much of the Hollywood shitscreen by dis-honoring the worst films of the previous year. (Passed harassed include Pia Zadora, Bo and John Derek, and the Stallones, who are still taking it in the chin.)

There were the usual Hollywood Types who'll don a tux or gown for anything happening in town they consider chic, and the Blossom was filled with around 50 small tables, with several chairs crammed around each one. Slipped into everyone's program was a copy of a 1963 still of Ethel Merman; it had two tiny holes cut out where her eyes had been.

A small, glittering silver globe rotated over the stage, hanging down from the ceiling. Under the globe stood a podium, and two standing mikes were set up stage left. On either side of the platform was a video monitor; in back of the stage was a tall, white, flat with a screen in its center for slide presentations. The white board had THE GOLDEN RASPBERRY AWARDS drawn on it, along with two large raspberry cut-outs on either side. The sound for the evening came from two small speakers on the floor.

★ ★  
SOME  
IMPORTANT  
NOTES ABOUT  
THIS YEAR'S  
RAZZIES

★ The Seventh Annual 'RAZZIE' Awards will be held in The Blossom Ballroom of the recently renovated Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel — The very room where The First Annual Academy Awards were held in 1929. We are looking forward to a Truly Swank Event, and invite you Dress Accordingly...

★ The Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel is at 7000 Hollywood Boulevard, at the corner of Orange (Between La Brea and Highland, South side of the street — Diagonally across from The Chinese Theatre)...

★ Parking will be available in a Valet lot behind The Hotel for \$3.50; In a pay lot across Hollywood Boulevard at an hourly rate; In a pay lot ¼-block below Hollywood Boulevard on the East side of Orange (enter thru alley); And, for the Totally Daring, possibly On the Street FOR FREE...

★ The DOORS of The Blossom Ballroom will OPEN AT 7:15pm, with The 'RAZZIE' Ceremony starting at 8:00.

★ There will be a NO HOST BAR in The Ballroom, serving Libations from the time the doors open and thru-out the show...

★ We look forward to seeing you on Sunday, March 29th at The Hollywood Roosevelt in Your Fancy/Funky Best...

There was a no-host bar inside the medium-sized room and every table had a basket of popcorn on it. Video cameras were set up all over the ballroom from local TV stations along with the Foundations own vid equipment, which makes copies of the show for the cast members, and to supply clips to the other stations which might request them.

The place was packed by 8 PM as Drew Wilson introduced the crowd to the proceedings, explaining the rules and bylaws of the Razzie Foundation. "It's the only thing I get to do," said the elder Wilson. "To be eligible for the Razzies a movie must have played at least one week during the past calendar year -- and some of them damn near didn't make it -- at a regular cinema, multi-plex, drive-in or Pussycat theatre. It must've been seen by one or more paying patrons." The winners/losers each year are determined by mailing ballots to members of the Golden

Raspberry Foundation; they include 175 Californians and members in 12 other states, and one Canadian member.

"Should a Razzie winner not be present to accept their award," Drew continued, and in seven years no one's ever shown up yet, the Foundation reserves the right to recycle the award for use next year. Now, to all our winners, may I give our sincerest \*raspberry noise\* and to all our losers, worse luck next year."

The video monitors on stage were then fired up; one screen was out while tape re-wound on the other. The tapes finally began -- with no sound. When things finally went right the crowd cheered; they were all geared up for a funny, star/film-knocking night. The first thing seen on the monitors was a clip of Janet Gaynor accepting the Oscar in the original A Star Is Born; as a drunken Fredric March interrupted the proceedings, the monitor cut to a clip of Daffy Duck opining, "Of all the stupid suggestions!" The video segments were well edited and the audience responded with loud laughter and applause throughout the show.

Drew Wilson's son John took the stage; he is the president of the Raspberry Foundation and MC-writer of each year's awards presentation. He informed the audience that the Blossom Ballroom was the site of the very first Academy Awards show 60 years ago. "Nearly six years ago a public dinner was held in the living room of what one magazine called 'a rundown apartment in the seedy section of Hollywood!'" This was the site of the first Razzie Awards anti-tribute; the show cost \$45 to produce, ran for as many minutes, and exposed the worst achievements in cinema for that year 1980. "But tonight we are in the very room in which what we call 'that other awards show' was born. We have finally arrived!" The crowd went crazy.

Everyone was then asked to join in the evening's opening number, which was sung to the tune of "That's Entertainment." Entitled "Let's Give 'Em Razzies!" the tune was crooned by the crowd as they held the photocopied stills of Ethel Merman up to their faces, as everyone's eyes looked out through the two cut-out eyeslots -- thus was born "The Merman Tabernacle Choir." The lyrics were run on the slide screen behind the podium:

If the plot's not so hot, so bad you  
wanna wince,  
Leaves a taste in your mouth, and it's  
not Junior Mints;  
Or if it's loaded with hints  
Mega-millions were wasted,  
It begs to be lambasted!

Six bucks at the Cineplex Four,  
For a film that was really a bore;  
Now at last we can even the score.  
Let's laugh till it hurts,  
Give out Just desserts --  
Let's give 'em Raaaaaaa- [one slide  
simply read 'aaaaaaa'] -azzies!!

All gave themselves a big hand.

John Wilson then introduced a new category for the Razzies: Worst Special Effects, "featuring dwarves in duck suits [Howard the



ETHEL MERMAN

Duck], grown men in monkey hats [the ridiculous King Kong Lives!] and alien creatures that look alarmingly like bean-bag chairs with legs [the shamefully campy Invaders from Mars]." The crowd howled as the video monitors played clips from the three films, then booed them as soon as they were over, as the crowd would all evening long. The show's Razzie Girl "tripped" when walking up the "winning" envelope, which had Howard the Duck's name in it.

Next came the first Worst Picture clip over the monitors; it was from Stallone's Cobra, whom Wilson described as "America's highest-paid illiterate. Of the 12 films Stallone has made to date, seven of them feature main characters with five-letter names with two vowels in them! His last appearance in First for Blood [Rambo: First Blood Pt. 2] won last year's Razzie for Worst Picture." Cobra cost \$30 million-plus to produce and made back \$27.9 million in the States (a major-studio film must make back around 2-1/2 times its cost [to pay back the investors, including interest] before it begins to make bucks for the studio itself). "Cobra finally insulted the intelligence of even the die-hard Stallone fans -- no easy task!" said Wilson. Stallone reportedly also insisted the film be cut down to a lightning-fast 79 minutes in order for theatres to cram in one extra showing per day!

The clip was accompanied by narration from a female film critic, theorizing that

the film "died" because "Stallone's character used tactics that were easily as despicable as those of the psycho death squad he's out to squash. We needed a hero, a guy we could root for. In Cobra the sense of humanity is based on muscle."

"If Stallone spoke less than 53 words in Cobra he got paid handsomely for those words," said the next awards presenter. "Now he's got the chance to be paid what he really deserves, as one of those nominated for Worst Screenplay." Awarded by the presenter who last year gave Linda Blair the Worst Career Achievement Razzie, this dishonor came after three actors, in front of the two standing mikes on stage, read funny script excerpts from the five nominated films this year, which also included Howard the Duck (Stick with the original Steve Gerber comics instead!) and the all equally-abysmal 9-1/2 Weeks, Shanghai Surprise, and Prince's Under the Cherry Moon (an unwatchable embarrassment!). The winner/loser was Howard the Duck.

Next came the first nominee for Worst Song, "'I Do What I Do', a love song about sado-masochism." Two actors, one man and one woman, then recited the repetitive, banal lyrics to the song in slow, melodramatic voices: "I do what I do to have you. (Pause) I do . . . I do. I do it all to have you." The actors finished the recital in Curly Howard and Jack Nicholson voices.

The second Worst Picture clip was from Howard the Duck, which John Wilson said, "turned out to be a duck version of Heaven's Gate. It was first proposed in 1981 as an \$8 million picture, approved for production as a \$20 million picture, and finally completed as a \$37 million movie, to which another \$8 million--the original budget for the entire picture--was added for prints and advertising. When this duck finally hit the fan it promptly laid a \$45 million egg, which ended up on the faces of almost everyone involved in this project." The main face belonged to Frank Price, the Universal executive who OKed the film; fired 6-1/2 weeks after Howard opened and died, he was reportedly involved in fist-fights in the studio offices, prompting the trade-paper headline, "DUCK COOKS PRICE'S GOOSE!" MCA, Universal's parent company, subsequently saw a profit slide of a walloping 58%. "It was the most mal-lard-odorous film of 1986!" (That pun brought groans from the audience.) The "romantic interlude" scene between Beverly and Howard was then shown, and it produced loud boos from the entire room.

The next actress on-stage said, "We will now try to prevent -- uh, present -- two awards back-to-back without the benefit of a highwire, a net or Frankie Avalon [Annette -- get it? More audible groans]." Two other actresses then read the list of Worst Supporting Actor nominees; first up (clips were shown after each name was announced) was Jerome Benton, "as Prince's 'special friend' in Under the Cherry Moon." (That produced a lot of laughs.) Next was Peter O'Toole, "for blatantly reading cue cards in Club Paradise"; then, in the clip, damn if the great one's eyes didn't appear to be wandering around off-camera. Next followed Tim Robbins for Howard, Scott Wilson (Who's also a good

actor) for the horrible Blue City and Brian Thompson, "as a dim-witted axe murderer who still outwits Stallone in Cobra!" And the Worst Supporting Actor was Jerome Benton.

The category of Worst Supporting Actress was led by . . . Dom DeLuise, for his performance-in-drag (quite funny, actually) in the limp Haunted Honeymoon (the audience applauded his clip). All then whistled and cheered as Louise Fletcher gobbled down a frog from Invaders from Mars, which was followed by Zelda Rubenstein from Poltergeist II. The presenter suggested that those trapped in the scene with Beatrice Straight from Power were trying not to look embarrassed; when viewing the clip with that in mind it was hilarious to watch everyone else in the scene squirm and look away as she gesticulated! Then came Kristin Scott Thomas as "Prince's pouty paramour and protege" in Under the Cherry Moon. Viewers in the crowd chanted "Louise!" and "Dom!" as the envelope was opened -- the Worst Actress in a Supporting Role Razzie went to Dom DeLuise. (I believe this sort of Razzie has happened before, when Brooke Shields won as Worst Actor [while wearing a moustache] for Sahara.)

The second Worst Song nominee was by George Harrison, for his theme from the film Shanghai Surprise (what the hell, for a title pop tune, it was all right). This was followed by John Wilson racing through the Worst New Star nominees "for the respect they deserve": Joan Chen (Tai Pan), Mitch Gaylord (American Anthem), Kristin Scott Thomas (again), Brian Thompson (ditto, for Cobra), and a total of seven people in the role of Howard the Duck's ludicrous costume (why couldn't they have hired Steve Gerber to write an animated feature version, the way it should've been done?!). The Worst New Razzie Star was, of course, Howard himself.

"It took our next Worst Film contender 40 years to get to the screen; fortunately for him, author Ross McDonald died before seeing what was done to his book!" The next speaker was introducing the film clip to the truly terrible Blue City, starring "nostril-flaring Judd Nelson [in an obnoxious performance] and Miss Monotone herself, Ally Sheedy. This turned the whole project into a sort of St. Elmo's mis-Fire; 'The movie appears to have been edited,' said the New York Times, 'by someone wearing earplugs and blindfolds.'" Blue City was up for five Razzie awards that night.

The next song up for the worst of the year was also, ironically, up for the best of the year at the Oscars; it was "Life in a Looking Glass" from That's Life. An actor recited the lyrics in a Jimmy Stewart stutter: "Life in, in, in as looking glass; that's, that's, that's life that you see..."

"The French have a theory of film criticism known as 'auteur,' in which the director is considered the sole author of the film," explained the next presenter. "But then the French think Jerry Lewis is a genius, so what the hell do they know?" As each Worst Director was announced, three actors wearing PRESS caps read excerpts from bad press reviews on each film. The nominees included Jim Goddard for Shanghai Surprise, Willard Huyck for Howard the Duck ("He's the worst

director in creation!" said one paper), Stephen King for Maximum Overdrive (sure it was shit, but it had some "good, shitty" moments), Michelle Manning for Blue City ("Her direction lacks style, pace, energy. Rhythm. coherence, humor or class," said the L. A. Times, which just about summed it all up!), and Prince (boos from the audience) for Under the Cherry Moon (onw critic rightly stated, "Prince has made a directorial debut so embarrassing, if I were him I would get plastic surgery!").

"And the worst auteur of the year is ... the envelope, please?" The Razzie Girl ran down from the balcony onto the stage with the loser's name; it was indeed Prince, whose moniker generated deservedly loud raspberries from the floor.

Under the Cherry Moon was also the next Worst Film clip, which John Wilson informed us was "filmed in color but released in black & white. As a monument to the ego of its star/director, it is also the best argument for colorization yet filmed!" Nominated in eight out of the ten Razzie Awards categories, the clip showed also acted as the next Worst Song presentation; entitled "Love or Money", it is the one song so bad in the film it wasn't put on the soundtrack album. The titled droned on repeatedly throughout the song during the film clip.

Three presenters then announced the nominees for Worst Actor. First up was Emilio Esteves, who demanded to know "what do you want?! What?!" from a semi which was bumping him toward the gas pumps in Maximum Overdrive. "A really gripping, tense moment there, folks!" said one presenter. Judd Nelson then threatened his mother, "You are going to experience grief and woe of Biblical proportions!" in Blue City, followed by a clip of Sean ("That's Mr. Madonna to you!" corrected a presenter) Penn from the flaccid Shanghai Surprise, which had earned my vote for Worst Picture. Penn can be a great actor with a good script and it was a shame to waste him in this turkey. The crowd groaned loudly as Prince ("as a short pianist," the girl at the mike said slowly) babbled love stuff over the phone while taking a bath in Cherry Moon -- "Turn it off!" one guy close by me kept yelling, causing everyone else to join in. "And of course no Worst Actor list would be complete without Sylvester..."; the applause drowned out his surname as a Cobra clip was shown (they laughed at his infamous "make my day" line: "You're the disease, and I'm the cure!").

"And the very worst actor of 1986 is ... please check under your tables and chairs." This time they had hidden the envelop somewhere in the room, and one guy at an adjacent table finally found it and took it up to the stage to encouraging applause. Prince was the loser.

"In the category of Worst Song you've got to feel sorry for the people who had to write a theme song for Howard the Duck," said John Wilson. Two guys and a girl dressed as beatniks (with berets and bongo drum) stiffly recited the lyrics to the song as another young woman performed a very funny, spastic "interpretive dance" of the words (stoically: "Hey, look out world ... a duck is on the loose"). This was followed by

the show's producer, Nancy Lienthal ("a woman who's been known to say, '\$1.95! I can get it at Pik'n'Save for 89\'," who gave the Razzie dis-honors to "Love or Money" from Under the Cherry Moon (the worst of a sorry lot").

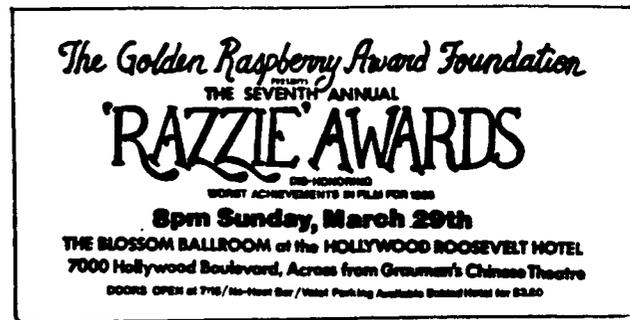
The Worst Actress was up next and the first clip showed poor Kim Basinger in the degrading sequence from 9-1/2 Weeks in which she is showered with milk, honey and everything else Mickey Roarke could find in his refrigerator "in a scene which literally sucks eggs" (she's getting to be a good actress-- note Fool for Love -- and this celluloid turd was not her fault). Then came newcomer Joan Chen, who clutched her breasts and said, "Mens! And you stand there and eat up her bosoms!" in the mega-disaster Tai Pan; the beautiful Madonna who, laughably miscast as a clergywoman in Shanghai Surprise, "took a vow of abstinence as far as her acting ability was concerned" and Mrs. Stallone from Cobra ("How do you think she got the job?" "I can't imagine!"). The nominees were completed by Ally Sheedy of Blue City; "I can almost understand her!" said one presenter in awe. The audience chanted "Madanna!" and even "Prince!" as the envelope was being opened, and the presenter sang, "Like a Virgin..." as the crowd cheered/bood.

The final Worst Picture clip of the evening was from Shanghai Surprise, which Wilson called "a junior Cleopatra [the industry's first mega-millions turkey]" and quoted reviews of the flick, such as, "Madonna emotes with all the emission of a guest on a Bob Hope TV special," which brought howls of laughter from the floor, and more quips from a Cleveland Plain Dealer critic who also noted in her review that, during the matinee performance of the screening she attended, she was the only person in the public theatre. Then a video TV review by Joel Siegal proclaimed, "...to compare her sex appeal to Monroe's? Maybe James Monroe's. This film is not the stuff that dreams are made of -- landfills, maybe."

"And now, the award you've all been waiting for," continued Wilson, "the last award." The entire cast read reviews of the nominated features: Blue City ("How many ways can a movie go wrong? You may never know until you see Blue City, which might actually be improved if you watch it with your eyes closed"), Cobra ("If your idea of fun is managing the slaughterhouse of the Manson family, go see this sleazeball movie!"), Howard the Duck ("Watching in instilled an awe I have very rarely experienced in a major studio production. What the fuck did they think they were doing?!" asked the Village Voice), Shanghai Surprise ("An immense bore of a film") and, last and certainly least, Under the Cherry Moon ("This film finds Prince in France, wearing too-tight pants. He drives his convertible, he changes clothes; he sings atop a baby grand, he changes clothes; he crashes a private party, he changes clothes," said John Wilson of the Razzie Reporter, the Foundation's newsletter).

The Razzie Girl dropped an oversized envelope over the balcony, disclosing the Worst Picture of 1986 to be -- a tie: Howard the Duck and Under the Cherry Moon.

"A year from now we'll be back once more," said Wilson, bidding farewell to the crowd in the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel, "shooting From the Hip [Judd Nelson strikes again in '87] and going Over the Top [Stallone's bomb for the new year]. Until then, may the [makes the sound of the Raspberry] be with you." The audience filed out of the Blossom Ballroom, and "Let's Give 'Em Razzies!" was played once more as, per Golden Raspberry Award Foundation tradition, "The End" was supered over a close-up slide of Pia Zadora's bikinied ass, bringing another of their annual bad-film award shows to an amusing end.



# PEOPLE ARE RAVING

An article by Dave D'Amassa

"Whitley Streiber is a best-selling novelist whose strangest story, he says, is true!" The man was probably in his late twenties, and in his leisurely "talk-show host" suit complete with combination microphone/tie clip he looked as though he would have been more comfortable discussing sports over beer and potato chips. "On the nights of October fourth and December twenty-sixth, 1985, Whitley believes he was abducted by extra-terrestrials who performed medical experiments on him."

Whitley Streiber blinked uncomfortably under the hot studio lights. He seemed nervous as he looked back and forth from his lap to the host.

The host continued to introduce his guests as the camera cut to an overweight woman with curly red hair that didn't quite drape over her shoulders. She stared directly into my living room with an inward smile. "Lydia Stalnaker, who also believes she was abducted by aliens, says she feels like "an animal whose been tagged". She believes that if aliens want to contact her again, there will be no place for her to hide.

"Have these people really been abducted by aliens, or have their minds created extraordinary and unexplainable hallucinations?" He smiled into the camera. "I'm Tom Bergeron, and this is People Are Talking."

My father had come into my room and said, "Come see this! I taped something today that I think you'll want to see." And now I was watching the low-budget title visuals for a talk-show I'd never heard of, and wouldn't have, if it hadn't been for my father and his delighted amusement with Streiber's tall tale about other-worldly creatures grabbing him and subjecting him to humiliating medical treatment, as chronicled in his hot-selling "non-fiction" gem, Communion.

Donald D'Amassa grabbed the remote control and slid over on the couch so I could

sit down. After fast-forwarding through a barrage of commercials, we settled in to watch the tape that would eventually remind me of the old Monty Python routine, "Spot the Looney".

Tom Bergeron didn't want to dilly-dally. He quite obviously found the prospect of having loonies on his show very amusing and indeed wanted to get right to the strange details that maintained their audience of nosy old ladies and other types you can imagine taking in a video tabloid such as this. Briskly, Whitley went into his story of the close encounter that resulted in Communion:

"On that night [October 4th], I was awakened by a swirling sound in the downstairs of my house. Before I could even think about what this was, something --a being-- peeped in the door, wearing a broad kind of flat helmet with a wide brim, and an oblong shield on its chest.

"...As if I had been pre-programmed I jumped up, threw my pajamas off, and they carried me out...a couple of minutes later I was doing a fair amount of screaming and yelling, as you might imagine...."

"Your wife was asleep through all of this?" asked Tom.

"She slept through it, yes, and so did my son downstairs."

As he got deeper into his narrative, a caption appeared on the screen which read: "WHITLEY STREIBER: CLAIMS HE WAS ABDUCTED BY ALIENS."

"Once I was up in their craft with them I began trying to wake up...they said, "We are going to do an operation on your brain," this electronic voice on my left side said. "What can we do to make you stop screaming?" And I said, "You could let me smell you."

"So this one on the other side said, "Oh, okay, I can do that," and he held his wrist up to my nose; I smelled this sort of cheesy

smell, a little cinnamon, dry -- and the cuff of the garment, of the blue coverall he was wearing, was made of paper. I could smell the paper."

On the screen, Whitley's name was replaced with an open invitation: "QUESTIONS ABOUT ALIEN ENCOUNTERS? CALL 787-4444!!"

I turned to my father. "Oh, I understand. These aliens wearing wide-brimmed construction helmets and overalls dragged him kicking and screaming out of his bedroom without waking his wife, took him aboard their ship, and were now trying to convince him to consent to a little intergalactic neurosurgery by letting him smell their hands. So what's hard to believe?"

"This man is a looney," said Dad. I nodded my agreement, and turned my attention back to the program.

"I don't think they performed experiments on me at all," corrected Whitley, "I think they already know what they're doing."

"Well, their social skills are a little lacking, obviously...."

Whitley nodded soulfully. "It wasn't a pleasant experience and nobody asked me."

According to Whitley, his unworldly hosts then surpassed their initial rudeness by firing a needle into his neck that "made a blue flash in my eyes and a pop behind my ears." And talk about being abandoned the morning after: "[They left me] naked on the couch at some ungodly hour of the morning, and totally confused -- the feeling that there had just been a lot of people in the house...and I had a bad taste in my mouth. It was nasty, like ether or something."

Whitley had no recollection of these events the next morning, and it wasn't until a few days later, when his neck started hurting in the spot where he had received his inoculation from beyond the stars, that memories started to return to him.

He said that at this point he figured he had two options: he could either go to the police or a doctor. He confided that he chose the doctor because he felt that this was a psychological problem, and "not a physical experience". Bergeron grinned and added that besides, the police might have been a little sceptical of his story.

"Oh, I don't know," Whitley protested indignantly. "I know the sheriffs in my area pretty well. I think they would have listened to me pretty seriously, frankly... that's one of the reasons [I didn't go to them] -- because they really would have tried to find out what happened to me."

My father gaped. "Aw, c'mon. Whitley!!"

So it was to the doctor Whitley went, and he was wisely referred to a psychiatrist. Whitley wasn't clear about this; apparently he had several psychological tests done, and came up with several other theories explaining the memories of this experience. He finally visited Dr. Donald Klein, a hypnotist who has dealt with many people claiming to have seen UFOs. However, Streiber prefers to rely on what he remembers himself for the story for conversation, since he doesn't quite trust what he recalled under hypnosis. "I have a feeling that the mind may play a lot of tricks under hypnosis."

"Not just under hypnosis," I observed.

While hypnotised, he claims that he regressed back to the year 1957, when he was twelve. It turns out that this was around the same time his sister recalls having seen a fireball streak across the sky, collapsing the tent she and her brother Whitley were camping out under at the time.

The camera cut to Tom while he was in the process of chewing the inside of his cheeks to conceal his amusement with Whitley's testimony. He quickly composed himself and cooed, "A lot of fascinating subjects coming up as we continue to talk about extra-terrestrial abduction on People Are Talking."

"Have I got an insurance policy for you!" gushed Gavin McLeod just as I grabbed the remote control and hit the fast-forward.

A loving pan through a pathetically-small audience marked the return of the program, and Lydia Stalnaker had magically appeared next to Whitley Streiber on the couch, smiling shyly as Tom coaxed her right into her story. It seemed to me that the reason Tom was letting his guests do most of the talking that day was that it's hard to talk and hold in your laughter at the same time.

Lydia's story was very interesting, what you could understand of it; she spoke very quickly, with a nearly unintelligible Southern accent that let all of us know right away that she was from Florida.

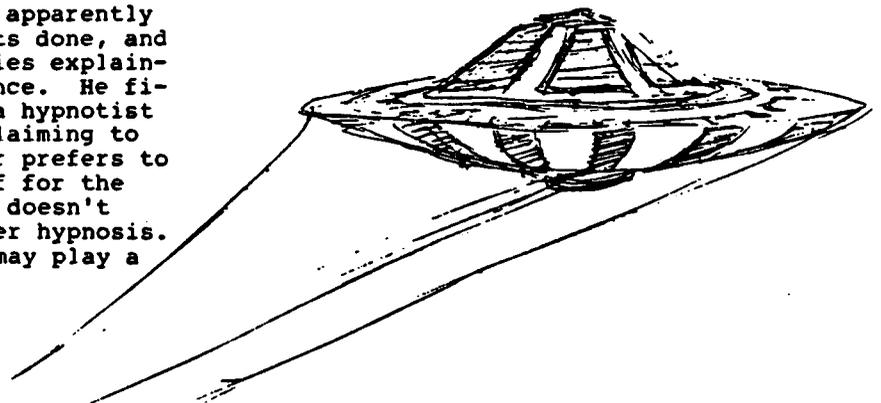
It seemed that in August of 1974 Lydia ran a mobile home business, and one night she and her partner were driving along a highway when they saw a brightly-lit craft drop down from nowhere and hover above the trees to the side of the highway. Lydia thought it was a helicopter, and when it started to descend into a field off of the highway, she thought it might be in trouble, so she had her friend turn off onto a secondary roadway near the field where the "plane" had touched down.

"As we got closer to the light," she narrated, "all of a sudden it was like something came into the car and made all the hair stand up on my body."

They both blacked out shortly thereafter, and woke up three hours later, slumped in the car, feeling -- to use Lydia's words -- "nauseated and disorientated".

Bergeron sneered. "By this time you were expecting Rod Serling to walk up to the car, right?"

After this incident, Lydia seemed to be coming down with a bad case of psychic phenomena. Wherever she went, automatic garage doors would open and close, and computers would go down.



Not one to be left out, Whitley chimed right in: "My computer is nothing but trouble! I've had the motherboard on the thing blow up -- so many different strange things have happened with it. Sometimes it almost seems like it was taken over by something."

Lydia smiled at him and continued, saying that she had a scar on her forehead after that evening, as well. Whitley sat straight up again. "They did something to my forehead on the night of October the fourth -- I remember that."

My father grunted. "Loonies generally have all the answers. You could talk about the time a vacuum cleaner sucked your eyeball out, and they'd say, 'Oh, that happened to me, too!'"

When the subject turned to the aliens themselves, and what they looked like, Tom gingerly picked up a copy of Whitley Streiber's rant book Communion, to show the alien depicted just under the title: a thin, triangular face with virtually no features except for two black ovals that appear to be eyes.

"Not the type of face you'd want to meet in a dark alley," quipped Tom. He's such a wild, witty guy.

After a close-up of that, he carefully picked up a painting of a generic-looking spaceship sitting in a field. The artist's inclusion of two alien escorts dragging a somewhat chubby woman over to the entrance ramp provoked giggles from my father and me. This, according to Lydia, was her being dragged from her car toward the spaceship, where she put up a terrific fight until she was tranquilized by the alien depicted on the next painting Tom picked up.

Lydia says she described this creature to the artist as a lot like Telly Savalas, and that's definitely what she got: Telly Savalas with a narrower head and eyes that were too large. He wore a black robe and gazed malevolently from the canvas. There was also a black version of these aliens that looked similar to Whitley's friend. Last, but not least, was the fellow in white with a blue, light-bulb shaped head and huge red eyes.

Tom Bergeron turned to Whitley and smiled sweetly. "Did you ever see anyone who looked as human as Doctor Telly?"

Well, gosh, Whitley was taken aback by these paintings. You see, his eight-year old son often talked of being visited by a creature with big red eyes, too.

Tom blinked, right along with my father and me.

"Your whole family has been involved --"

"My whole family: my brother, my sister, my son, my wife, we think our mother, also."

Yeah, you can't be sure about mother. She might be crazy, right? Ahem.

Getting back to Lydia, and her own spaced odyssey, she was dragged under protest from the car, and fought until Doctor Telly slapped her on the neck with some injection that calmed her down. He said, "Don't be afraid," and she claims she was suddenly very cheerful and went with him happily.

You see what a threat these beings are? Not only are they distracting traffic and impersonating famous Greek actors, but they're distributing dope! If you see any

extra-terrestrials wearing wide-brimmed construction helmets, I'd suggest calling a narc immediately.

"All this speaking very good English?" asked Tom.

"Not so much English," she corrected him, knocked off track once again by this lousy interviewer, "Sometimes it's just a word or it could be I see what they're trying to tell me."

"What do these spaceships look like inside, for those interested in interior design?" asked Tom, loving every minute of this.

"Whitley described the room where he had been put as "a round room with a little bench close to the floor and a sort of ribbed ceiling...very plain and simple...." But! He then announced that just a few weeks ago he had another experience (Tom nearly fell over), and this time they put him in a room with a shelf full of books.

I noticed that there was no description of an incident of a ship landing in his yard to pick him up or anything, he was just there again, rather like the way we remember dreams. Hmmm. And, just like a dream, he says that he cannot communicate freely with the aliens when they visit: "I've said things that seem to be required...they asked me 'What can we do to help you?' and I said 'I need to fear you less'. I wanted to say, 'Give me an artifact! PROVE THIS!'"

Then the camera suddenly cut to Tom: "When we come back we'll also have with us Doctor John Gliedman. He's a research psychologist and a 'sympathetic skeptic'. When our conversation about extra-terrestrial abduction continues!"

Any attempt he might have been making to conceal the smirk was futile at best as the picture faded to another pan through a diminutive audience of bored old ladies, a pair of young parents who brought their kids here for a thrill, and one awkward-looking character who peered around nervously. We would get to know him later on. A message on the screen read: TO BE IN OUR AUDIENCE, CALL 787-7109. I passed up the invitation.

Dr. Gliedman was a gentle-looking man who fidgeted slightly in his seat as he spoke. He had conferred with Whitley about his UFO experience, but in how much detail was not revealed to us. Gliedman's clarified his description of himself as a "sympathetic skeptic" by saying that he did not exclude the possibility of these encounters, but that we should also look for simpler explanations.

"The mind is a wonderful thing," said he. "Close your eyes for a second and then open them. Where is that would that you see through the portals of your eyes? It's being created by your brain from one moment to the next."

He licked his lips and went on to mention that there are certain rare neurological conditions, such as Temporal Lobe Epilepsy, "in which for some reason one can start playing upon the brain they way that one plays upon a piano, producing illusions that are as real life -- memories that are as real as life.

Or dreams that are as real as life? Whitley?

Actually, TLE is one of Streiber's many

other theories explaining his experience. He underwent the unpleasant test for this disorder, which involves electrodes being pushed up your nose into your brain, and the official verdict was, according to Whitley, "not only normal, but very normal." Well, there's no beating very normal, is there? But Gliedman licked his lips again and reminded Whitley that the tests for Temporal Lobe Epilepsy are notoriously unreliable.

There are other vague theories that Gliedman posed -- he spoke of the hypothesis that earthquake activity produces flashes of light that can be construed as flying saucers. As for the incidents with computers going down and garage doors behaving strangely, he reminded Lydia that no one really understands what sort of electromagnetic energies we produce.

This is true: in Erie, Pennsylvania, there is one traffic light that my grandfather used to pass under every day taking Gramma back and forth to work, and whenever he approached it it would blink out, or go from red to yellow just before turning green, or do something else rather odd. His guess is that it had something to do with his station wagon.

What Tom wanted to know was, why didn't these researchers from beyond the stars go public and make themselves known to the entire world?

Neither Whitley nor Lydia had any idea. "There come across as being very strange," said Whitley.

Tom laughed. "I'll grant you that, yeah."

Gliedman theorized that since they were discussing a whole other race of creature, perhaps their methods of communication went beyond our understanding, or perhaps they have different values about what they were doing, whatever that was.

Lydia, who you'll remember said that she had been tagged like an animal, thought that since the aliens were experimenting on humans, perhaps the relationship was one of scientist versus lab animal, so maybe they figured that communication with us was trivial.

Gliedman liked this idea, too. "Does a hamster in a laboratory make much sense to the gloe that comes down and picks it up, and then holds it while someone sticks a needle into its neck?"

Tom made a face and then informed us all that it was time for more commercials. The picture swiveled to that of Linda Blair in white pajamas menacing Max Von Sydow. The caption read, COMING UP NEXT WEEK: EXORCISM. I wondered if Tom knew about that yet.

The last guest was Dr. M. Bruce Maccabee, a research physicist for the United States Navy, who studies UFO reports as a hobby. He's come to the conclusion that there is a pattern among UFO sightings (I would presume after excluding the numerous crackpot reports, such as -- well, never mind) that would indicate an investigation of some sort, and he does believe the story about doctors from space examining Whitley without his permission.

"This is not an official statement of the US Navy, it's my opinion," said he. "I call myself a skeptic, but I'm skeptical of the skeptics."

Taken literally, this somewhat schizophrenic statement made Dr. Gliedman brighten, and he jumped to agree: "I am personally convinced that there have been multiple cover-ups about UFO sightings since the first sightings were made in 1947. Since I don't know what's been covered up, I don't know what to conclude from it."

Maccabee stared into his lap.

"I think the way our government works," continued Gliedman, "is that the moment anything touches upon national security a great fog of disinformation rises mysteriously from Foggy Bottom and conceals everything."

"Yep," agreed Whitley. Bergeron laughed out loud, but stifled it. "ANOTHER LOONEY!" cried my father, nearly falling off the couch.

"One of the reasons I am a sympathetic skeptic and not prepared to dismiss all this as just another intricate dance of the mind," he went on, "is that there is so much circumstantial evidence that funny things are moving around in the sky and that they're funny enough to make our government behave the way it normally behaves when it wants to keep important information from the American people."

Tom briskly announced that it was time to take a phone call from the home audience, adding that he couldn't wait to see how people reacted. A woman who admired Whitley's courage (smirk) wondered what finally prompted him to begin discussing his experience.

"Poverty," guessed my father.

But Whitley had another story. Apparently, after having needles stuck in his head, Streiber began looking up other UFO reports, and astutely concluded that none of them were loonies or charlatans. In fact, he is alarmed by the fact that society appears to have turned its back on these people, and that it is his duty to help turn the head of the community to these people, many of whom are simply afraid to describe whatever it was that happened to them: "It's a public health problem," insisted Whitley. In this context, being visited by flying saucers is akin to homosexuality, and Whitley is trying to urge these masses to come out of the closet.

Later on, Bergeron took questions from the jury audience, pretty much by sticking a microphone in faces chosen at random. This particular time he chose that odd-looking character I described earlier.

"Hello, my name is Victor Venscus and I am a professional psychic."

"Wha--?" chuckled our dashing host. "What is a 'professional psychic'?"

"Someone who gets paid for doing psychic things."

Ah. An authority.

"MORE LOONIES!!" squawked my father, knocking over his beer.

"I've had dozens of out-of-body experiences, one which I do interpret as being projected on board a spaceship." Vic went on to describe the interior of the ship as "dome-shaped, like your stereotypical spaceship might be." And the decor was impeccable. He was especially struck by "a rectangular box that was suspended in air. And it was all gold-shaped."

A gold-shaped box? Hmmm. I've never seen anything like that, although somewhere a-



round here I have a green-shaped Thermos. Once again, Whitley was up to work someone else's story into his own: "This is staggering! I actually did have, just this past October, probably the most wonderful thing that's ever happened to me...an out-of-the-body experience that was occasioned -- caused -- by them. And it involved seeing a box just like you described!"

Uh-huh. Whitley was apparently lying in his bedroom one afternoon when he fell out of his body (suggesting new highs in clumsiness Earthlings have never dreamed of). It was apparently a profound experience, although Whitley's account was zealous more than specific.

"I cannot tell you, any of you, that you have souls, but I know you do because I have been out of my body...I was as conscious as I am now."

My problem is, I don't have much faith in his consciousness. Whitley didn't seem to think it important to mention how being out of his body proved to him that we have souls: all it indicates to me is that he was either dreaming or completely loopey, even assuming he wasn't sub-consciously inventing it on the spot. After all, what was that about Temporal Lobe Epilepsy?

Bergeron asked Streiber how he got back into his body. This is a very pertinent question, for many stores will not serve you

unless you are wearing a body. Indeed, even the body must be wearing a short and shoes. Inhabiting your body also makes driving much easier. Whitley just shrugged and told Tom that he just hopped back in.

"When I went back I fell out again -- I slipped out. It was, like, hard to get back in."

"Well, we have to get out to a commercial but we will get back in in just a minute!"

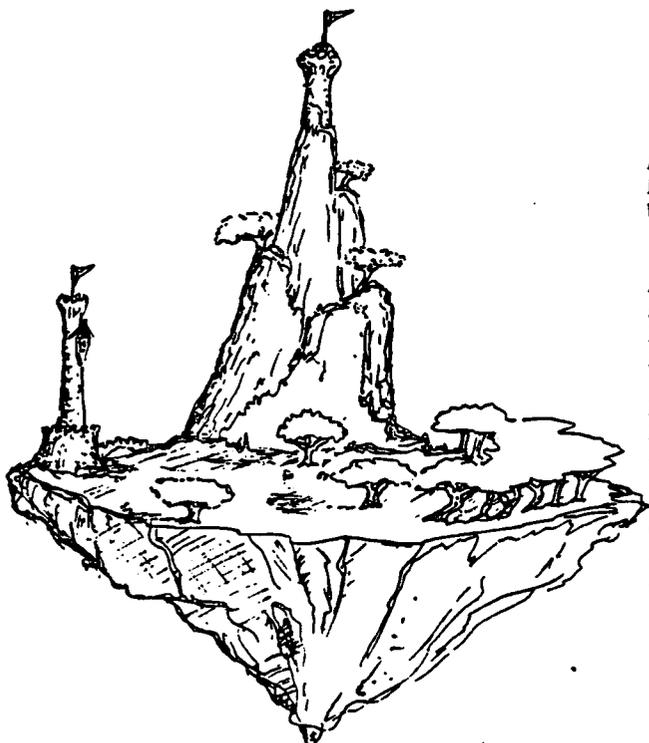
And right there our tape ends and begins rewinding. It was just put on the end of a tape with several movies, you see, just to watch once. However, since this half-hour was funnier than most programs designed to be funny, it is now a permanent part of my father's film library. It is indexed under "Streiber Nonsense".

I don't know about Lydia's story, but as far as Whitley is concerned, a story with additions so compulsively added to it leaves me very skeptical indeed, but I don't think it's a hoax, either.

Looking at this tape, it's quite apparent that the author of Wolfen is mad. An author hoping to pull the wool over the public's eyes with a "non-fiction" work like Communion would not keep adding new things to his story; that's very dangerous and could lead to self-contradiction later. Based on Dr. Gliedman's rough description of TLE, to me it sounds like that is precisely what Whitley is up to.

But then, who is to say that bald doctors in overalls and funny hats aren't dropping upon us every now and then to take needles out of their gold-shaped boxes and inject organs into our bodies? You never know, do you?

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A FANTASIST BREEDS WITHIN MY SOUL

by Thomas A. Easton

A fantasist  
Breeds  
Within my soul.  
I see:  
  
A woodlot quiet in the rain,  
A goddess standing, virginal, beside the woodbox  
A child grown muddy playing in sawdust,  
An alder tree giving birth to a garage.  
  
A powerline embarked upon a windy dream,  
A falling bird straining to fly,  
A pickup licking it's own load of wood,  
A chimney impregnating a skidder.  
  
Weather pounding on a muddy shed,  
A falling oak banishing a porch into limbo,  
An axe red with the stains of labor,  
Death ravished in a fiction.

# WANNA WRITE? HAVE KIDS

by Esther M. Friesner

It was about a year ago May that I was sitting on a panel at DISCLAVE. I do that well, sit. Anyhoo, the topic under mastication was, near as I recall it, How Can You Write If You've Got Kids?

Basically, it was a case of Youth Wants to Know how childed writers manage the grand juggling act of Capital-A Artistic creation in the teeth of demands for attention and cookies from our more mundane and fleshly creations.

Well, sir, bearing in mind that this was over a year ago and I'm not making any claims to total and complete accuracy, I do believe that there was a lot of my-spouse-keeps-the-little-yard-apes-off-me-when-I-write said, coupled occasionally with the phrase or-else. Or else what I never did ask. (At our house it's Or Else Mommy announces she's going to go stark raving mad if she doesn't get this book finished on time and you stop torturing your brother/sister right now!)

But what I do remember is the last question the panel fielded, namely: If you had it to do all over again, would you still have kids? Correct me if I'm wrong, former fellow-panelists, but when the straw poll was in, I wouldn't have bought any stock in Sesame Street products.

But not if you went by my opinion. Nope. Sorry, but not only do I believe it is possible to write and write well and write a lot with kids, I am here to convince you that if you want to do all of the above, kids are a must! Plus, there are additional benefits for SF&F in general. And to justify myself as Speaker for the Rug-Rats, I offer the following in evidence.

1. Writing: I do it. I get paid for it. This makes me a Writer according to my own lights, SFWA's, and Mom's.
2. Writing well: Well, that's always a subjective matter, but I've had some kind reviews and nice things said to me at cons.
3. Writing a lot: Six books out since 1985. I was frightened at a tender age by a photograph of Isaac Asimov with his collected works.

O.K., so having established my credentials, I will now tell you how having kids helps you write.

1. Inspiration: Kids say the darndest things. Really. Just tonight my four-year-old came in and announced, "Nature is progress." God knows where she got that, but it bears investigation and elaboration.

My eight-year-old son builds worlds, designs space factories, does a comic strip called "Mr. Dude," and writes about how the

Star Trek crew saved the St. Patrick's Day Parade. Anything to get out of cleaning his room. That's inspired!

Now one of my fun story-stoppers in fantasy is coming up with good names for characters. I have decided to swear off pseudo-Celtic appellations for awhile, ditto medieval monikers, though I did make fond mention of one Gubbo the Sot recently. We're none of us perfect. But my daughter (vide supra) is a bottomless well of super names that sound as if they belong in a fantasy world and are easy on the ear, too.

Further, I like to tell everyone in the family just what I was doing all that time locked away with the WP, and as I recount the plot-output for the day, my son will sometimes catch me in a mistake, an inconsistency, or just a plain old stinkeroo. Why wait for my editor to demand, "Are you kidding?" when my kid does it for me?

2. Pressure, financial and temporal: When you have children, you must feed and clothe them. When you really want to write, you will do it come hell or high water. Ergo, if you write while holding down another job for the feeding/clothing of your family, you will feel guilty about your time spent writing because it does nothing towards furthering the feed/clothe obligation.

Double ergo, you will therefore make the greater effort to make your writing turn a buck, by which we all of us justify ourselves in the eyes of this grotty materialistic world, right? (Wrong? Then how many times have you heard a writer defend his work against charges of blatant mental farina-ism by snarling, "Zgru the critics; it's selling big, Baby!": Of course so are Garbage Pail Kids trading cards.)

If you are NOT holding down a mundane job, the guilt and pressure to make a living off writing is that much more intense. You are haunted by visions of your child's photo in glossy magazines with the header, "Little Michael never knows where his next Possum McNuggets is coming from. His mother... writes fantasy! You can save little Michael, or you can turn the page."

There is another great pressure-source kids can turn on you, to your ultimate benefit: TIME. Yep, only the childless know the real meaning of "I'll do it in my spare time." Parents have no spare time. Which means, if you really want to write, and are going to do it anyway (vide supra encore), and you know you can't live with the self-scorn of having twenty-three first chapters of twenty-three different novels cluttering up your workspace, then having kids will push you to work more intensely in those few spare moments children allot you.

Gone are the days of blissful f\*rtting around before the keyboard. When you sit down to write, you WORK, because you know

it's only a matter of time before you hear that treble wailing for Mommy or Daddy to come right now!

You'd be surprised how much you can produce in limited time when you KNOW that your time is limited. (And you'd be surprised how many He-Man figurines one kid can flush before the commode backs up.)

It's sort of like how you manage to clean up a whole house that's been Dust Bunny heaven for seven months in a mere three hours' time when you know your parents/in-laws/fussy Significant Other is coming to visit.

3. You duty to the future of the field: Briefly, if you don't have kids, how can you personally guarantee the quality of gofers, readers, and assorted fen yet-to-be?
4. Your pledge of optimism in the future: This goes hand-in-glove with the previous one. Will SF&F HAVE a future? Or will there be one big, bright bonfire followed by the SF&F section of the local bookstore being converted to Evangelism Is Your Friend Or Else reading matter?
5. Moral support: When book sales fail and critics rail, it's nice to have someone you can count on to say you're still the greatest writer that ever lived and the rest of the world are dumbheads.
6. Keeping the critics at bay: Bring your children to a con and tell them that is the person who made Mommy cry last week. If you have raised them to be outgoing, self-confident and fairly vicious, your children will not disappoint you in this situation.

On the personal side, my daughter was a great force for holding off harsh words before she was even born. As a member of the HAVEN writers' group, I exposed my works to the weekly scrutiny of my fellow-groupies. Two of the regulars were men, and you would be surprised how cautious and considerate their criticisms became when they were confronted by a seven-months-pregnant woman, sunk beyond hope of extraction deep in the LaBrea tarpit of an easy chair, who just might be perverse enough to go into labor in situ should she become unduly upset by the tenor of their comments.

("Gee, Esther, I don't really like this part here where--" "Oooh!" "WHATISITWHATISITWHATISIT?" "N-nothing. Just a passing contraction. You were saying you -- ow! -- don't like what I wrote?" "Oh, nononononono!" It's fine. Great. Really. Just relax, O.K.?" Heh, heh, heh.

7. P.R.: "Buy my Mommy's book," is very effective when uttered in large stores to total strangers who may become so nervous when facing small fry that they actually buy the damn book just to get AWAY from those big, sad, Keene eyes.
8. Perspective: Writing will always be important to you, if you're serious about it, but having it turn into an obsession will only rack you up in the long run. Really. Study the lives of

the greatest writers. Very few of them went around, hands clutching forehead, moaning, "Oh, God, I'm so ARTISTIC, I'm so SENSITIVE, I'm such a CREATIVE animal that I don't know how I stand myself."

Moping, doping, drinking, and otherwise abusing your body and its immediate neighbors does not make you the romantic ideal of a Slave to Art. It can make you awfully boring, if that's what you want. And sick. Sometimes dead, if you work at it.

So care about your writing, but have something in your life that you can care about MORE. A book can change the world, but not every book does. Every child, however, is a greater source of potential world-change than MUFFY GOES TO MARS will ever be.

9. Developing realistic characters: Kids will teach you about Suffering. Kids will teach you about Fear. Kids will teach you about Power Struggles frightening in their Byzantine complexity. Kids will teach you more about Raw, Naked, Seething Emotion than you can shake a stick at (and might funny you look, standing there shaking sticks at Raw, Naked, Seething Emotion, bucko.)

This works out especially well if you have more than one child. If you do not, watch yours interact with his or her little friends. Talk about your Order vs. Chaos! Good vs. Evil Sandbox social dynamics can truly be the Dark Side of the Force. It's MY universe! No, it's not, I saw it first! Well, if I can't have it, I'm gonna bust it! Oh, yeah? Yeah! MOMMY!

Sibling rivalry has its uses, too.

10. Scapegoats: See, the real reason I'm not Stephen King yet is because I had to go see Johnny play the part of Mr. Tadpole in the nursery school extravaganza.
11. Caveat: All kidding aside (no pun intended), not one, not all of the above reasons are reason enough to bring a child into this world if you're not prepared to love that being, care for him or her, teach, learn, love, protect, guide, cherish, bear with the beastlies, forgive, love, weep over, rejoice with, provide for, love...you get the idea.

There are times when you may feel like urging the child toward a career as a T.A.R. D.I.S. inspector, but this too shall pass. Few other experiences in this life (note I do not say NO other experience) will teach you as much about all the masks of love.

The moment my son finished reading my first book and said, "You know, Mom, this is good," didn't mean anything in terms of getting said book on the Times Best Seller List. I wouldn't have traded it off cheaply, though. And in my pre-published days, when I spent a good part of every afternoon waving rejection slips around in an ungovernable manner and swearing I was going to go into computer sales instead, my son scowled, growled, and shouted, "Don't you dare quit!"

Some things you can't numbercrunch. Thank goodness.

# SF TELECOMPUTING

by Dick Napoli

Would you be interested in a fanzine published 365 times a year? A loc column where your letter brought response within hours of your "mailing" it? How about having the opportunity to converse with Jack Chalker, Michael Kube-McDowell, Orson Scott Card, Mike Resnick or Vonda MacIntyre and a dozen other fans, all from the comfort of your home?

These are some of the activities which increasing numbers of science fiction fans are enjoying through the process called "telecomputing." If you own a personal computer -- be it an IBM PC or compatible, an APPLE II or Macintosh, an Atari or Commodore -- you can join the fun for as little as \$100. That will buy a modem, the device which converts the electrical output of the computer to tones which can be sent over regular telephone lines. Modems are bi-directional devices so that you can both send and receive messages, files or even programs over the phone lines. In addition to the modem, you will need a communications program to send and receive files, dial the phone, and take care of the "housekeeping" necessary when you join the world of telecomputing. Often the communications program will be included with the price of the modem; if not, you can usually find a "public domain" program by contacting the local user group for your brand of computer.

Ok, you say. I buy the modem and obtain the communications program. Where do I find all this science fiction activity? There are two sources for the fan; commercial information utilities such as GENie, Delphi, and PeopleLink, and free local bulletin boards.

The information utilities listed above all have science fiction special interest groups (SIGs), as well as SIGs for all the popular microcomputers. The SF SIGs all have a bulletin board section where you can "post" messages; these can be read and responded to by anyone interested in the topic of your post. The SIGs also have the capability of holding private messages -- usually referred to as "E-Mail" or electronic mail. These can only be read by the person you specify as the addressee.

The third common feature of the SF SIGs is a database. These are files which the members or the sysop (system operator) have contributed for the benefit of all who wish to "download" them into their own computer. Examples, from the Delphi SF SIG files, include:

- 1) Transcripts of the conferences held in recent months with Orson Scott Card, Michael Kube-McDowell, Jack Chalker, and Mike Resnick. SIG members can join in the conference when it is scheduled or download it later.

- 2) An updated convention schedule.

- 3) The 1986 Hugo winners (this was available on the Wednesday after the World Con in Atlanta).
- 4) The current nominees for the next Nebula awards, with the number of votes for each work.

As you can see, the databases give you access to information either not available elsewhere or for which you would have to wait several months to get from Locus or Science Fiction Chronicle.

The commercial services also have a feature called the Real Time Conference. Since many computer users can be "on-line" at the same time, it is possible for them to talk to one another or to a group of people. This "chat" mode is often likened to CB radio, and in fact many users adopt "handles" which express their unique persona. The Conference area is much like a Con Suite -- you never know who will turn up or what kind of outrageous conversations will occur. Beyond the informal conversations, however, the Conference area is the site of the formal conferences with authors.

As I mentioned before, these are commercial services. The rates vary from the low of \$4.25 an hour for PeopleLink to \$6/\$7.20 an hour on Delphi. If you purchase a modem you will probably receive special offers for the sign-up on the commercial services. In case you need them, however, here are toll-free (voice) sign-up numbers for the services mentioned.

- 1) Delphi.....800-544-4005
- 2) GENie.....800-638-9636
- 3) PeopleLink...800-524-0100

If you are interested in telecomputing but don't want to spend money each month on the commercial services you should investigate the free public bulletin boards in your area. The public BBS systems are operated by computer owners who dedicate their computer and a phone line for community use. Although most will accept donations (to pay for phone lines, new equipment, and wear and tear on existing equipment) they seldom require a fee to use them. The local boards will have a number of "sub-boards," the topics varying according to the interests of the operator and the users. Many will have file sections similar to the databases mentioned above. If you can get the number of even one local system from a computer store or computer users group, you will probably find an extended list of other boards in the file section. One feature missing from local boards will be the Real Time Conference, since few have the capability to have more than one user on-line simultaneously.

So far there are not very many free boards which have science fiction SIGs, but if you don't find one locally, do what I did -- start one yourself. When I purchased a modem in July of last year I spent several weeks investigating the free boards in Columbus, Ohio. I finally found a relatively new board that featured user polls to see what the users of the system wanted from the board. I suggested a Science Fiction SIG and about 2 dozen users said they would support such an endeavor. As you might imagine, I wound up as the host for the SIG. But that often happens when you make suggestions in life. I am having a great time with the assignment and since it is a local board, I have practically no expenses (not even stamps!)

There are 8 local systems with Science Fiction sections which I am aware of around the country:

- 1) Phaze.....614-889-2264  
Columbus, OH
- 2) StarPort BBS.....203-698-9588  
Old Greenwich, CT.
- 3) National Science Fiction BBS....919-922-3308 ...N.Carolina.
- 4) Valhalla BBS.....212-598-0243  
New York State.

- 5) SMOF..... 512-836-7663  
Austin, Texas.
- 6) Quark.....919-482-3693  
Jeffersonville, NY
- 7) SysLink.....312-622-4442  
Chicago, IL.
- 8) The Citadel.....818-339-4704  
San Francisco, CA

The first six boards have no user fees while the seventh board charges a one-time fee of \$20.00. One word of warning: public boards go in and out of existence in a manner similar to fanzines. StarPort, SMOF, National Science Fiction BBS and Quark were operating as of June, 1987. The remaining names come from a database file on the Delphi SF SIG, but I have not dialed them myself.

If you join GENIE or Delphi, leave E-Mail and let me know you have taken the plunge into telecomputing. E-Mail addresses: GENIE, R.NAPOLI; Delphi, NAP2. Or, if you still have questions about telecomputing, you can use the old-fashioned mail service and reach me at:

Dick Napoli  
500 East Dunedin Rd.  
Columbus, Ohio 43214

TEN YEARS AGO IN SCIENCE FICTION  
Summer/Fall, 1977

An article by Robert Sabella

Tom Reamy died of a heart attack at the age of 42. He was a longtime science fiction fan, having edited the Hugo-nominated fanzine Trupmet and co-edited Nickelodean. He started writing fiction in his thirties and was an immediate success. He won the Nebula Award for "San Diego Lightfoot Sue", the John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer, and was nominated for Nebulas for "Twill" and his only novel Blind Voices.

Death also claimed Raymond Palmer at the age of 67. He also started out as a well-known fan, editing one of the first -- if not the first -- fanzine Comet in 1930. Later he edited Amazing Stories from 1938 until 1949. Although quite successful as editor, he is perhaps best remembered for his publishing the infamous Richard Shaver "stories".

Science Fiction publications continued to come and go. Cosmos folded but Jim Baen, editor of Ace Books, announced the forthcoming publication of his magazine in book form, Destinies. It would be a true magazine featuring a science column by Jerry Pournelle and book reviews by Spider Robinson.

The Hugo Awards for 1976 were presented. Best Novel was Kate Wilhelm's Where Late the Sweet Birds Sang. Best Novella was a surprising tie between James Tiptree, Jr.'s "Houston, Houston, Do You Read?" and Spider Robinson's "By Any Other Name." Best Novlette was Isaac Asimov's "The Bicentennial Man" and Best Short Story was Joe Haldeman's "Tricentennial." The Fan Hugos were won by Science Fiction Review (Fanzine), Phil Foglio (Artist), and a tie between Richard Geis

and Susan Wood (Writers). C. J. Cherryh won the John W. Campbell Award as Best New Writer.

The #1 best-selling novel in both the New York Times and Publisher's Weekly was J.R.R. Tolkien's The Silmarillion. It's initial demand was so high it was certain to be the best-selling novel of the year, if not of all time.

The World Fantasy Awards of 1976 were presented at the WORLD FANTASY CONVENTION. Best Novel was William Kotzwinkle's Doctor Rat. Best Short Fiction was Russell Kirk's "There's a Long, Long Trail A-winding." The Life Achievement Award went to Ray Bradbury.

Important [ublications included Michael Bishop's highly-underrated religious satire A Little Knowledge; George R. R. Martin's second collection Songs of Stars and Shadows and his Hugo-nominated first novel Dying of the Light; Damon Knight's history of the influential New York science fiction organization, The Futurians, whose members included such luminaries as Frederik Pohl, Isaac Asimov, Donald Wollheim, Richard Wilson, and Knight himself; Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle's best-selling thriller Lucifer's Hammer; Greg Benford's In the Ocean of Night; and Stephen Donaldson's entire trilogy The Chronicles of Thomas Covenant the Unbeliever was published simultaneously in three volumes: Lord Foul's Bane, The Illearth War, and The Power that Preserves. Some people claim the success of this trilogy sparked the entire fantasy publishing genre as it exists now.

# CAMPUS FUGIT



by Bob Shaw

I was sitting in my office one day, writing a science fiction novel and at the same time solving some scientific problems which have baffled the world's greatest thinkers for centuries. Suddenly there was a tap on my door. I stared at it for a moment, thinking, That's funny -- that wasn't there a minute ago. Then the door opened and who should enter but my old friend Von Donegan, the noted German-Irish writer and researcher!

He was wearing an expression of mingled triumph and pleasure, with just a hint of barely controlled manic excitement.

"Why," I said to him nervously, "are you wearing that expression of mingled triumph and pleasure, with just a hint of barely controlled manic excitement, on your face?"

"Where else could I wear it?" he said, showing that incredible sharpness of brain which had once -- during a near-suicidal attempt to understand an Ian Watson book -- led him to accidentally trepanning himself from the inside.

"I'm really glad to see you, Bob," he went on, "because I need to talk to you." He approached my desk and brought up a chair, which surprised me because I hadn't even noticed him swallowing one. As he was sitting down I noticed for the first time that there were several old scars on his face.

"Von," I said, "how did your face get that way?"

"You mean the scars?" he said proudly. "I got those when I was at Heidelberg."

"My God," I breathed, "I heard that was a pretty hectic convention, but I had no idea they did things like that to you. Did you get mixed up with the Society for Creative Anachronism?"

"No, you fool," he gritted. "I attended Heidelberg University. Getting scars is all part of the learning system there."

At CONSPIRACY I arrived late for Bob Shaw's speech and was unable to enter the room, so filled with fans it was. Afterwards, Mike Glicksohn suggested that I ask Bob if I could publish it, since he had not seen any fanzine editors approach him. I did so, and here it is.

"So that's where Mrs. Thatcher got the idea," I said. "And I thought we were the only ones to suffer education cuts."

Some of the pleasure faded from Von Donegan's face. "It's funny you should mention education," he said. "Well, almost funny. You see, I've made millions from my latest book, and I want to spend the money on a great educational project, and I need your help because I know that the ideal of promoting knowledge is a passion of yours which far outweighs any thought of vulgar fame or commercial success."

"Quite right," I said, seizing my notepad. "What was the name of your book, what was it about, and who is your agent?"

"Don't give me that," he said. "Your agent is a genius -- he must be if he sells the sort of stuff you write. Doesn't he keep in touch with you?"

"Not since I sat on the ouija board and broke it," I said. "Now, about the book..."

"It's my best yet," Von Donegan said. "A new way of teaching mathematics! The book is filled with faint outlines of numbers, and with it comes a paint box which the students use to fill in the outlines with bright colours, and thus they become numerate. I called it Numbers by Painting."

"That's brilliant," I breathed.

"Yes," Von Donegan agreed modestly. "It's a sort of follow-up to my old success -- Writing by Numbers. You know the one, where you get a dictionary and lists of numbers, and you can sit at home and write War and Peace or Vanity Fair or Mission Earth -- any literary classic you care to name..."

"You have totally won me over," I said. "What is this great educational project you have in mind?"

"Well," he said, "it's a well-known fact that the best way to learn about science is by reading science fiction. You are the perfect example, and I'll give you a little test to prove it. Tell me, what is Fahrenheit 451?"

I thought for a moment, baffled. "Could it be the temperature Ray Bradbury reached when he saw the TV version of The Martian Chronicles?"

"Don't try to be funny," Von Donegan snapped. "What I'm going to do is found a new university of science -- I think I'll name it after Hugo Gernsback -- where the students learn all their science by reading SF. Naturally, I want you to be the chief administrator, because I've studied your work and as far as I can see you learned all you know about science from Planet Stories and Thrilling Wonder."

I nodded, deeply flattered. "Don't forget Captain Future and The Mysterious Traveller Magazine."

He frowned. "Perhaps you're over-qualified for the post."

"No, no," I said hastily. "I also lost some scientific knowledge -- in fact, some brain cells--through reading Perry Rhodan."

"That's understandable," Von Donegan said. "So you'll accept the job?"

"I have to! It's my duty to pass on everything I know about science and technology to the young of this country. For instance, did you know that the inertial guidance system for inter-continental missiles was invented by a man whose children kept leaving empty pop bottles on the floor of the family car?"

"My car has been having engine trouble recently," Von Donegan said pensively. "I'm a bit surprised, because it's Italian and before the manufacturers put the engine into production they got 2,000 Italian designers to check it over and give their assent."

"Does that mean it's a 2,000 si-si engine?" I quipped.

"Don't start the car puns," Von Donegan snarled, growing a trifle paler. "I want to concentrate on my project. At last I can put all my advanced ideas into practice. You know, I intend to PAY my students, so that while they are studying at the university they'll be able to put themselves through the training for business careers -- like selling magazine subscriptions."

"That's marvellous," I said. I immediately shelved all my other projects and threw all my energies into helping Von Donegan set up the Gernsback University for Scientific Studies, or GUSS for short. It was an instant success!

All the old tedious methods of teaching were thrown out and were replaced by classes in which the tutors worked from SF books and magazines. The Government became a bit upset when they found that we had placed major contracts for textbooks and visual aids with Ken Slater, Rog Peyton, and Forbidden Planet.

At one point Mrs. Thatcher became involved, but I quickly slipped her a copy of a Doc Smith book and when she saw all those descriptions of planet-smashers she was quickly won over to our side. (In fact, she

became inflamed with the idea of appointing Kimball Kinnison as Minister of Defence, but when she heard the probable cost of an inter-dimensional vortex blaster she quickly lost interest and switched back to Trident, which is about 5% cheaper.)

The university flourished for a year or so, banishing mistaken notions about science and supplanting them with the stuff that we all know to be true. For instance, we dealt with the effects of lightning on the human body. The traditional view is that being struck with lightning kills a person, but anybody who reads much SF knows better. A much more likely effect is that the person on the receiving end, the strikee, will be hurled back into the remote past.

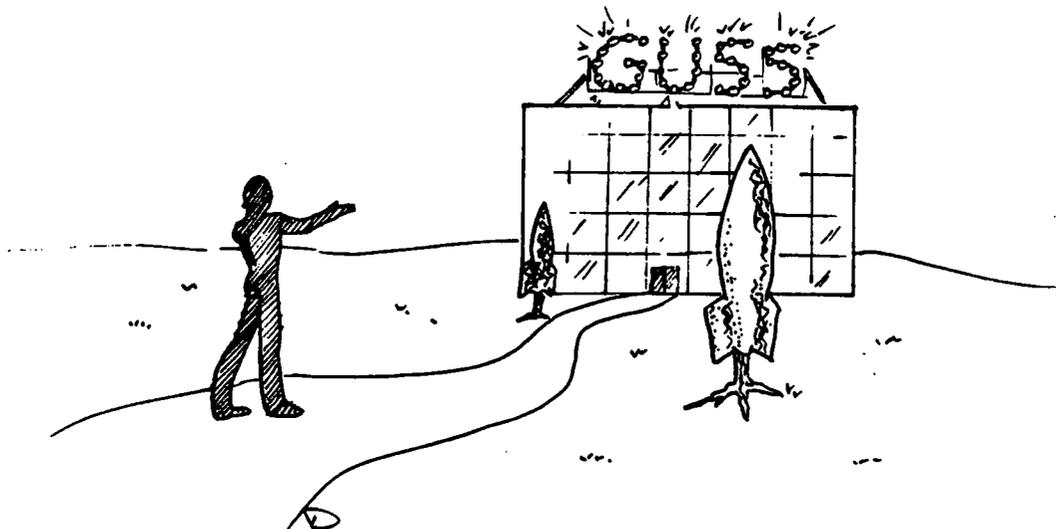
The exact distance he will be bounced back in time depends on three factors -- his body weight measured in grammes, the number of volts in the electrical discharge, and the period of history the author has been boning up on.

If that sounds alarming, don't worry too much, because I have devised a foolproof method of avoiding being struck by lightning. It is based on the fact that in all the billions of words of printed SF there is not one example of a person being hurled back into some ancient culture without having university degrees in that culture's history and language.

So, all you have to do is avoid classical studies and you'll be as safe as houses. Houses with lightning conductors, that is. Latin is the most dangerous subject of all. One of my students at GUSS came to me one day with a pile of books under his arm and said, "I'm on avid reader."

I said to him, "You're taking a hell of a risk with any of those Roman poets." He went away with a puzzled expression which indicated there might have been a communications failure.

I won't go into too much detail about the university's curriculum at this stage, because -- sad to relate -- Von Donegan and I were about to be overtaken by dramatic events. (If you can't make it funny, make it dramatic.) The university was doing too well, you see. Other organisations were becoming jealous and resentful because we were



attracting all the best students, in spite of our rigorous entrance standards. To obtain a place at GUSS a student had to have three A-levels (Analog levels) and at least ten O-levels (Omni levels).

In particular, we got into trouble with the teachers' unions, most of which had trouble coming to terms with the idea that -- in our university -- a person with four years at teacher training college was less qualified than somebody who had done three months behind the counter at Dark They Were And Golden Eyed.

To cut a long story short, our enemies managed to get an official enquiry going, and Von Donegan and I were suspended from our jobs at our own university on the grounds that -- this will make you laugh -- that we weren't properly qualified to head a place of learning! Did you ever hear of anything more ridiculous?

We appealed, of course, and produced all our official diplomas -- but even the sight of my 50-yards Breast Stroke Certificate failed to sway the committee. My hopes were raised for a moment when Von Donegan brought out a letter from the Pasteur Institute, but it only turned out to be a note warning him to stop lurking around the back of their premises trying to steal the milk.

The upshot of it all was that we were given a year to acquire some proper mundane credentials. Such ignominy! Von and I had to enroll at a special school for disadvantaged adults, and it was terrible. There we were -- stuck in among all those Stephen Donaldson fans -- trying to cram ten years of accepted establishment-type learning into a single school year.

To make matters worse, our tutor -- a sarcastic monster named Higgins -- took a dislike to us and kept loading us down with homework. We had so much of it that we had to sit up until the small hours every night, then we would be late for school in the morning and would get a fresh barrage of sarcasm and abuse from Higgins.

The three subjects which gave us the most trouble and took up most of our time were Shakespeare, geography and geometry. There was just too much of them, even for brains like ours, and it began to look as though Von Donegan and I would emerge from the course as abject failures and would never get our jobs back.

One night we were sitting in our apartment, toying with a couple of Pink Ladies -- and wishing we had a drink instead -- when I realised I had no hope of getting through that night's work. "Something will have to be done," I said to Von Donegan. "Can't you come up with a solution to this homework problem?"

Von Donegan's brows knitted so furiously that a little pullover appeared on the bridge of his nose. "I've got it!" he said. "Where we went wrong was to begin thinking conventionally, instead of like the SF geniuses that we are. There is too much knowledge for us to cope with -- and we reacted like mundanes by vainly trying to take it all in, just the same. But a true SF genius, equipped with his Van Vogtian double mind and William Gibson phrase book, would have ... would have..."

"Yes, yes," I said eagerly, privileged to watch raw genius at work.

"...would have reduced the amount of knowledge!"

"How could you do that?" I said, suddenly feeling sorry for Von Donegan. It was obvious that the recent strain had unhinged his brain.

"Easy!" he said, a visionary gleam appearing in his eyes. "We start off by travelling back into the past. First of all, we visit Euclid and explain to him how much heartache all his theorems are going to cause -- not only for us, but to untold millions of schoolchildren. We persuade him to take up some other occupation -- and that gets rid of most of the field of geometry in one go.

"Then we visit Columbus and persuade him to turn back before he discovers America -- and without the New World to consider, future geographical studies are reduced by a very large percentage. Then we visit Shakespeare and persuade him to lay off the plays and sonnets, thus wiping out about half of our English studies.

"It's all so simple and obvious," Von Donegan enthused. "Why didn't I think of it before?"

"I don't know," I confessed. "Especially as the whole plan is eminently practicable. How are we going to get back into the past? By being struck by lightning?"

"Lightning is too unreliable," Von Donegan said. "Besides, I'm afraid of thunder. No, I'll design and build a time machine, and we'll use that."

I gaped at him in astonishment. "But you're the one who only yesterday couldn't change a fuse."

"That's mundane technology," Von Donegan said. "We're talking SF technology now, and that I can handle. You go out and have a couple of pints, and when you get back the machine will be ready."

I did as I was told, and incredibly, when I got back to the apartment the time machine was completed and ready to go. It was a typical 1940s Astounding model, consisting of a cage made of shimmering rods which met at peculiar angles which produced a strange wrenching sensation in my eyes when I tried to follow the geometries.

"You've done it!" I cried. "I can tell this is a time machine because of the way the shimmering rods meet at peculiar angles which produce a strange wrenching sensation in my eyes when I try to follow the geometries."

"Sorry about that," Von Donegan muttered. "I fell up against it a while ago and it got out of shape." He grabbed the cage and pulled it into a normal rectangular configuration. It kept right on shimmering, ready to take us into the past as far as we wanted to go -- just like the History of Irish Fandom panel later this afternoon.

"There is one major problem," Von Donegan said. "When I switch the machine on the power drain will be so great that we'll only have a minute or so each with Euclid, Columbus, and Shakespeare."

I nodded knowingly. "That's because of the billions of electron volts needed to overcome the resistance of the temporal matrix."



"No," Von Donegan said. "It's because I only had one fifty-pence piece for the electricity meter. I don't suppose you could ...?"

"Sorry," I said hastily. "I've just given my last change to the Captain James T. Kirk Hostel for Redundant Television Actors."

"Oh, well, we'd better go then," Von Donegan said. "Let's see now -- how long ago did Euclid live?"

"Around 300 B.C.," I said, stepping into the shimmering cage beside him.

He took out his calculator, pressed the keys and said, "That means we have to go back exactly 2,287 years." He turned to the hastily-assembled control console and tapped in some figures on the buttons, buttons which looked oddly familiar to me.

"Hey," I said, "that looks like part of my video recorder!"

He nodded. "I had to borrow the timer unit."

"I hope it works better for you than it did for me," I grumbled. "I never even once managed to record a programme while I was out. The damned instruction manual is written in cyberpunk, and..."

At that moment Von Donegan threw a massive lever. I ducked and the lever flew harmlessly over my head. He then threw a couple of switches, the cage began to hum, and the scene beyond the bars dissolved into a hazy, formless, flickering blur. It was just like watching a film being projected by Gerbish at an Eastercon. Suddenly the humming and flickering stopped, bright sunshine washed over us -- and there we were in ancient Egypt!

I recognized it at once because there was a lot of sand around, and in the middle distance some people were building a pyramid. The pyramid had a sign on it. Von Donegan, who speaks fluent hieroglyphic, translated the sign for me. It read: CONDOS FOR SALE.

"That's funny," I murmured, "most countries have banned pyramid selling."

Von Donegan looked ill. "Shaw," he gritted, "don't start the ancient Egypt puns."

I gaped at him. "Can't I even do the one about the explorer who fell out of his aeroplane and hit the Nile on the head?"

An argument might have ensued, but at that moment we noticed near us a gloomy-looking man who was staring in bafflement at some diagrams he had scratched in the sand. He looked amazingly like Omar Sharif, but I sensed at once that he was Euclid.

I said to him, "Are you Euclid?"

"Who do you think I am?" he replied sarcastically. "Omar Sharif?"

"What way is that to greet visitors from the future?" Von Donegan cut in. "What's the matter with you?"

"I'm sorry," Euclid said. "Life has been pretty grim for me recently. You see, I lost my job when the Great Library at Alexandria went bust."

"What happened?"

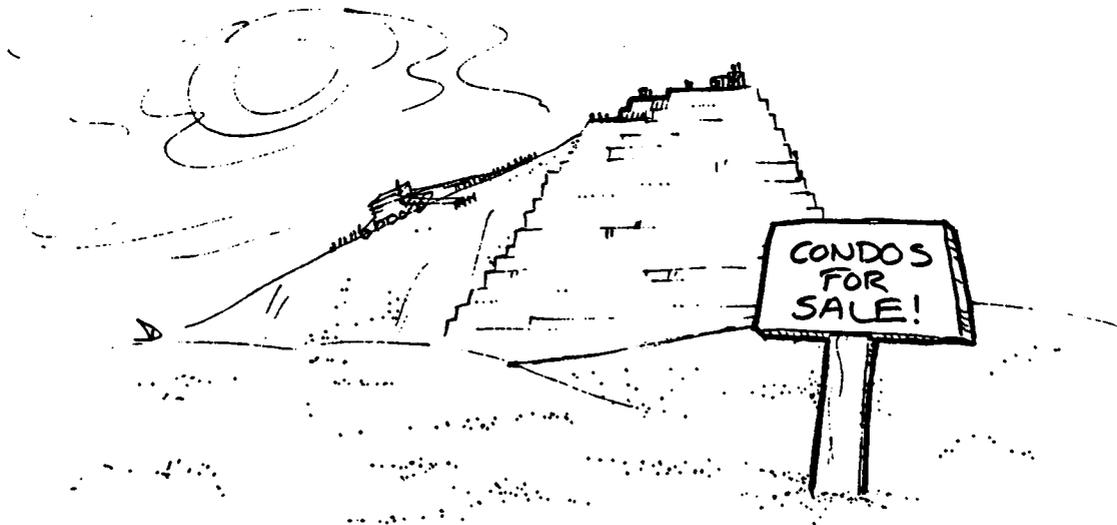
"Poor financial management," Euclid explained. "The Library was supposed to exist on the fines it charged when members kept scrolls out too long."

"That seems reasonable," I said.

"Euclid nodded." "Yes, but the big problem is that we're living in B. C. We count time backwards here, and no matter how long a member kept a scroll at home, when he brought it back it was always earlier than when he had taken it out! It was enough to break a librarian's heart."

"You have my sympathy," Von Donegan said.

"I did my best," Euclid went on. "I spent a couple of years trying to design a date stamping machine which would run backwards, but the money dried up. I got fired, and then I decided to become a mathematician, but I'm not making much headway with these problems." He raised his doleful gaze from the diagrams in the sand, and suddenly he noticed the calculator which Von Donegan was still holding in his hand.



"What's that?" Euclid cried, snatching the machine from Von Donegan's grasp. He pressed a few buttons, and his eyes widened as his unique genius for mathematics supplied the answer to his own question.

"With this marvellous instrument," Euclid breathed, "I will be able to produce ten times as many theorems as before. My name will live forever!"

"No so fast," Von Donegan said indignantly, trying to grab the calculator back. "I paid 3 pounds 99 for that at Dixon's, and I demand..."

But he was too late. Suddenly there was a loud whooshing noise, and Von Donegan and I were back in the time machine and surrounded by the flickering blurs of the Gerbish effect.

"You made a right mess of that," I said accusingly to Von Donegan. "Things are going to be worse than ever in the future now that you're handed your calculator over to Euclid."

Von Donegan threw up his hands -- which surprised me because I hadn't even noticed him swallowing them. "Why didn't you say something to him?" he said. "You're supposed to be the great talker."

Before I could reply the flickering ceased and we dropped onto the deck of a small sailing ship in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. We were close to a worried-looking man, who was sitting at a bench covered with clocks which he was obviously trying to repair or adjust.

"Are you Christopher Columbus?" I said.

He nodded.

"And," I said, "did you set sail in 1492?"

"I had to," he replied. "I wanted to leave a year earlier, but it was forbidden because nobody could think of an ocean colour which rhymed with 1491. What do you want, anyway?"

"We have come to make a plea on behalf of future generations of geography students," I said to Columbus. "If you would only agree to turn back..."

"Wait a minute," he interrupted, turning to speak to a passing sailor. "Manuel," he said, "take over the steering of the ship." Columbus turned back to me. "Sorry about that -- I was putting the ship under Manuel control."

I reeled back, wondering if I had at last met somebody whose puns were worse than mine.

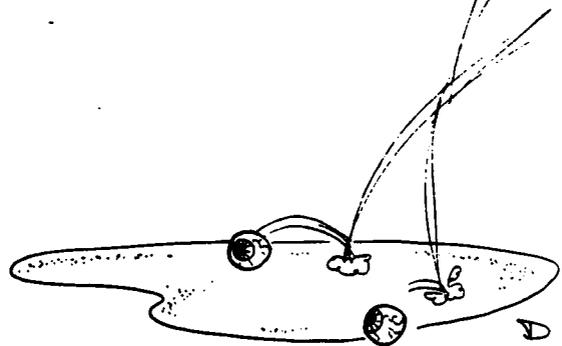
"I'd better deal with this, because we're short of time," Von Donegan cut in, glancing at his wristwatch.

"What's that?" Columbus cried, snatching the watch from Von Donegan's wrist. He pressed a few of its buttons, and his eyes widened as his unique genius for navigation supplied the answer to his own question.

"I was about to turn back because, without an accurate timepiece, I couldn't work out my latitude," he breathed. "But with this marvellous instrument I'll be able to navigate with complete confidence and discover lots and lots of new lands."

"Not so fast," Von Donegan said indignantly, trying to grab the watch back. "I paid 3 pounds 99 for that at Dixon's, and I demand..."

Suddenly there was another loud whooshing noise, and Von Donegan and I were back in the time machine again, surrounded by the flickering blur. "You made a right mess of that," I said to him. "Things are going to be even worse in the future now that you've handed your watch over to Columbus."



Von Donegan rolled his eyes at me--which surprised me because I hadn't even noticed him taking them out. "Things are going badly for us," he admitted. "In the next part of the time voyage we'll just have to put our trust in God."

"Does that mean you're putting the time machine under Emmanuel control?" I chortled.

Von Donegan gritted his teeth so hard that little bits of gravel rolled down his chin. "Shaw," he said, "don't start on the Biblical puns."

"I wouldn't dream of being irreligious," I said. "I know that many people still think that everything in the Bible is gospel."

Before Von Donegan could reply the flickering ceased, and we found ourselves standing on the doorstep of a lovely cottage close to a pretty English river. I rang the doorbell and was about to say, "Avon calling," when I noticed Von Donegan glaring at me with clenched fists. How he managed to glare at me with his fists I'll never know, unless he had picked up his eyes after rolling them at me.

A voice told us to enter the cottage, and when we went in we saw a frustrated-looking man sitting at a desk which was surrounded by heaps of broken quill pens and terribly blotted pages of manuscript.

"We have come from the future," Von Donegan began hurriedly, "with an urgent and vitally important piece of news for you..."

"Not again!" Shakespeare said irritably. "Don't tell me I've been awarded another six numbers in the Reader's Digest prize draw."

"That isn't it," Von Donegan said.

"What is it then?" Shakespeare said. "Can't you see I'm busy? I'm working on a sequel to The Tempest. It's all about this spaceship which lands on a planet where it gets attacked by an invisible monster. Trouble is, I can't think of a good title for it."

Von Donegan's eyes lit up -- possibly scorching his fingers -- as he saw his chance to influence the history of literature. "Will, baby," he said, "perhaps I could help you with a title. Here's a hint -- just think of a big bookshop... in London... Tottenham Court Road area..."

"I've got it!" Shakespeare cried. "Foyles!" That's a great title for my play!"

Von Donegan looked so comically upset that I decided to write up the whole incident for either the Times Literary Supplement or Ansible. I took out my new six-colour ballpoint pen to make a note.

"What's that?" Shakespeare cried, snatching the pen from my grasp. He flipped the points in and out a few times, and his eyes widened as his unique genius for anything connected with writing answered his own question.

"With this wonderful instrument which glides so easily over the paper I will be able to write all the plays and sonnets which clamour in my mind, but which I have not been able to commit to paper because of the stupid quills I have been forced to use."

"Not so fast," I said indignantly, trying to snatch the pen back, but at that moment there was another loud whoosh and suddenly Von Donegan and I found ourselves back in our apartment. The time machine crumpled up and fell apart -- just like the Warrington group's bid for the 1988 EASTERCON.

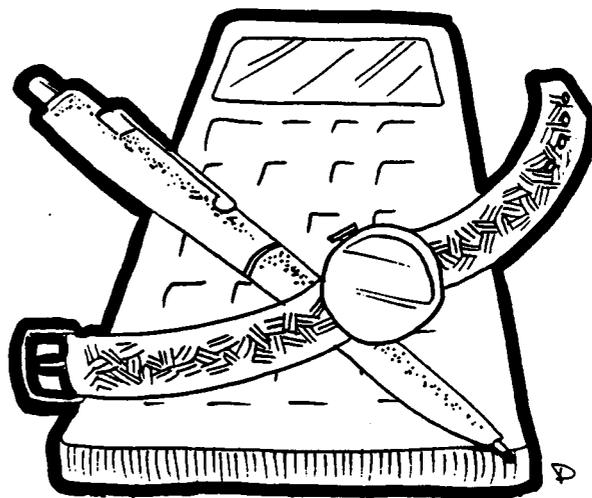
"You made a right mess of things, bringing out that damned pen," Von Donegan said bitterly. "Now there'll be more Shakespeare plays than ever!"

"And if there's one called Foyles it's all your fault," I retorted angrily.

We spent the rest of the evening blaming each other for all that had gone wrong, arguing so much that we completely forgot to do our homework. Next morning Higgins flew into a rage when we told him we hadn't even touched our assignments, especially as the only excuse we could offer was that we simply could not cope with the work.

"You should be ashamed of yourselves," Higgins snarled. "Just look at how much work was achieved in the past by great mean like... Euclid... and Columbus... and Shakespeare -- and they didn't have all your fancy, labour-saving, modern gadgets to help them!"

Needless to say, that was more than enough for Von Donegan and myself. We stormed straight out of that classroom and headed for the nearest bar -- which sounds like a very good idea for all of us.



### CAKEWALK

by Sam Atwood

Inscrutably, she answers the groom  
Who praises the cake.

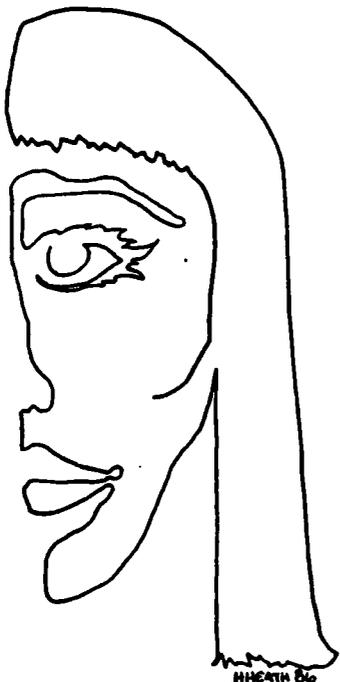
Does the cushion mistreat the ring-bearer?  
Or the strawberry banish her electric beauty?  
Then fortune mistreats its religious brother,  
And the dating service cues the widow.

Mourning, she makes love possible.  
No alimony does she need.  
She is no political bride.

Her fiancée is the ultimate star.  
His smile restores her virginal cream,  
Though he carelessly ravish the usher,  
And a spoiler explore her dessicated cushion.

She knows.  
It is the cake that primes the alimony pump!  
Banish the cake,  
That intellectual wedding infection,  
From the democratic marriage-bed!

A generous bower is all he needs,  
Her excellent fiancée.



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# Film & Book Reviews by Mark R. Leeper

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## SUPER-TANKS

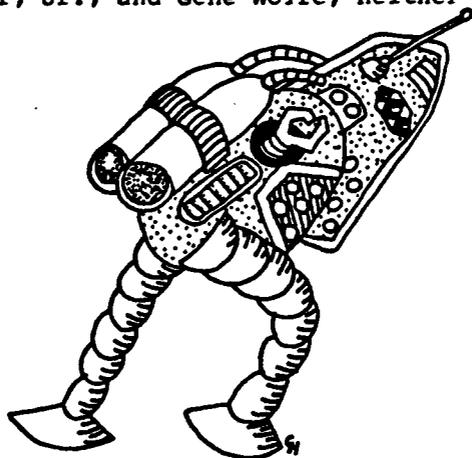
edited by Joe Haldeman, Charles G. Waugh,  
and Martin H. Greenberg  
Ace, 1987, \$3.50

Back when evangelism was merely lucrative, I would occasionally listen to a program called "The World Tomorrow" with Garner Ted Armstrong (who more recently was excommunicated from his particular sect by his father Herbert W. Armstrong, who founded the sect). Garner Ted pontificated --if that's not a mixed metaphor-- on the state of the world. One day G. T. was talking about what a war-like people mankind was. Then he made what I thought was a very odd comment, which was in fact very much in character for old G. T. He said that's why so many people read science fiction: what they are reading about is the wars of the future. At the time I knew that he was selling science fiction very short; there is a lot more to it than future war stories. But, in fact, there is a lot of future war science fiction written.

Ace Books has published *Super-Tanks*, and anthology edited by Joe Haldeman, Charles G. Waugh, and, of course, Martin H. Greenberg. I say "of course" since few science fiction anthologies seem to come out these days without being at least in part edited by Greenberg, who must be the genre's most prolific anthologizer since Groff Conklin. The cover shows a Godzilla-class tank, nearly as big as a city block, rolling through billowing flames, firing its cannon, and violently destroying a small transport that got in its way and which was apparently beneath its attention. The blurb says, "Welcome to Tomorrow's Battlefields, Where Only the Strong Survive." The blurb sure fits the cover illustration.

David Drake has a Hammer's Slammers story, "Hangman," which in spite of the future setting has a World War II feel to it. Keith Laumer contributes a story of the field test of one of his Bolo-class tanks. The most interesting part of the story is his history of Bolo tanks.

Surprise contributors include Walter Miller, Jr., and Gene Wolfe, neither of whom



does one usually think of as war-SF writers. The book concludes with Roger Zelazny's "Damnation Alley" (the shorter magazine version published in 1967).

Francis Izzo has a story more about videogame simulations of tanks than about tanks themselves. Arsen Darnay has a story reminiscent of Anne McCaffrey's *The Ship Who Sang*. My personal favorite is George R. R. Martin's "The Computer Cried 'Charge'." It is a futuristic retelling of "The Charge of the Light Brigade" that makes an interesting point about mechanized warfare. Martin's short stories are always worth reading.

I can't say I'm a big fan of military science fiction, but if I do get the mood, *Super-Tanks* should have enough action stories to fill the bill.

## DARK VALLEY DESTINY: THE LIFE OF ROBERT E. HOWARD

by L. Sprague de Camp,  
Catherine Crook de Camp,  
and Jane Whittington Griffin  
Bluejay Books, 1983, \$9.95

L. Sprague de Camp is one of those people who have found how to make a living out of their hobbies, like Jacques Cousteau and a handful of other people I know of. He is a first-class storyteller, probably because he loves telling stories to himself and he writes them down for other. When he gets interested in a subject, he studies it and then writes a book about it. Doing that, he has gotten a string of respected non-fiction books, including *Day of the Dinosaur* (co-authored by his wife Catherine Crook de Camp), *Lost Continents*, *The Science Fiction Handbook* (also co-authored with his wife), *Ancient Engineers*, and many others. In 1974, de Camp published the definitive biography of one of his favorite writers, H. P. Lovecraft. Apparently earlier and about the same time, de Camp did similar research on Robert E. Howard. Working with his wife and Jane Whittington Griffin, he produced *Dark Valley Destiny: The Life of Robert E. Howard*. The book was published by the recently defunct Bluejay Books.

Howard was a popular writer for pulp magazines in the 1930s, particularly *Weird Tales*. He wrote a range of adventure stories of the blood-and-thunder variety, but by far his best known creation is Conan. *Dark Valley Destiny* is 367 long pages of biography about Howard himself and the evolution of his works after his death. The length is impressive considering that Howard committed suicide at age 30 in a fit of depression about his comatose mother's impending death.

De Camp's prose is crisp and usually to the point (with occasional lapses such as "[Howard's mother] did not hear the local shower that afternoon as, pattering across the roof, it beat a brief tattoo to mourn young Robert's passing.") Of particular

value is a very complete index --a feature sorely missed in the paperback edition of de Camp's Lovecraft biography.

Negative aspects of the biography? Well, the biography is written for fans of Howard's writing. It is certainly not de Camp's fault that Howard himself was simply not as interesting as his characters. In chapters I read --and I fully admit to some skimming and even outright skipping-- the most interesting thing about Howard was what he was writing. If I were not interested in fantasy and pulp-writing the book would have had little interest for me. The story is in black and white and the segments about Conan are Technicolor.

#### SOLARIS

Solaris is one of those films I'd wanted to see for years. I have heard claims that this Soviet film is one of the great science fiction films of all time. It is, after all, based on a novel by Stanislaw Lem, a Polish science fiction writer who is considered to be very good and very artistic. Well, under it all, science fiction has a rather nice concept. The problem is that there is so much and so little it is under. The "so much" is about 150 minutes. The "so little" is what is happening in the story. The plot could have been done in half an hour. It is not particularly original. On the planet Solaris, a human base with 80 people has been almost entirely wiped out by an enigmatic alien force that creates three-dimensional versions of images it finds in the humans' minds. In the great sentient ocean or Solaris, as in the film, there is a great deal happening beneath the surface, but exactly what remains a mystery. This film is for the very patient only.

Rate it 0 on the -4 to +4 scale.

#### LA JETEE

This 25-minute science fiction film was shown with Solaris at the Cinema Village in New York, and packs about the same impact -- which isn't to say a whole lot -- in about one-sixth the screen time. It is a science fiction story told almost entirely by photographs. I say "almost" because one scene has noticeable movement. The main character is a man in a post-nuclear war future who is haunted by an incident he witnesses as a small boy but has never understood. In the post-war future, he is the involuntary guinea pig of a time-travel experiment that allows him to go back and take a second look at the remembered incident. For a 25-minute film, La Jetee has a high idea content and packs quite a wallop. It only looks better seen with the ponderous Solaris.

Rate it a +1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

#### THE HIDDEN

Intentionally or not, The Hidden has a lot of ideas in common with Hal Clement's Needle. It concerns an alien criminal and an alien policeman who has chased him to Earth.

Each gets around by finding a human to invade and control. The criminal seems to have quickly acquired a taste for fast cars and bad music. He's willing to kill to get either. The script calls for a lot of filler of some very standard types: car chases and gun battles. But basically it is a good story and not a bad film.

Rate it a +1 on the -4 to +4 scale.



#### HOUSE OF GAMES

A film review by Mark R. Leeper  
Copyright 1987 Mark R. Leeper

**CAPSULE REVIEW:** Psychiatrist, disenchanted with her efficacy, gets involved in an adventure of sorts. See the film before you read too many reviews. This is a difficult film not to spoil in the reviewing. It has a really good script by David Mamet, who earlier this year did THE UNTOUCHABLES. Rating: +2.

David Mamet is becoming a name to conjure with. I first noticed him about a decade ago when he had a play on Broadway called The Water Engine. That play, set in 1939, wove together chain letters, the World's Fair, and the great American paranoia myth that the auto companies have an engine that runs on water, but they've hushed it up. Much more recently, Mamet wrote The Untouchables, an enjoyable screenplay unencumbered by concern for historical accuracy. House of Games has a Mamet screenplay and Mamet also debuts as director.

Lindsay Crouse plays Margaret Ford, a successful psychiatrist. Dr. Ford doubts she really can help any of her patients. Against the cautious rules of psychiatry she gets involved in the personal life of one of her patients. In doing so, she meets Mike (played by Joe Mantegna). That is not saying much about the plot. My personal recommendation is to stay away from any reviewer who is going to tell you any more about the plot than that. If you really want to know more about it to know if you will like the film, take my word for it. You will probably like House of Games. It has humor, it has suspense, and it had the audience spellbound.

My biggest complaint with House of Games is that even when the final credits roll, the audience is still waiting for the other shoe to fall. No matter how many shoes fall in a film like this, you still expect that there will be another one and another one. What further creates that feeling is that House of Games is so entertaining, it seems like a much shorter film than it really is. Perhaps a plot twist or two were predictable. Lindsay Crouse's acting is a little wooden. But Joe Mantegna is mesmerizing. His is a piece of nearly perfect casting.

I rate House of Games a +2 on the -4 to +4 scale.

## PRINCE OF DARKNESS

A film review by Mark R. Leeper  
Copyright 1987 Mark R. Leeper

**CAPSULE REVIEW:** A very demanding and very rewarding horror film. Horror and science fiction combine together to make a film for long-standing horror film fans only. Lots of old stuff but a lot that even the long-time fans have not seen before. The last half hour is a let-down, but it is hard to imagine an ending fitting the buildup. Rate: +2.

A lot of horror films are coming out about now. Released in one weekend are both Prince of Darkness and Nightflyers. Earlier this year, Clive Barker directed and wrote Hellraiser. Believers, based on a respected horror novel, came out this year. Then there were a number of minor pieces of the Near Dark ilk. Horror, I understand, sells well on videocassette, so it is pretty tough for a horror film to lose money. I was vaguely aware that Prince of Darkness was from John Carpenter, but he has had a spotty career. I like his Dark Star, Halloween, The Thing, and maybe a few others. His most recent, Big Trouble in Little China, was a good idea that went amazingly bad. But then things are not always what we expect. Prince of Darkness, for example, turns out to be the best thing Carpenter has ever done.

For 2,000 years, the Brotherhood of Sleep have kept secret what Christianity was really about -- have kept secret the true nature of evil and of the Devil, a secret with roots far older than humanity. Now, 2,000 years after they discovered the secret, it is becoming important to understand it once more. The laws of physics are changing and the focus of all that is happening is one small rundown church in Los Angeles. There a group of scientists, their graduate students, and a priest are trying to unravel the mystery of what is happening. What is happening will tie together particle physics, mathematics, and orthodox Christianity.

Prince of Darkness has everything it needs but the payoff. The final third of the film is good Carpenter-style suspense, but it fails to live up to the promise of the first two thirds of the movie. If it had, this would have been an excellent science fiction film as well as a good horror film. As it is, Prince of Darkness is rich in ideas and has some good suspense to boot, but doesn't quite deliver.

I really enjoyed the film, but have to give this film a qualified recommendation. It takes a lot of effort just to understand as much of what is going on as the director wants to show you. There are many scenes that are deliberately disturbing, and a lot more that are violent. It has been pointed out to me, though, that there is very little actual blood. If you haven't seen many horror films, you may not find this one worth your effort. If you have seen a lot of horror films, you will recognize little ideas here and there from (are you ready?) Dracula, The Exorcist, The Thing, The Quiet Earth, The Legend of Hell House, The Night

of the Living Dead, Escape from New York, Five Million Years to Earth, The Keep, and The Terminator. Yes, there are recognizable ideas inspired by each of these, yet there are so many new ideas in this horror film that the familiar ones are outnumbered.

The man who crafted all these ideas into a single screenplay is Martin Quatermass. Perhaps that is a pseudonym and even a film reference. Since some of the images, like the marauding street schizophrenics, are reminiscent of images out of Carpenter's Escape from New York and Assault on Precinct 13, it is at least conceivable that the film was written by Carpenter himself. In any case, it is often hard to follow exactly what is happening; the film makes the audience work a little. And a little knowledge of paradoxical 20th century physics helps to set the atmosphere.

If you are tired of seeing old ideas rehashed in horror films, Prince of Darkness will show you a lot you haven't seen before. I'd give it a high +2 on the -4 to +4 scale.

## NIGHTFLYERS

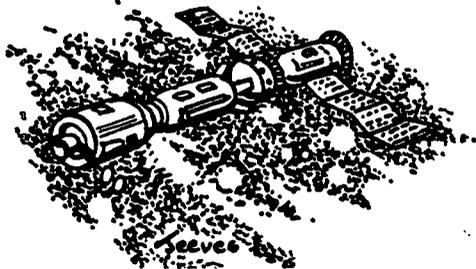
A film review by Mark R. Leeper  
Copyright 1987 Mark R. Leeper

**CAPSULE REVIEW:** An incompetent adaptation of a mediocre novella adds up to a must-miss science fiction film. Besides seeing how someone managed to turn an obviously inadequate special effects budget into an impressive set of effects, this film has little going for it -- certainly not the characters. Rating: -1.

I was recently discussing the new "Star Trek" series with some fans who were unhappy with it. The series is certainly weak in ideas and my friends' solution was to solicit stories from established science fiction writers. I was somewhat doubtful that a good story in incompetent hands would stay good for very long; I remember the disappointment of seeing Dune. I think another case in point of at least a fair story that did not fare well in the transition to screen is "Nightflyers." George R. R. Martin (a pretty good writer) wrote the novella on which the film was based. Admittedly, it is not his best work, but it deserved a better shake than it got in this weak and boring adaptation.

The story deals with an expedition to a celestial phenomenon which may or may not be connected with a hypothetical alien race called the Volcryn. The Nightflyer, the craft for the expedition, is piloted by a crew of one, a mysterious young captain seen by the other members of the expedition only as a life-sized hologram that can appear whenever and wherever he (it?) wants. Then mysterious things start happening and people start getting killed. The travellers suddenly have more to think about than an alien race.

Well, that doesn't sound too bad. That is all taken from Martin's novella and this adaptation is at least Hollywood's idea of "faithful to the original story." Which is



to say, yeah, much of the plot is there and the plot of the film is more like the source story than it is like any other story or film that comes to mind. (Any better than that and you start calling it a "literal adaptation.")

So the story is recognizably Martin's "Nightflyers." I will say one more good thing for it. It has cheap special effects done really well. Someone very intelligently knows how to get 4/5 the quality of effect at 1/5 the cost. For that and other reasons I was reminded more than once of Dark Star. But there is where my charitable feelings toward Nightflyers end abruptly.

I have rarely seen a bunch of characters I cared less about. I started counting the number left alive the way I used to count the days left till summer vacation. With the exception of the expedition cook, the characters are developed pretty much by how they argue with each other. The direction is almost humorless and you watch through the whole film without them ever showing any personality at all. The hero should be something like Ripley in Alien. Instead she looks like a lawyer's wife who has just stepped out of the beauty parlor, with her high heels, her frosted lipstick, and her big earrings. The captain looks like a 1980s rock star, complete with earring. Much of the wardrobe and all of the hairstyles are from the late 1980s in spite of the 21st century setting.

The science was laughable (if they let the air out of the ship it would implode; noisy, smoking explosions in a vacuum --that sort of thing). The continuity was confusing and error-ridden. I know I would not want to fly a spaceship that uses burning torches and candles for lighting. The film even picks up a major fault of the story: the audience can figure out what is going on much faster than the people on the ship. This is an amateur film which makes a lot of amateur mistakes.

Rate it a -1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

#### THE PRINCESS BRIDE

**CAPSULE REVIEW:** William Goldman expertly wrote a twisted fairytale novel and Rob Reiner did a great job of bringing it to the screen. Fun and unpretentious.

One of the advantages of being a proficient and successful writer is that you can write what you like and do not have to worry that this idea is too silly and readers will laugh at it. One of the advantages of being a proficient and successful director is that

you can make the kind of films you like and do not have to worry that the idea is too silly for audiences.

William Goldman has written such successful books as No Way to Treat a Lady, Magic, Marathon Man, and Soldier in the Rain. So when he decided to write a book-length fairy tale, his publisher knew he could pull it off. And when Rob Reiner, who was not much of an actor but was a director of three films the worst of which was as good as the sure thing, wants to direct it, he isn't going to have too much trouble getting up the mazuma to make a fairy-tale movie.

Princess --are you ready for this?-- Buttercup (played by Robin Wright) is to be the unfortunate bride of Prince Humperdinck (played by Fright Night's Chris Sarandon). But the only man she has ever loved was the callow youth Westley (played by Cary Elwes of Lady Jane) who was killed off-screen by a notorious pirate. Buttercup would like revenge on the pirate and she isn't too fond of her fiance, either.

And speaking of revenge, Inigo Montoya (Mandy Patinkin) would like some against the six-fingered man who killed his father. They could get revenge together but unfortunately Inigo's current job involves him and two friends, including Vezzik the giant (played by Andre the also Giant) kidnapping and murdering Buttercup. Then there's this little boy who would rather play videogames than listen to his grandfather's story. Yeah, well, he's in there too.

It is hard to find fault with as well-meaning and enjoyable a film as this offbeat fairy tale. The real problem is that the characters are flat so that one is never really drawn into the story. Reiner can create characters we like and believe. Had he done it here, the film would have been just about perfect. As it is, the story feels a little thin and too short for its material. Something is wrong when the only likable character is played by a quarter-ton of professional wrestler.

Beyond that, all I can say is this is the most fun you will have in a film for quite a while. I could tell you why this fractured fairy tale is fun, but most of it catches you off-guard. I couldn't convey the fun and I'd probably ruin the gags.

Rate the movie a +2 on the -4 to +4 scale.

#### NEAR DARK

**CAPSULE REVIEW:** The worst film I've seen in a theater this year. A vicious gang of vampiric bullies runs wild. Lots of blood and little thought.

What is the nicest thing I can think of to say about Near Dark? Well, they didn't bend too much the traditional rules for vampires. Within those rules they showed something of how dangerous a gang of really mean-spirited (bloody-minded?) vampires might be. Beyond that, Near Dark is over three hours of a film so bad, every minute of watching it counts as two minutes off your sentence.

A guy picks up a girl who turns out to be a vampire. She bites him after what seems like an interminable period of time. This opening sequence turns out to be the high point of the film. Our friend is forced to join the gang of vampires to learn the trade of vampirism. Mostly he sees how the vampires bully and terrorize humans with their powers. The scenes of the bullying are long and violent and bloody and boring. There are a couple of ideas borrowed from Anne Rice's Interview with a Vampire.

Don't waste your time. Life is too short to watch movies this bad.

Rate it -2 on the -4 to +4 scale.

#### STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION

##### "Encounter at Farpoint"

Star Trek was a television show that was popular in syndication and the basis for four films so far. If this is news to you, welcome to the English-speaking world. With commercial television desperately trying to compete with cable, it was only a matter of time before the series was resurrected in some form. The only thing that stood in the way, probably, was that the stakes were not high enough for sufficient funds to be made available to do the television series decently. Special effects would probably be much of what the audience would want and the effects of the 1960s would look shabby and cheap in the 1980s. The demand finally justified the huge per-episode cost and production was started.

Now all this has little to do with plot, characterization, or other story values. Tradition says these are of secondary import, but clearly someone was watching to make sure the series did not become another Battlestar: Galactica.

The first difference that is apparent in the new series is that the traditional Alexander Courage score is present but has been pushed aside by Jerry Goldsmith's triumphant score from Star Trek: The Motion Picture. Both scores are good, but Goldsmith's is better. The crew composition has been re-arranged in major ways --not surprising since the new series takes place almost a century later. There is an interesting recombination of humans, modified humans, aliens, and an android. A Vulcan (or perhaps a Romulan) is conspicuous in the background, but he appears to be just a phaser-carrier. Captain Jean-Luc Picard (Patrick Stewart, who also played Paul's teacher in Dune) is intelligent, logical, and cold-blooded, but definitely human. He could easily be as interesting as any character in the series so far. His second-in-command, Commander Bill Ryker (Jonathan Frakes) is the one in the James Kirk mold. There are a number of other characters, adding loose plot-ends to be tied up in later programs.

The effects, including contributions by Industrial Light and Magic, are much more in the tradition of the films than of the television series. Some of the effects are obviously computeraided video, but for the most part they are quite convincing. The ship

looks like a futurized version of the old Enterprises. It is supposedly much larger and houses entire families. The uniforms have once again been redesigned. They are smart-looking and more tight-fitting than ever. The transporter now looks like it is sprinkling fairy dust.

The "Star Trek" universe, however, will remain recognizable to viewers of the new series. Many of the same sound effects are used. The plot, at least of the first episode, "Encounter at Farpoint," is a recombination of plot elements from episodes of the previous series. An unfortunate touch is a cameo of a superannuated character of the first series. The makeup is about the worst visual effect of the episode.

Overall verdict on the series? It is way too early to tell. As a film, I would rate "Encounter" a +1 on the -4 to +4 scale. In fact, that was just about what I expected to rate it, but it was a higher +1 than I expected. It is the best science fiction television series since the old Star Trek died. Sure, I'll keep watching.

#### PREDATOR

**CAPSULE REVIEW:** Arnold Schwarzenegger meets an alien with a cloaking device while on a commando mission in Central America. Action films are pretty common, but the concept of the cloaking device and decent special effects are a boon.

When I was growing up and into comics, one kind of comic I was not interested in was war comics. I never read one, though I was occasionally curious about the ones that mixed war stories with a science fictional element. Typically, some group of commandos would find an island they were taking was infested with dinosaurs. Well, the science fiction war story has made it to the screen with Predator.

To Major Dutch Schaefer (Arnold Schwarzenegger), it's just another job. Schaefer makes his living by leading a crack commando unit in the jungle. It isn't the safest way to make a living, but it usually has a predictable level of danger and few really unexpected hazards. Schaefer usually knows pretty much what to expect and what to be prepared for. This time, however, Schaefer has flubbed it badly. Schaefer and his men are not prepared for the hazards they are facing and they are paying the price in lives. It isn't really their fault, of course. It's just that sometimes you face SOMETHING YOU HAVEN'T SEEN BEFORE. This time they are being picked off by an alien creature. Because the alien can fade into the jungle like a chameleon, they are not even seeing the something.

Twentieth Century Fox cleaned up with two science fiction horror films last summer (Aliens and The Fly). This year their summer science fiction film is a sort of Rambo meets Aliens. You probably already know who Schwarzenegger is. The Predator is played by 7'2" Kevin Peter Hall. Hall is quoted as saying of his alien's fighting style: "An alien warrior wouldn't come from outer space

doing old Bruce Lee routines. I wanted something a little different from the standard karate. Medieval combat seemed appropriate." Right! Well, I'm not really sure you can tell the difference.

What sets this film apart from pure throwaway action films is an interesting approach in the chameleon or, more accurately, "cloaking" effect. In the first scenes when you see it, you really are not sure what you have seen or how the effect was created. When you can get a better look at the effect, it is relatively clear how it was achieved, but it is still a good idea. The plot implications of a nearly invisible creature stalking the commandos are well-handled. Without the cloaking concept, this would be a fairly low-grade action film. As it stands, Predator is an enjoyable action film, reasonably well thought out. I saw only one real inconsistency; I don't think it gives away much to say that sometimes the alien can see human eyes and sometimes it can't. Because the invisibility theme is well-handled, I give Predator a +1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

#### THE BELIEVERS

CAPSULE REVIEW: Ugly, unpleasant urban horror film about a voodoo-like religion in New York City. There is nothing original or creative and little enjoyable in the film. If John Schlesinger can make films like Midnight Cowboy, that's really what he should be doing.

There hasn't been a horror film like The Believers in a while. After Rosemary's Baby, and especially after The Exorcist, there were several horror films in modern -- particularly urban -- settings. To make a film seem more believable and immediate, it was set in a contemporary city setting. The Sentinel worked that way; so did The Wolfen. There was even a weekly "urban horror" TV series, Kolchak: The Nighttalker. Then along came Stephen King, who usually uses small towns for his settings. Consciously or not, film producers followed suit. Setting is, of course, only one of many factors in what makes a horror film, but it does a lot to set the tone. The Believers somehow feels like a throwback to the Nightstalker series sort of horror story, with definite echoes of Rosemary's Baby and Burn Witch Burn.

An African-based religion, Santeria, is creeping into New York City. Santeria is voodoo-like and calls for blood sacrifices of chickens and other small animals. It may also call for human sacrifice. There have been bodies of young boys found who appear to have been sacrificed in a brutal manner. When a policeman is suspected of taking part in Santeria ceremonies, Martin Sheen, a police psychologist, is called in. Sheen becomes involved in the investigation of the murders.

The Believers does something quite difficult. In spite of a muddled and confusing plot, it is predictable. Just about every surprise in the film telegraphs itself well

in advance. There is almost nothing original or inventive in the entire film. Most of the horror impact of the film comes from scenes of mutilated animals. There is one effective makeup effect which produces as much nausea as fear in the audience.

Director John Schlesinger had previously done films like Billy Liar, Darling, Far from the Madding Crowd, Midnight Cowboy, Day of the Locust, and Marathon Man. These are not schlock films! Schlesinger can make very good films. However, my advice to him would be that less talented directors than he can do a better job with horror; few can make a Midnight Cowboy or even a Marathon Man. He should make films but stay away from horror.

Rate The Believers a -1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

#### THE FOURTH PROTOCOL

CAPSULE REVIEW: Pierce Brosnan is a Soviet agent and Michael Caine is a British agent trying to track him down. This is a good "spy-procedure" sort of thriller that is just a bit too much like Frederick Forsyth's previous DAY OF THE JACKAL.

The Fourth Protocol is based on the novel by Frederick Forsyth. Forsyth writes good suspense stories about political intrigue. He is best known for The Day of the Jackal and The Odessa File. They are clearly written and tense thrillers, though if the truth be known, there is a certain sameness about them. While there are major consequences to what is happening, his stories really come down to a sort of chess game between two men, one good and one evil. Nobody else is really important in the story. Just about everyone else is a prop.

The Day of the Jackal dealt with a lone assassin in the pay of political extremists, whose mission is to kill Charles DeGaulle. We see how the assassin works and thinks. We also see a police investigator, one who is not altogether popular with his superiors, and we see how he is able to discover an amazing amount of information about the assassin. That information, together with a modicum of dumb luck, is sufficient to avert the assassination.

With minor substitutions, we have the same story here. Instead of a political extremist group, we have a rogue general in Soviet intelligence. The general sends a sort of assassin, Petrofsky (played by Pierce Brosnan), to head up an operation in Britain. Trying to uncover the operation is John Preston, played by an aging Michael Caine. Preston takes his orders these days from an officious supervisor played by Julian Glover, who seems to make a career of playing unlikable officials (including Breen in Five Million Years to Earth). Only this time, the assassin's mission is not to kill a single man.

The Fourth Protocol is solidly acted with Caine a likeable if independent-minded agent. Pierce Brosnan is not very good at showing emotion, but as an emotionless killer he is just fine. There are a host of other familiar faces, including, I think, the

same actor who plays Max Headroom; in this film he plays an obnoxious American. As suspense films go, The Fourth Protocol is not the most cerebral, but it is several cuts above American suspense films like Beverly Hills Cop.

Give it a low +2 on the -4 to +4 scale.

### THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA

#### A music review and commentary

What do you think of when you hear the term, "operetta"? If you are like most people, you probably think first of Gilbert and Sullivan. You think of something light and whimsical, maybe H.M.S. Pinafore or The Pirates of Penzance. It is difficult to think of anyone but Gilbert and Sullivan who ever wrote one. Some might remember Offenbach's Orpheus in the Underworld, another piece of whimsy. But most people cannot think of a single operetta written since World War I.

In actual fact, the art form of the operetta is still very much with us, though the name is rarely used these days. Operettas play on Broadway relatively often, but somehow they seem to escape the label of the art form. If a work has a grim tone, nobody thinks to put it in the same category as a Gilbert and Sullivan. Obvious examples are Peter Weiss' Marat/Sade and Stephen Sondheim's Sweeney Todd.

By far the most successful practitioner of the art form is Andrew Lloyd Webber. Webber began his long partnership with Tim Rice when they wrote religious school pageants together. The first version of Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat was written when they were in school. Later they wrote Jesus Christ Superstar. Jesus Christ Superstar began a sort of mini-Golden Age of operettas in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Large numbers of operettas were written and called "rock operas." Webber and Rice responded with a new production of Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat and with Evita. Now, nearly a decade later, Webber has a new operetta, this time written with Charles Hart. The new work is The Phantom of the Opera, based on the novel by Gaston Leroux.

Leroux wrote the novel in 1911, basing it in part on what he claimed were actual legends of the Paris Opera House. Leroux embellished the legends to say that a man referred to only as "Erik" was the so-called "opera ghost." Erik was born healthy but with a face so ugly that his own mother could not bring herself to look on it. He was in turns a carnival freak, a singer, a ventriloquist and conjurer, an executioner for the Shah of Persia, and an architect of torture chambers. Eventually he retreated from a cruel world to live in the passageways and catacombs below the Paris Opera House, reputedly so immense they contain an entire underground lake. Beneath and inside the walls of the mammoth opera house he found himself an unchallenged king, albeit of an empty kingdom of rats and darkness. (Perhaps there is a parallel here to "Paradise Lost.") The actual story of the book

begins years later as the fabled and rarely seen "opera ghost" has decided to make an aspiring young singer, Christine Daae, the star of the opera using any means necessary.

The book's first film adaptation, and the only accurate one, was in 1925 with Lon Chaney, Sr., in the title role. Chaney's superb portrayal of Erik had both power and pathos. The Phantom of the Opera became one of the most memorable films of the silent era. It was one of the first films --and one of the few silent films-- to contain a sequence in the then-new process of Technicolor.

The first of three remakes was produced in 1943 with Claude Rains as Eriqne Claudin. The Rains version made one major change in the mythos that the later version adopted. As one additional cruelty at the hands of humanity, Eriqne was not deformed from birth. Instead, through tragic circumstances, he has his face burned with strong acid.

There were two more direct remakes. One in 1962 had Herbert Lom and one in 1983 had Maximillian Schell as the Phantom. Each version has an unmasking, a falling chandelier, and a dramatic death for the Phantom. (The Herbert Lom version was an odd variation in which toward the end of the script none of these elements were present yet. In the climax scene, someone else cuts down the chandelier. Lom rips off his own mask and dives under the chandelier to save Christine, thus showing all three elements in the space of a few seconds.)

There have been a number of major variations on the theme, of course, including the 1975 Phantom of Hollywood and the 1974 Phantom of the Paradise, which also mixed in the Faust legend.

All of this leads us to this latest incarnation, an operetta based on The Phantom of the Opera with music by Webber and lyrics by Charles Hart. As yet it is available in this country only in an abridged form on record.

My first observation is that Webber, Hart, or both read the book. Does that sound like faint praise? It might have been in Lon Chaney's day. It is clear that his version is reasonably close to the book, but each later version diverges further from the source material. The new version has returned to arm's length from the novel. Various changes were made to fit it into the confines of the stage and into a reasonable performance time, the most serious of which is the omission of a very important character referred to as "the Persian." In addition, from the illustrations on the record, the Phantom look nothing like Leroux described him. Leroux's Phantom is "extraordinarily thin and his dress coat hangs on a skeleton frame." The record's illustrations show a man much more substantial, if not actually heavy-set. Further, in the new version the Phantom's mask cuts across his face diagonally, covering most of his forehead but not the left eye and continuing diagonally to leave his mouth entirely uncovered (a necessity to allow the actor to sing). His face hardly fits the description:

"His eyes are so deep that you can hardly see the fixed pupils. You just see

two black holes, as in a dead man's skull. His skin, which is stretched across his bones like a drumhead, is not white, but a nasty yellow. His nose is so little worth talking about that you can't see it side-face; and the absence of that nose is a horrible thing to look at. All the hair he has is three or four long dark locks on his forehead and behind his ears."

The actor in the play seems to have normal skin and nose and a healthy head of hair. Admittedly even Chaney could not achieve the effect of the nose, but this Phantom looks like a businessman in a brief mask.

The music seems at first listening to be a cut below that of Evita just as the music of Evita seemed a cut below Jesus Christ Superstar. After two or three listenings that impression goes away entirely. Both for the subject matter and the music, this has quickly become my favorite of Webber's works. Some of the melodies are discordant and downright ugly. The same was true of Evita, however; once some of the nicer melodies are heard two or three times they make the music all worthwhile. The sticker on the album boasts what it calls "hit songs": "All I Ask of You," "Phantom of the Opera," and "Music of the Night." Where exactly these songs are hits, I have no idea. They are, however, appealing melodies though no more than others like "Masquerade," "Think of Me," or "Angel of Music."

Unfortunately, not enough can be told about the actual play from the record. While the album contains the full text of the play in the libretto, it is abridged on the records. In fact, the whole fate of the Phantom, whether he will live or die, is lost in an ambiguous stage direction. Is he disappearing from the room or only disappearing into his cloak? If the former, he will survive as he does in the book. If the latter, he will be captured by the mob as he was in the first film version. I suspect he escapes, but it is unclear. I look forward to seeing a live performance. In the meantime, I will dust off my copy of the book.

#### PHANTOM OF THE OPERA

A theatre review by Mark R. Leeper

I review a lot of things and see or read a lot more. It is not all that unusual that I come away from some and consciously say that it is the best of a certain class I have ever seen, read, or whatever. I thought that the remake of Cat People was the best shape-changer horror film I had ever seen. But of course, that is the best of a small class. It is far rarer that I would say something is the best play.

I will say that for me, Phantom of the Opera was the best play. By artistic merits alone, Amadeus was a better play, I suppose, but Phantom of the Opera was the most enjoyable and even the most meaningful play. It is a pot-boiler melodrama based on a pot-boiler melodramatic novel and I loved it.

Sometimes even a pot-boiler can hit you squarely on target and you are absolutely floored. I hope Margaret Thatcher, who attended the same performance as I did (while Evelyn and I were in London), enjoyed it as much.

Contradicting a review I wrote earlier of the record, I now concede that the play may be more faithful to the novel than the Lon Chaney film. It certainly reveals more of the Phantom's background and tragedy. The Phantom is shown to be the genius he was in the Gaston Leroux novel, and the victim of an unfeeling world. The Chaney film undercuts its own tragedy by making the Phantom a mad escapee from Devil's Island. That robs him of his power and gives the power instead to the madness. In fact, the Phantom is a polymath, a genius in whatever he does who is robbed of the fruits of his genius and at times actually caged as an animal because of his extreme ugliness. After decades of being denied by humanity, the Phantom finds and partially creates for himself a world where he is all-powerful.

That was what gave the novel its power, but none of the films built him up as the tragic polymath. The play does. On listening to the record, I did not catch how much of the novel really was translated to the stage for the play. To fit so much of the plot into a musical, of all play forms, is incredible. They did eliminate the Persian, who is a major character in the novel, and many chapters near the end of the novel, particularly those involving the torture chamber scenes which are telescoped to a few seconds on stage. I don't think the impact has really been lost.

Most of this could be told from the record. What I could not have expected is the brilliance of the set design. When you first sit in the theatre, the stage seems small. What they do with that tiny stage is hard to believe. Many effects are impressive, but none so impressive as the descent to the lake below the opera house (it really exists under the Paris Opera House, by the way, and is used to buoy up the stage). Less impressive is the falling chandelier, which is much less convincing. But the moment when you first see the Phantom is a cold chill like nothing I remember from any film or play. Phantom of the Opera is really a superb adaptation of a story I have loved for years.

Now for a few minor quibbles. Andrew Lloyd Webber's music is spectacular as long as he is simply having his characters sing, but he does some funny things when he is representing other composers' music. Presumably his song "Evergreen" is an aria from the opera Hannibal by Chalmers. From the style of opera of the period, and from what we do hear of the opera, it is clear that the song simply would not fit in. It is not an operatic style, and Webber apparently did not want to take a chance on his audience not appreciating the beauty of the operatic style. Further, it seems absurd that a music genius like the Phantom would write an opera in which the music is just unappealing scales and with phrases like "Those who tangle with Don Juan..." That sounds like

it came from a poverty-row Western rather than an opera written by a musical genius.

But I think the measure of how much the play was enjoyed by its audience can be taken by the group I was with. They paid 18 pounds (about \$30). The scalpers were selling the same tickets for 75 pounds (about \$125) and were selling out. The group I saw the play with were clammering for us to get tickets for them at New York City prices so that they could see it a second time.

[PHANTOM OF THE OPERA opened on 01/26/88 in the Majestic Theater in New York City.]

#### HELLRAISER

CAPSULE REVIEW: Non-stop slam-bang action creepshow makes writer-director Clive Barker seem sicker than he actually is. Lots of sex and violence, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.

Clive Barker is the new wunderkind of horror fiction. While Stephen King writes pretty much in the well-trodden areas of horror --clairvoyance, psi powers, vampires, etc.-- Clive Barker seems to create startlingly new ideas that are usually totally off the wall. You cannot be sure what territory a Barker story will take you to, but you can be pretty sure it won't have anything as familiar and reassuring as a blood-sucking vampire. You may encounter a malevolent talking pig, or a haunted burial shroud; one of his more horrific stories involved a giant. It was perhaps the first horror story in two centuries with a giant. Now following in the footsteps of Stephen King, who wrote and directed his own horror film Maximum Overdrive, Barker has written and directed Hellraiser.

Well.... I heard someone in the audience echo almost word for word the thoughts I had watching the film: "The guy who made this film is one sick son of a bitch." Take Re-Animator, remove the humor, then add more gore, more graphic violence, and more imagination, and you have something approaching Hellraiser. The story deals with a man who bought an ornate puzzle box. The box seems to be the key to a universe of sex and torture. At least I think that was what it was. Things are just not very clear. Barker, who is usually a good story-teller, just fails to do a very good job here of story-telling. Instead the film devolves into a sequence of imaginative gross-out scenes with some very spare connective tissue. Nothing makes a whole lot of sense and there is little point in asking, "If that guy is really the king of the dead, or whatever he is, why does he have his head marked up like a Rand McNally globe and why has he driven all those nails in his head? Does he just think it looks 'punk'?"

Hellraiser must be the ultimate of some kind of film. Whatever it is, it certainly is very much what it is. If you like the sort of thing that Hellraiser is, you're sure going to love this film. And you might want to get some therapy while you're at it. I guess I'd give Hellraiser a 0 on the -4 to +4 scale.

#### THE RACE FOR THE DOUBLE HELIX

CAPSULE REVIEW: Made-for-TV BBC film gives a more founded view than does Watson's book The Double Helix. A very fine film with a lot to say about the discipline of science research.

Around the middle of September I start thinking back on what was the best film I have seen the previous summer. I had pretty well determined it was to be De Palma's The Untouchables this year when just under the wire I saw something better. And it was a made-for-TV film, made by the BBC. The film ran on the Arts and Entertainment cable station. It was called The Race for the Double Helix. It featured superb acting by Jeff Goldblum as James D. Watson and Tim Pigott-Smith as Francis Crick. Watson and Crick are the two unconventional scientists who worked out the structure of DNA.

The film is about many things, among them the conflict between two approaches to science. You can go for the gold, or glory in the truth and doing things the right way.

The first approach is personified by Goldblum's Watson, a boorish Yank who is a duomaniac. His goals are to get a girl and a Nobel Prize. Anything in life that does not further his attempts at one goal or the other is not to be tolerated.

Espousing the other point of view is Rosalinda Franklin, to whom science is a turn-the-crank operation of putting enough work into your goal, going from square one to square two, to square three... until you have achieved your goal without once making an intuitive leap.

The film is about the politics of science, and the viewer comes away with an education in how those politics work as well as one of how the structure of DNA was determined. It is the story of how three men won a Nobel Prize based greatly on the work of one woman who neither got a piece of the prize nor, because she was a woman, was she even allowed to join the men in the lounge of the building where they worked.

The Race for the Double Helix is a powerful, excellent film. If this sort of thing gets shown often on the BBC, I may pack my bag.

Rate it a +3 on the -4 to +4 scale.

#### THE LOST BOYS

CAPSULE REVIEW: Moody photography and baroque sets constitute most of the value of this punk-vampire film about the undead on motorcycles and pre-teen Van Helsing. The story plays a little fast and loose with traditional vampire lore.

Back when Hammer Films was making its best vampire films -- and they were some of the best ever made -- they used vampirism as a sort of metaphor. The early Dracula films with Christopher Lee (Kiss of the Vampire and especially Brides of Dracula) likened vampirism to drug addiction. This added a little relevance to the films and it made things easier for the scriptwriter. How does a mother behave when she discovers her beloved son has become a vampire? Well, it's

not so hard to find mothers whose sons have become drug addicts; just have them react the same way. In Brides of Dracula one woman talks about how there is a so-called smart set who consider vampirism a sort of special privilege. Hammer's metaphor has been resurrected for Joel Schumacher's Lost Boys.

The story concerns two boys, Sam (about 12 years old) and Michael (about 18), who are the new family in town in Santa Carla, California. Michael quickly falls in with the wrong sort, punk bikers forever getting into trouble. Sam makes friends, too, with boys his own age. The bikers are not just punks; they are vampires, and Sam's friends are vampire hunters. From there the plot follows turns which, if not completely predictable, are hardly surprising, either. In fact, the only real surprise comes from where the scriptwriter decides to vary from the standard rules of the powers of the vampires.

With not much of a script to work with, Schumacher manages a few pleasant moments of tongue-in-cheek but little more than that. This is, however, a cinematographer's film and while everyone else seemed to be putting in half-hearted efforts, the cinematographer was working overtime. The photography is moody and at times even eerie. The atmospheric camera work extends even to the gratuitous rock concert scenes. If The Lost Boys is better than Schumacher's previous films, like The Incredible Shrinking Woman, it is mostly because of emotional effects orchestrated by the cinematographer.

Rate the film a low +1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

#### INNERSPACE

**CAPSULE REVIEW:** Fantastic Voyage crossed with Foul Play makes for another science fiction comedy cut from the same mold as Back to the Future. Innerspace does not always make sense, but it is just about always fun. (Spoiler warning: major elements of the plot are presented first as minor surprise plot twists. Read the following at your own risk.)

Two years ago, Steven Spielberg's production company had a big hit with a light science fiction comedy, Back to the Future. Success is not something that Hollywood takes lightly, so presumably it was not long before Spielberg had a second film, cut of much the same cloth, on the drawing boards. Well, Innerspace is out and very probably it will be a hit of equal or almost equal strength.

Innerspace, directed by Joe Dante, is a light-hearted film which can easily be taken as a sequel to Fantastic Voyage. Tuck Pendleton (played by Dennis Quaid) is a "right-stuff" sort of pilot who feels he never got the recognition that astronauts have gotten, so he volunteers to be the first human to be miniaturized and injected into another creature --in this case, a rabbit. Through an absurd chain of events, he is instead injected into a neurotic grocery clerk Jack Putter (played by Martin Short) who happens to

be in the wrong shopping mall at the wrong time. Pendleton must make contact with Putter and together they race against time to stop a weird assortment of freelance spies who want to steal the secret of miniaturization and sell it to the highest bidder. One, we are told, has already made a fortune by selling the secret of Velcro (tm) to the Persian Gulf.

Pendleton's abilities to enhance Putter's own powers start impressive and eventually get absurd, while the characters are really only superficially developed and at times are totally absurd. At one point, Putter takes time out from a race against time to do a little jive dancing around Pendleton's apartment. The film sometimes relies too much on slapstick scenes and goofy chases, but at other times it makes very clever use of its premise to create some exciting action scenes. And the script does leave room for the Spielberg trademark (malfunctioning mechanical arms) and some Dante trademarks (cameo roles by Dick Miller and Kenneth Tobey). The film is packed. It has science fiction, comedy, chases, really weird situations, and really weird characters, and it just keeps delivering. After the film has already run long, it rolls the end credits before its story is even finished. Not a great film, but good light entertainment; it gets a low +2 on the -4 to +4 scale.

#### VAMPIRES EN HABANA

**CAPSULE REVIEW:** The watchable Cuban feature-cartoon was made for the international market. It is pure fluff with no more political comment than The Man in the White Suit, which it occasionally resembles.

After a short history of vampirism and the discovery of a drug to protect vampires from the sunlight that irritates their skin and reduces them to a pile of ashes, the scene is Havana in 1933. Professor Von Dracula and his nephew Joseph Amadeus have become the focus of a war between a Chicago-based gang of vampires and another gang from Dusseldorf. One gang wants to control the "Vampisol" drug; the other wants to open beaches protected from the sun and will be put out of business if Vampisol protects vampires from sunlight.

Vampires en Habana (Vampires in Havana) is an 80-minute cartoon from Cuba that lampoons vampire movies, gangster movies, Cuban entertainment, James Bond films, Cuban history, and anything else within reach. In many ways it resembles Japan's "Lupin III" cartoons with a little more human and a little less logic to the action. In it we discover that vampirism is a wide-spread subculture with its own radio stations, its own version of the Mafia --the Capa Nostra-- its own mad scientists, and its own set of problems. There are many kinds of vampire --one always appears in a bubble, like Glinda the Good Witch-- but Joseph Amadeus is a new kind. Thanks to a monthly quaff of Vampisol, he has so few symptoms of vampirism that he has grown up never knowing that he is a vampire.

The pace of *Vampires en Habana* is break-neck, but the animation is rather poor. The artwork is unexceptional and includes racial stereotypes that we reactionary capitalist lackeys would never dare to put into a film. It is enjoyable but not very deep. Writer-director Juan Padron makes his film almost devoid of political comment or any other kind of comment.

Rate it a 0 on the -4 to +4 scale.



## Book Reviews by Robert Sabella

### THE PLANET ON THE TABLE

by Kim Stanley Robinson  
TOR, 1987, \$3.50

A review and essay by Robert Sabella

One of the lasting effects of the New Wave was the increased respectability science fiction gained in academic circles. This was a mixed blessing though, and somewhat controversial. Consider the abundance of academic criticism SF has received. For every James Gunn and Jack Williamson who understand how science fiction differs from literary fiction, there have been a half-dozen coffee klatsch critics. You know the type I mean: they sit around faculty lounges sipping cups of hot coffee while discussing such things as "what eternal theme was *Bester* analyzing with the creation of Gully Foyle?" or "was Louis Wu a neo-classical cynic or a post-modern romantic?" or "would David Selig's *angst* have been so pervasive if he were not suffering from hemorrhoids?" All right, I exaggerate, but I am trying to make the point that many academics rate science fiction by standards that are not valid in a field nurtured on pulp milk and whose basic structure depends on equal parts sense-of-wonder and scientific extrapolation.

The same mixed blessing applies to the many writers who have entered science fiction from literary traditions. I am not decrying the fact that most of them ignore the traditional science fictional images and cliches. In fact, avoiding the cliches often produces fresh, original works that could not have come out of the genre itself. Consider such novels as Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse Five* and *Cat's Cradle* or Richard Adams' *Watership Down* and *Shardik*. What does matter though is whether the authors understand what makes a science fiction story successful on purely SF terms. Robert Merle understands, so *Malevil* was a splendid book. Margaret Atwood did not understand so that as frightening as *A Handmaid's Tale* was, it was a little more than an unexplored premise and ultimately unsatisfying to many SF people. (Not that I ridicule Atwood, you understand. She was obviously writing for a literary audience who undoubtedly accepted *A Handmaid's Tale* as what science fiction should be.)

The bottom line here is that Sturgeon's Law says 90% of everything is crap. No long-time reader doubts that statistic applies to

science fiction as well. This being the case, academic SF actually grades out pretty good. The percentage of "good" academic SF (admittedly on a somewhat subjective scale) certainly surpasses 10%, if only because there is no hack writing in academic and that probably accounts for a large portion of science fiction's 90% crap.

But even if academic science fiction was 99% crap, it would still be worthwhile because both John Kessel and Kim Stanley Robinson emerged from academia and they are two of the very best writers currently in the field.

Both Kessel and Robinson had an advantage over other academics in that neither began writing blind to the field's long history. Kessel's roommate in college was SF fan Steve Carper and the two of them have been congoers for many years. Robinson was a Clarion Workshop attendee who fell under the tutelage of Damon Knight and Terry Carr, two astute editors who understood both the literary tradition and the science fiction tradition.

While Kessel has not yet published an anthology of his short fiction (a failing which might be due largely to his lack of proclivity), Robinson's *The Planet on the Table* is one of the gems of the recent burst of single-author collections (by the likes of John Varley, Michael Bishop, Howard Waldrop, William Gibson, and Lucius Shepard among others). It contains 8 stories including a World Fantasy Award winner and three other award nominees.

The World Fantasy Award winner is "Black Air," a retelling of the defeat of the Spanish Armada. It is strong with both imagery and characterization, two areas in which Robinson excels. But its greatest strength is its handling of religion, something often treated superficially in historical stories as if it were a facade people wore without any feeling. In fact, it was an integral part of people's lives, something Robinson understands and portrays well.

Perhaps an even better story which should have won an award somewhere was "The Lucky Strike." This is another historical retelling, a what-if the first atomic bomb had been dropped on Hiroshima by a pacifist bomber. It is a chilling emotional story more closely tied to the 80s than the 40s since I doubt it could have been conceived outside of the current nuclear weapons panic. I am not sufficiently well-versed in recent history to know how realistic the paci-

fist protagonist was, although Robinson certainly made him plausible to me. This is a highly-recommended story.

There were other stories which, if not as good as the above-mentioned pair, were certainly commendable. "Venice Drowned" tells of a future when the Italian city is slowly drowning and its treasures are being plundered by everyone from art collectors to opportunists. It is a moving tale of one man's love for his heritage and should move everybody who is disturbed as much as humanity's heritage is gradually being lost by the unstoppable worldwide McDonaldisation.

"The Disguise" is a gripping murder mystery set in a futuristic theater where actors becoming their roles takes on an entirely new meaning. "Coming Back to Dixieland" is a warm evocation of Dixieland jazz as remembered by Uranian miners. This story will warm the hearts of aficionados of any dying art form.

This review will be incomplete if I ignore Robinson's splendid introduction. It acknowledges his strong commitment to literary tradition while simultaneously showing how he chooses to twist it into science fiction terms. It is as engaging as his stories, chock full of humor which remained hidden from his readers until very recently. Overall, this book contains some of Kim Stanley Robinson's best stories. For those already familiar with him, it is a must collection. For those who have somehow missed him so far, you are in for a rare treat.

THE YEAR'S BEST SCIENCE FICTION  
FOURTH ANNUAL COLLECTION

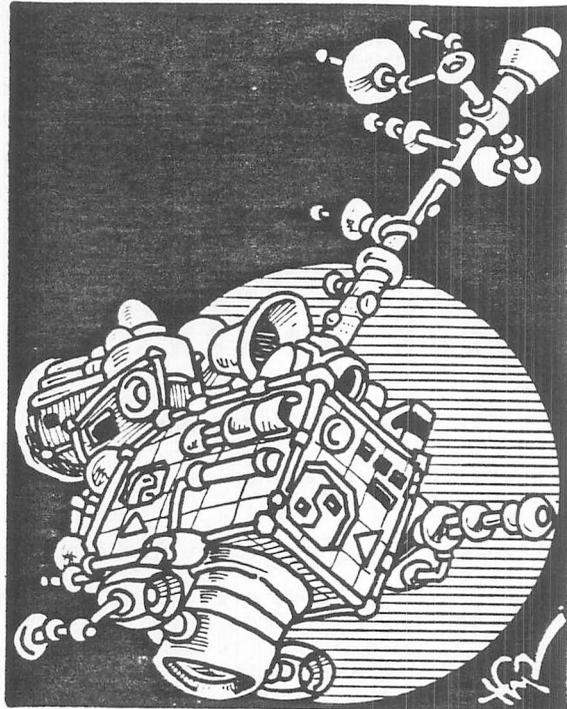
Edited by Gardner Dozois  
St. Martin's Press, 1987, \$19.95  
(\$11.95 trade pb)

A review and some observations  
by Robert Sabella

Another Spring, another round of the annual best-science-fiction-of-the-year anthologies. For the past four years, most reviewers, myself included, have been raving about Gardner Dozois' entry in the field, and deservedly so. Not only does this volume have size (602 pages), it has breadth and quality.

Of the 27 stories in the collection, not a single story is weak. Six were Nebula nominees, two actually winning the award, and many others were either high on the list of SFWA recommended stories or have shown up on several Best-of-the-Year lists. The contents range from gentle fantasies (Orson Scott Card's "Hatrack River" and Richard Kearns' "Grave Angels") to experimental hard tech (William Gibson's "The Winter Market" and Greg Bear's "Tangents"), from light comedy (Somtow Sucharitkul's "Fiddling for Buffaloes" and Bruce Sterling's "The Beautiful and the Sublime") to several authorial tour de forces (Lucius Shepard's "R & R" and Michael Swanwick's "Covenant of Souls").

The best story in the book -- and one of the best stories of the entire decade -- is undoubtedly Lucius Shepard's "R & R." It is truly a tour de force, featuring everything from evocative images and brutal depictions



of war to outstanding characterization. It is simultaneously beautiful and revolting, breathtaking and haunting. If anyone had doubts Shepard is one of our great writers, those doubts must be dissipated now.

Many other top writers of the Eighties are represented with major works. Orson Scott Card continues to impress with "Hatrack River." Much of his current reputation rests on his updating of traditional SF ideas (such as in the Ender's Game/Speaker for the Dead series), but this is a fantasy retelling of 19th century America, quite imaginative compared to endless repetitions of White, Howard and Tolkien. It is the first segment of the novel Seventh Son which is itself reputedly the first of a series of six books. I await them eagerly.

William Gibson has always been one of SF's most original writers, but last year's Count Zero and "The Winter Market" have proven him one of its most talented as well. Both still feature the excitement and wild originality of his earlier stories, but Count Zero is also a tightly plotted thriller and "The Winter Market" a moving story primarily concerned with emotions. It is reminiscent of John Varley's excellent "Blue Champagne" but much more compact and, dare I say this, slightly better.

Also worthy of mention are Judith Moffett's "Surviving" (a brilliant variation on a century-old theme) and Greg Bear's "Tangents" (another truly creative idea from one of SF's best thinkers).

No volume is perfect, of course, and three stories in this one particularly irked me. I refer to James Patrick Kelly's "The Prisoner of Chillan," Pat Cadigan's "Pretty Boy Crossover" and Walter Jon Williams' "Video Star." Not because they are bad stories; in fact all three are quite well written and show considerable talent on the part of their authors, but none make any attempts

at originality. All belong to the growing school of William Gibson imitators. Apparently all three authors were enamored by Gibson's version of cyberpunk. But this did not inspire them to join the ranks of hard-tech writers pushing the boundaries of science fiction in new directions (writers such as Gibson, Bruce Sterling, Greg Bear and Rudy Rucker). Rather, they embraced the narrowest definition of cyberpunk, in effect going in the opposite direction of Gibson et al; they have abandoned originality entirely in favor of mimicking Gibson's ideas: the cyberpunk milieu (Cadigan and Williams), artificial intelligence (Kelly and Williams), amoral computer hackers (Kelly and Williams) and even mirrorshades, for cripes' sake (Williams)!

Interestingly, Gibson himself has evolved beyond his early creations. A true talent,

he is always striving for newer, better ideas while lesser talents mine his throwaway ideas. They are hitching rides on Gibson's coattails, something they cannot do forever since he is too wildly creative to stay pinned down for long. Eventually they must either find their own voice (and all three are talented enough to do so) or they will soon pass by the wayside. I can't imagine much worse than seeing imitation cyberpunk linger on for decades just as imitations of E.E. Smith, Robert E. Howard and J.R.R. Tolkien have done.

But don't let my personal gripe discourage you. In fact, maybe you'll be interested in comparing the Gibson story with those of his imitators. Or maybe you haven't read Lucius Shepard's "R & R" or Greg Bear's Nebula winning "Tangents." Whatever the reason, do yourself a favor and buy this volume.

## Book Reviews by *Laura Todd*

### ANCIENT OF DAYS

by Michael Bishop  
Tor, 1985, \$3.50

A book review by Laura Todd

Sometimes I like to take a break from tales of interstellar, post-nuclear, or other-dimensional mayhem. This book provided just such a break. Set in the everyday milieu of the American South, it is the story of the last surviving member of a proto-human species, homo habilis, and how he is befriended by a kindly woman named Ruth-Claire who eventually marries him and has his child. The pitfalls are pretty much what you'd expect: skeptical anthropologists, nosy press crews, preachers thundering against evolution, and a nasty bunch of Ku Klux Klansmen decrying the evils of miscegenation.

But the real meat of the tale is how Adam (the obviously appropriate name given to the hominid) is gradually transformed from a wild, naked primate who eats rodents, into a civilized, earnestly searching man, deeply concerned over the question of whether he poses a soul.

It's an entertaining, absorbing tale, with lots of wry humor and insights into our own oh-so-civilized species. In fact, Adam sometimes behaves with more forbearance than the members of homo sapiens with whom he comes in contact. However, I just wish the author had gotten a little closer to the soul of this marvelous material. The book is written from the viewpoint of Paul, Ruth-Claire's ex-husband, who is a restaurant owner. Paul is basically an observer, or at best a supporting character. This leaves off-stage the central development of the story; namely, Adam's own feelings and experiences as he gropes toward 20th century "enlightenment." One day Adam shows up, a frightened, 4-foot, hairy "ape" in Ruth-Claire's backyard. Soon afterward, he is

shown entering Paul's restaurant with Ruth-Claire, uncomfortably decked out in Paul's old clothing. (There are elements of the Eternal Triangle in this story.) A while later, though, it turns out Adam can read, and eventually he becomes a model 20th century man. He can speak, drive a car, and he has even achieved some celebrity as an artist. Most of all, he has acquired a thoroughly modern case of angst. This would be great material, except we see it all second-hand.

This off-center viewpoint, as well as losing immediacy, also creates a credibility problem. As I understand current theory, homo habilis was one step above the Australopithecines. They used tools made from chipped stones, but had not yet developed fire. Bishop postulates that an isolated group of the species survived in a complex of caves in Africa, where they were discovered in the 19th century and taken to Haiti by slavers. Okay, I'll swallow that. But the question is: would one of these hominids really have the brain capacity to develop modern skills such as literacy? To make such a transformation really believable, it would have helped if we could have gotten inside Adam's head. As it was, though this was an enjoyable book, it was a little too much like "Tuppie meets Greystoke."

### ALWAYS COMING HOME

by Ursula K. LeGuin  
Bantam/Spectra, 1985, \$4.95

A book review by Laura Todd

For those who haven't heard, Always Coming Home is mainly the narrative of Stone Telling, a woman of the Kesh -- a "primitive" people of a far-future California after the disappearance of the technological age. Interspersed with this narrative are large sections consisting of Kesh poetry, songs, tales and religious lore.

It's definitely not easy to get into. Right at the beginning one must wade through a inordinate amount of quaint, quotidian and opaque details of the narrator's childhood--rituals, places, names. All of it is written in a detached, rambling, mystical style which reminded me of an anthropological tract on "Aboriginal Creation Myths" or some such. It's interesting, but you really have to work at it.

The story itself, when the author finally gets to it, is a fairly typical tale of two cultures with opposing world views. The Kesh (Nice Guys) are holistic, calling animals, plants and rocks "people." Stone Telling leaves her village to visit the city of her father's people, the warlike Condor nation. The Condor (Nasty Aggressors) have an I/it relationship to the rest of the world. Women, slaves, and those of other cultures are "hontik": animals.

The story held my interest, but the author kept her distance by telling it in a synoptic, detached manner so that I never experienced it as a novel -- suspense, character identification and gritty sensory details are absent. Had they been there, the story probably wouldn't have needed to be padded with huge sections of anthropological lore. In fact, if this work had been skillfully handled, the cultural background would have been woven right into the novel so that we'd never know we were being handed an anthropological tract.

To be fair, LeGuin does a good job of painting an appealing culture. The lore is amusing, especially the myths of the "backwards-head people," those wrong-headed technological assholes who left a legacy of tox-

ic and radioactive wastes for the future. Still, one can only read so many myths and descriptions of religious rituals. If that's what I'm interested in, why not study a real culture?

Worldbuilding is fine, but it should be there to support a story, not take the place of one. Obviously LeGuin hoped that readers would be as captivated with Kesh society as they were by every detail of Tolkien's Middle Earth. The difference is that first Tolkien pulled us in with an enthralling, can't-put-it-down story. That's where LeGuin fails. If the narrative and characters fail to grab, what good are the side details?

I will say one good thing about Always Coming Home. Unlike some sexist dystopian novels (such as A Handmaid's Tale), this book didn't leave me depressed and mad at that nasty aggressive male half of the human race. Stone Telling speaks of the cruelty of Condor society, but because of her detachment we don't see the blood and feel the pain, so we don't get too mad. The Condor are finally seen as a doomed aberration, while the surrounding gentelbeings are assumed to be the evolutionary wave of the future. When I finished Always Coming Home, I didn't feel as if I'd been through hair-raising adventures. It was more like spending an amiable evening in the company of nice folks.

A final word of warning: There is a total of 540 pages in this book. Of this, Stone Telling's story consists of 124 pages, the rest being taken up by the myths and poems and lore of a culture that never was. At a cover price of \$5.00, you're not getting much story for your money.

## Book Reviews by *David M Shea*

### APHRODISIAC COOKERY

by Greg and Beverly Frazier  
Paperback Library, 1970, \$1.25

There's a word for it, in endless versatility of the English language: "desipience," from the Latin meaning the enjoyment of an activity one knows to be trivial. No, no, I didn't mean that activity was trivial! Reading this puffery of a book is certainly trivial, though. It's astonishing to think that intelligent people actually put in a lot of time researching this book.

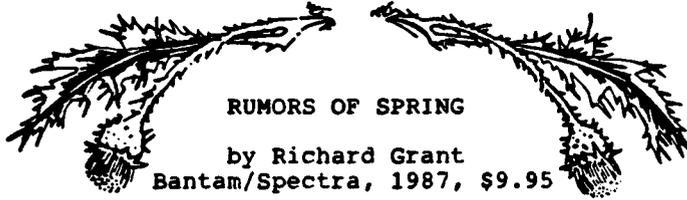
The book itself consists of actual modern recipes, ancient concoctions supposed to enhance sexual potency, and a mixed bag of quotations having more or less to do with the erotic qualities of food. The modern recipes are mainly innocuous despite the cute-sy-erotic names attached to them. (There are a few exceptions, such as "Mountain Oysters" and "Eel Stew," the ingredients of which don't strike this palate as appealing.) There are places where the conventions of recipe-writing have lent an air of apparently unintentional humor, as in a recipe for "Connubial Onions" (boiled onions in a sauce of sherry, butter, sugar, cheese, salt and

pepper), which ends with the laconic notation, "Serves 6." Makes you wonder who's supposed to be connubial to whom, or all together?

The ancient recipes for aphrodisiacs are much further afield, sometimes running off into the downright weird, as in Albertus Magnus' famous recipe (the one quoted verbatim in Heinlein's Glory Road) concerning a "Woolfe." The human talent for self-deception is continuously fascinating. The book is also heavily spiced -- to use the appropriate simile -- with quotations from a variety of sources: Shakespeare, The Song of Solomon, Paradise Lost, the Ars Amatoria, The Perfumed Garden, and "Oral Techniques in Genital Excitation." (Trust me on this one: Don't ask.)

The authors wisely preface their book with a disclaimer to the effect that it's not what the food brings to you, it's what you bring to the food. I strongly suspect that anyone who takes this seriously with the hope of enticing an unwilling partner is in for a major disappointment. However, it's all in good fun; mainly harmless, debatable only here and there (it is flatly asserted that the "earliest alcoholic beverage known" is mead, which is not how I understood it),

and only kinky in one or two places. If you can track down the book, and you and your "significant other" want to frolic in the kitchen, have fun.



### RUMORS OF SPRING

by Richard Grant  
Bantam/Spectra, 1987, \$9.95

I will offer as a generic dictum that probably one ought not review one's friend's books: the prospect for conflict of interest is apparent. (One also finds oneself in an awkward position should the book turn out to be unreadably awful.) Since I know Richard to be a very nice fellow who has been encouraging to me about my own writing, probably I should not review this book. Well, I'm going to do so anyway. Caveat Lector.

Any attempt to describe in a few words the plot of Rumors of Spring (insofar as it has a "plot"; it has a story -- all stories are part of One Story -- but I'm no longer sure these are equivalent terms) is probably foredoomed to failure; but briefly, this is the story of the last forest, the great Carbon Bank Forest, which after centuries of neglect comes creeping out of its last fastness to once more dispute with humanity for dominion of the world; and of the First Biotic Crusade, a motely group of strangers and misfits who seek to understand the forest and come to terms with its sudden expansion.

Rumors of Spring is an easy book to like, but a difficult one to explain why. It has something of Carroll's innocent absurdity (I wish the crypto-Freudians would leave poor Mr. Dodgson alone), but is neither juvenile nor whimsical, though frequently amusing, at least to this reader. It has perhaps a touch of Mervyn Peake's glorious madness, but us not preoccupied, as Peake was, with the morbid and grotesque. If I called it a quest novel this might suggest one of those bad-imitation-Tolkien things which infest the marketplace. To describe it as a future Grail novel would imply a wholly inapplicable medievalist mysticism. It's certainly not another ecological-disaster novel; this is unmistakably a fantasy, though a scientific fantasy. (If that sounds like a contradiction in terms, I can only suggest you read the book to see why it isn't.)

Absolutely the last thing I want to do is to give the book the kiss of death with that fatal adjective, "literary"; but this is not a book for everyone. It blossoms (to use an aptly botanical simile) at its own unhurried pace, sometimes slowing nearly to a stop to admire its own language. Clearly one reading is not sufficient to appreciate it fully. There seem to be dozens of subtle allusions and private jokes -- James Joyce, the Atlantic Coast Conference -- I probably missed lots of them. Rumors of Spring is uniquely itself, a whole entity. It's practically organic. (An irrelevant aside: This is the best proofread novel I have read in years. There are no typos.)

As an aspiring writer, I find this book intimidating, the same way I find the guitar playing of Leo Kottke or Mahavishnu John McLaughlin intimidating: I know I simply can't compete on this level. (Nabokov's "There are no minor writers, only minor readers" is scant consolation.) As a reader, I was very impressed and very entertained. This is a book that, with a little encouragement, could easily be regarded as a classic in a few years. It's going on my nominating ballot for the World Fantasy Awards. I recommend Rumors of Spring very highly.

### SPIDER PLAY

by Lee Killough  
Questor, 1986, \$3.50

Lee Killough is a writer I admire a great deal. She can plot (no convenient miracles sneaking out of the woodwork in the last chapter), she creates interesting and believable characters, and she tells a good story without lecturing. It's a pleasure to watch an honest artisan in the performance of her craft.

Case in point, Spider Play, an excellent example of that neglected sub-genre, the science fiction mystery. With the exception of Asimov's Caves of Steel books there haven't been many of these, because most writers are too lazy to write a book which must conform to two disparate sets of story-telling criteria. It's so much easier to write another gooey Faerie romance or Star Trek clone. Spider Play is more or less a sequel to the author's 1979 The Doppelganger Gambit, involving the same characters and setting in a different case. It's the year 2080 in Shawnee County, Kansas, and those offbeat police detectives, Janna Brill and Mahlon "Mama" Maxwell, are handed a new assignment concerning a hijacked hearse which disappeared complete with, um, contents. The trail of clues leads the two "leos" (for "law enforcement officers: Killough invents a lot of Twenty-First Century slang) into the underground of Topeka, past a shopping mall to end all shopping malls, and finally to an orbiting station. The problem grows bigger and bigger, eventually leading Janna and Mama to uncover a massive conspiracy in which a mere murder is small change.

One of the ironies of book reviewing is that it's relatively simple to explain why one disliked a book (one merely lists all the outrageous blunders the writer has made), but it's much more difficult to explain why one liked a book. This is especially true of mystery stories, where one must reveal enough of the plot to make the book sound interesting without blowing the plot wide open. I enjoyed Spider Play; it's exactly what I've come to expect from this author, a good entertaining read. Enough said. Now if I can only convince Killough to write that sequel to The Monitors, the Miners and the Shree....



## NERILKA'S STORY

by Anne McCaffrey  
Del Rey, 1986, \$3.95

Ah, good ol' Anne McCaffrey: no one punches our buttins any better. She has this kind of book down to a fine art. The hero/heroine is young, above-average bright and/or talented, but not so unhumanly perfect that the reader can't identify. The villain/villainess is usually older, in a position of authority, and prone to abuse that authority. A little injustice, a little justifiable youthful rebellion; some exciting adventures, a whiff of romance, a happy ending. Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, the Wizard of Oz. McCaffrey has this basic plot down cold, as indeed she ought to, having used it in Restoree and Crystal Singer and Dragonflight and Dragonsong ....

This short novel is a companion piece to 1983's Moreta: Dragonlady of Pern, based on a minor character therein. Nerilka is the eldest daughter of Lord Tolocamp of Fort Hold. When the great plague begins to sweep across Pern (evidently influenza or something of the sort; in our hi-tech medical age we tend to overlook that as recently as the beginning of the Twentieth Century thousands died in the epidemics of influenza and diphtheria), Lord Tolocamp abandons his wife and other daughters to die a Ruatha; breaks quarantine by returning to Fort; Hastily removes his mistress into his wife's place; and flatly refuses to help anyone. Not surprisingly, Nerilka soon decides she Can't Stand This Any Longer, grabs her clothes and a load of medical herbs, and cuts out to become Rill, the wandering healer, on her way to Ruatha. The remainder of the story should not be too difficult for anyone to anticipate who has read Moreta; but the author writes and plots so securely that the book is still appealing to read.

One has the impression that McCaffrey could bat out this sort of thing in her sleep. In fact... Well, leave us not to pick nits, despite the fact that at the beginning of chapter 3 the character specifically dresses in "tunic and trousers," and less than four pages later has to "pick up her skirts" to run. It must have been a long tunic. An awfully long tunic. If I found an amateur writer doing this in a workshop I'd jump all over it. Since we all know McCaffrey is an excellent polished professional, I guess we can forgive her one little mis-cue. I don't wish to seem too harsh on a book which, as usual with this author, I found eminently readable. After all, knowing what's marketable is no vice; and consistently delivering solid, reliable, entertaining reading is no small virtue.



## ROCKET TO LIMBO

by Alan E. Nourse  
Ace, 1986 (c1957), \$2.95

## STAR SURGEON

by Alan E. Nourse  
Ace, 1986 (c1959), \$2.95

Dr. Alan E. Nourse was a popular writer of so-called "juvenile" science fiction novels in the 1950s before drifting away from the field to devote more time to his family and his medical career. (He also produced some good short fiction, notably the superb proto-psychedelic "Nightmare Brother.") It is gratifying to see back in print some of the books which first interested me in the field, lo these many years ago.

In the prolog to Rocket to Limbo, a NAFAL starship is launched in the year 2008, setting out on the fatal Long Passage. The book itself begins some three centuries later when an FTL drive has been invented and new worlds are being opened up to colonization. Lars Heldriggson, a Danish Greenlander fresh out of the Colonial Service Academy, reports for his first star cruise. It's supposed to be a milk run to the Vega III colony (yeah, yeah, blue-white giants aren't likely to have habitable planets -- don't be picky), but turns out to be a top-secret mission to investigate a mysterious system where a Service ship has disappeared. There's trouble among the crew who fear a suicide mission, and a series of startling discoveries at the end when it's left to Lars and his arch-rival Peter Brigham to solve the mystery and try for an incredible breakthrough.

In Star Surgeon, the Human race's cultural achievements are judged to be marginal, our technology primitive, and our communications hopeless. The one skill Earth has to offer the powerful Galactic Confederation is our knowledge of the life sciences; and so Earthmen become the doctors of the universe. Thousands of small ships roam the galaxy, staffed by trios of young physicians -- a diagnostician, an internal medicine specialist, a surgeon -- treating routine ills of many races and referring problem cases to Hospital Earth, which is run by a medical hierarchy inevitably headed by the final medical authority, the pathologists. Everything is hunky-dory until Dal Timgar, a native of another planet, upsets the applecart by his determination to be a Star Surgeon. Enemies in high places see Earth losing its monopoly on its only marketable commodity. Galacto-medical adventure follows until Dal and his teammates face an epidemic on an uncharted world, and a final showdown with the high-ranking pathologist who is Dal's greatest enemy.



Honesty compels one to say that neither of these are great books. Among other shortcomings there are no female characters at all in Star Surgeon (well, I guess that's how it was in medical school in the 1950s), and only token female presence in Rocket to Limbo. However, both of them are solid, entertaining reads within the tradition of "juvenile" SF. I liked them a lot back when I was a teenager, and I still go back and reread them occasionally. It's good to see them back on the general market again. If you know a young reader who's into SF, you could do worse than to show him these. Maybe soon they'll reissue Raiders from the Rings, my all-time favorite Nourse book.

#### THE TACHYON WEB

by Christopher Pike  
Bantam/Spectra, 1986, \$2.75

##### NOTE: Spoiler alert!

Ho hum, another routine mediocre juvenile aimed to the literate twelve year old, a vanishingly small market, but then that's not my problem, is it? Earth and its few colonies are surrounded by the Tachyon Web, a vast network of automated "hyperspatially-connected" satellites. The authorities (inevitably, "The Patrol") don't permit civilizations outside the Web, for reasons which have never been explained to the civilian population. Eric, a routine teenager who is pissed off over being rejected by the Patrol Academy, leaps at the opportunity to make a clandestine trip in his friend's uncle's starship. The remainder of the characters are lifted straight out of the standard-issue box of teen characters (if this were a

movie, John Hughes should make it): Strem the handsome-leader type, Sammy the computer-wizard geek, Cleo the revivalist-punk-rocker, and Jeanie the cheerleader. (After being specifically described in the book as a brunette, she appears on the cover as a blonde. Well, I guess we can't blame the author for that.)

The five kids and their borrowed starship manage to bluff their way out of the Solar System and, taking advantage of a remarkably convenient nova, escape the Web. Outside, they have to cope with some sort of ruptured coolant line on the ship, which will blow them all to smithereens if not fixed within x number of hours (almost to the split second, apparently); but this problem is as nothing when they discover the Great Secret which the adults have been hiding. Shall I tell you? (Yes, yes, tell us!) Okay, it's an Alien Fleet. Well, they're sort of aliens, you know? I mean, like, they have green eyes and white hair (or was it the other way around), but the girls are real cute, see....

"Don't be cruel," Elvis said. In fairness, Pike (yeah, okay, it might really be his name -- you do remember who commanded the Enterprise before Kirk, don't ya?) is an adequate writer, though it doesn't appear he knows much about either science or science fiction. If I were trying to hook a teenager on SF, I can think of a lot of books I'd recommend sooner; Heinlein and Andre Norton and Alan Nourse, for openers. However, while reading this book hasn't much to offer to the adult reader, it's adequate for its purpose of a few hours of light reading for twelve year olds. Better they should read this than sit in front of the goggle box watching "Transformers" (whatever that is).

## Book Reviews by Dean R. Lambe

#### THE LEGACY OF HEOROT

by Larry Niven, Jerry Pournelle, and Steven Barnes

Simon & Schuster, 1987, \$17.95

When experienced collaborators collaborate, when dynamic duos become a trio, is the sum greater than its parts? In this case, yes, for Niven, Pournelle, and Barnes offer a lively and literate work beyond their individualistic efforts.

A seemingly straightforward adventure tale, Heorot quickly transcends the 22nd Century "first contact, first colony" plot, and aims for depth of characterization and thematic structure usually associated with "mainstream." No doubt, the lack of a genre label is more than a marketing ploy.

On Tau Ceti IV, planet Avelon, Camelot Island, Man's first extrasolar colony, all seems well for the emerging pioneers who have survived cryogenic hibernation aboard the National Geographic Society's starship. Yet Colonel Cadmann Weyland, late of the U.N. Peacekeeping Force (and not a little bit Pournelle mercenary) remains uneasy about their apparent paradise, a fear not

shared by Camelot administrator, Zack Moscovitz, or by Sylvia Faulkner, Weyland's unrequited love. Then the colony's precious livestock begin to disappear, and all pretense of "happier ever aftering" in Camelot vanishes with the first deadly attack by a "grendel." With introduction of the vicious aquatic predator, Weyland's military skills suddenly become vital, but the colony's shock and despair at loss of their colleagues forces the Colonel to seek his own refuge and his own solution. The colony's few bio-medical experts are faced with their own challenges as the puzzle, the terrible mystery of grendel behavioral ecology threatens extinction for the feeble human toehold on Avelon. While the survivors counterattack, their victory is truly Cadmean as many rise up from the slain dragon, and all are torn by self-doubt in their worry that "hibernation instability" has stripped them of vital cerebral abilities.

Heorot works on many levels--in part because Niven and Pournelle finally have a believable alien, modeled after an African clawed frog. That Colonel Weyland is the lonely warrior, the Bee-wolf of ancient legend, is but one reason to pass this novel

on to your "sci-fi is kid stuff" friends. Even rabid environmentalists should benefit from this story's wisdom. As for what particular spice Barnes adds to the Larry & Jerry best-seller stew, who knows? Is it mere coincidence that the female characters are so well drawn? Whatever their special synergy, let's hope these three get together again soon.

#### EMPERY

by Michael P. Kube-McDowell  
Berkley, 1987, \$3.50

Is a "space opera" with memorable characters, a span of centuries, and a scope requiring three novels still, at heart, escapist action-adventure? Perhaps so, and if true, so what? With the end of Kube-McDowell's trilogy, Book Three of the Trigon Disunity, the reader receives far more than the grandiloquent battle of space Juggernauts depicted on the cover--in fact, most of the "action" is quite cerebral.

Almost 700 years after an isolationist Earth first discovered that humans existed on other worlds in the galaxy, had indeed been extraterrestrial colonizers over 60,000 years in Earth's past, USS Defense Director Harmack Wells plots revenge against the Sterilizers. A half century after Merritt Thackery revealed the true history of the human race, and the shocking nature of the enemy in the Mizar region of Ursa Major that almost extinguished mankind in the forgotten past, Wells and his offensive Triads of planet-killers is ready to destroy the ancient foe. But Chancellor Erickson, head of the Unified Space Service Steering Committee, the de facto interstellar ruler, opposes the Triads. Wells schemes to have Erickson replaced with Janell Sujata, the newest Committee member, but upon taking office, Sujata proves to have a mind and a mission of her own. Wells' drive to attack the Mizari Sterilizers leads him to the very frontier of battle, only to have his plans muddled by the reappearance of Merritt Thackery himself. Then Chancellor Sujata breaks all precedent, and plays a desperate trans-light hopscotch to argue Wells from a military course that may well mean the end of an entire species--and the odds are that species is Man.

Empery answers all the questions raised by the first two novels, and adds well-drawn characters and meaningful philosophical discussion as well. If revelation of the Trigon Disunity seemed a long time coming (and rather trivial in the context of the yin-yang of human nature the author portrays), well, nobody promised you a Lucas/Spielberg zap-whammer. There's a writer at work here, not just a string of special effects.

#### THE NET

by Loren J. MacGregor  
Ace, 1987, \$2.95

We mourn the recent passing of Terry Carr, the talented editor who brought us so many extraordinary first novels. MacGregor

is one of the last new discoveries Carr fostered with the Ace Specials, but The Net alone does not establish MacGregor's career.

A simple story of thief's gambit and revenge, The Net pits interstellar trade magnate and starship captain Jason Horiuchi, and her rather odd melange of crewmates, against Alecko Papandreou of the colony world, New Crete. Alecko makes a straightforward wager: if Jason can successfully steal a huge ruby from his father's well-guarded museum, the Papandreou empire will back away from all competition with Horiuchi, Pty. If Jason is caught, on the other hand, she must surrender an equal degree of business advantage. Despite misgivings of her crew and the contacts she has on New Crete, Jason agrees, only to find that Alecko lies and cheats even more than she. With one crewman dead and three others seriously maimed, Captain Horiuchi vows death for Alecko--but she still wants the ruby.

Unlike other Carr proteges who quickly rose to SF stardom, MacGregor's first effort lacks scope and credibility. The net of the title is typical post-cyberpunk brain/computer interface, and while he handles the psychophysical concepts better than most, Horiuchi's "unique discovery" seems as trivial and as dubious as do the novel's talking business cards (the better to network you with?). While writing what you know is good advice, the author's status as a Greek scholar provides a futuristic background that seems strained. The gender role of most of the characters is oddly in conflict with their gender identity. Yet for all its beginner's faults, The Net shows promise, and marks MacGregor as one to watch.

#### THE SMOKE RING

by Larry Niven  
Del Rey/Ballantine, 1987, \$16.95

Larry has probably done more interesting things with neutron stars than all of academic astronomy combined. A couple years back, with The Integral Trees, he created an entire civilization--albeit primitive--in a gas torus around a neutron star. This novel continues the story of that "smoke ring" torus, where descendants of a collectivized Earth's seeder ramship live in a variety of zilch-gee habitats within the galaxy's most interesting doughnut.

Most of the action this time concerns the small population of Citizens Tree, about 15 years after the adults escaped from other troubled habitats (slavery or integral tree breakup). Jeffer and Lawri, the scientists of Citizens Tree, and pilots of the ramship's Cargo and Repair Module (CARM), maintain their huge tree home within the dynamic gravitational and atmospheric system of the Smoke Ring. Their simple existence is soon disturbed, however, when five refugees, surviving members of the tree logging Serjent family, escape their burning log for Citizens Tree. The Serjents tell the Citizens of true civilization, as it exists in The Clump, the Smoke Ring's L-4 collection of mass. Jeffer secretly plots to visit The Clump, with prompting via the CARM's radio

from Kendy, the human personality in a computer aboard the ancient ramship Discipline. Along with Booce Serjent, Citizens Tree Chairman Clave, and several others, Jeffer leaves his wife Lawri and his fellow Citizens without the vital CARM. Young Rather, a "dwarf" by low-gee bone structure standards, is included on the adventure because he alone can fit inside the CARM's only vacuum suit. Once at The Clump, the travelers learn of their past, and even computer/Kendy comes to appreciate the future of this unique human settlement.

As in the previous novel, The Smoke Ring presents the glories of bizarre yet believable astrophysics and ecology in true sensawunda detail. Although the characters and their motivations are well drawn and interesting, they still pale in comparison to the incredible environmental background that Larry has created for them. Methinks this wonderfully rich "world" has more tales to tell. Do read this one, even if it may be the middle of a trilogy.

#### TOOLMAKER KOAN

by John McLoughlin  
Baen Books, 1987, \$16.95

In reviewing a first novel, one tries to be generous and encouraging. Fortunately, Toolmaker Koan is McLoughlin's second novel, so I don't mind saying that it's a mess.

After an overly-long opening section of comic-book Commies and cartoon Capitalists in the two remaining powers in this 21st Century world on the brink of Armageddon, the story settles down with four characters. The traditional "boy" and "girl," along with their respective mission commanders, are the only survivors of American and Soviet deep-space missions out past Uranus. On orders from their paranoid leaders on Earth, the two spaceships destroy each other, lest their enemies gain contact with the Third Party, a mysterious silvery egg. However, Dr. Jennifer Dawson and her Commander Benai of the African Soviet sphere, and Pike Muir and his Colonel Corson of the Americas, are rescued by the Egg, who calls itself Charon, because this alien machine intelligence also happens to be Pluto's moon. Charon transports the four to Hwiliria, a 400 km long space habitat that was built eons ago by the whileelin, a giant bird-like species. Inside the huge vessel, Charon explains the Pleistocene environment to the humans and tells them his toolmaker koan, the riddle of cultural suicide. The alien entity claims that his travels throughout the galaxy have proven that the rise of toolmaking intelligence in a species always, inevitably leads to species extinction through warfare. Charon has saved members of the whileelin, through its ability to regenerate life from raw matter, and proposes to do the same for the few thousand humans in space. Earth, now at the brink of the final nuclear madness, is written off.

Only when McLoughlin details the evolution and behavior of the "alien" birds does this novel have any life. While tales of

extra-terrestrial redeemers are very "in" this year, this one simply lacks originality and characterization. Why it was published in hardback is the greatest mystery.

#### THE FALL OF THE REPUBLIC

by Crawford Kilian  
Del Rey, 1987, \$3.50

Almost ten years ago, Kilian's first SF novel, The Empire of Time appeared. Now, that story becomes part of a series, to which this "Novel of the Chronoplane Wars" is the prequel.

Set at the very end of the 20th Century, in a thoroughly unpleasant food- and liberty-hungry U.S., The Fall of the Republic is just that, the end of America as we know it. Two men are largely responsible for the end of nationalism on Earth and the birth of the new International Federation. Two SF gimmicks underlie the oft-violent transition: Trainables and the I-Screen. Jerry Pierce is the T-Colonel in charge of Idaho, one of the young Trainables who carries the genes that permit very rapid data input and processing. Pierce helps the Army hold the lid on a sullen population, as the century ends with a whimper under the Civil Emergency Administration, a corrupt committee that has turned Congress and the President into rubber stamps. Eric Wigner is a Trainable who works for the CIA in New York. When Wigner discovers that Pierce takes a direct and pragmatic approach to capital punishment, he enlists Pierce in his own private project. Then, the I-Screen is discovered, and alternate worlds become available. Most of these "chronoplanes" are at various points in Earth's past, but a few are opened to the future wherein an apparent alien attack has stripped the world of its atmosphere. Wigner continues to scheme, despite the efforts of his unTrainable boss, Jonathan Clement, and soon Pierce finds himself in that frighteningly dead future world, his sanity and his very life at risk.

While the funny physics of an I-Screen could happen anytime, I suppose, the Trainables gimmick seems unlikely and certainly not a mere ten years away. Essentially, Kilian has stretched credulity to back and fill for future novels in this series. While adequate for a rainy afternoon, this is not his best work.

#### BUDSPY

by David Dvorkin  
Franklin Watts, 1987, \$17.95

Normally I shun novels with swastikas on their covers faster than I avoid vertically-banded snakes. Thus was I pleasantly surprised to be hooked, and actually intrigued by Dvorkin's alternate world story. Even though the "what if the Nazis won" pasture has been plowed many times, BUDSPY offers a rather fresh--if chilling--version.

Chic Western is a "budman," a secret employee of the U.S. Ombudsman Commission, a combination of FBI and KGB in a fascist 1988

America. Western's America may be at peace, but scarcely has plenty, in the face of a Europe dominated by the Third Reich. Normally, Western dons a role and ferrets out corruption in federal agencies--for which the guilty are "disappeared." When the German Gesipo, successor to the Gestapo, insists that secret information is being leaked to the Russians from the U.S. Embassy in Berlin, however, Western is ordered to assume the persona of Jesse Bourne, Foreign Service flunky. Once in Berlin, and in contact with libertine Gesipo agents HorstDieter Gettner and Krista Graefenberg, Western begins to wonder whether his Jewish ancestry really does matter to his Bourne identity with these "new" Germans. He also begins to doubt whether he can survive the sexual Olympics of the hungry Krista. Between bouts in the sack and beerhall crawls with the Germans, he appears to fall in love with Judy Melanious, an embassy visa section employee. Since "budmen don't fall in love," he manages to do his duty when it becomes apparent that Judy is a part of the anti-Nazi movement that favors the Soviets in the interminable war on the Eastern Front.

Aspects of this work will remind the reader of Orwell's 1984, so vivid and sinister is this tale of a National Socialism that continues 45 years after Hitler's death. Yet, as much as I recommend it, I must caution about the final chapters that disappoint--almost as if a publisher had added them.

#### TIME PRESSURE

by Spider Robinson  
Ace, 1987, 217 pp., \$16.95

Not a few of us out here wonder whether Spider Robinson's writing will ever grow up. For one whose words often lilt about the page with brutal honesty that makes us laugh, with savage joy that makes us cry, Robinson's endless safari for the perfect pun seems childish. At best, his constant reverence for Robert A. Heinlein remains fixated adolescence in works that ought to soar beyond the Master's mold. Thus, with this prequel to his Mindkiller, we're treated to more of "the good times are a comin'" in the glorious past Age of Aquarius, a pale replay of Stranger in a Strange Land, and we're getting a little too cranky to grok.

A seemingly semi-autobiographical tale, Time Pressure gives us a few months in 1973 in the life of an American draft dodger and his fellow Hippies in the chill north woods of Nova Scotia. Sam Meade, a thoroughgoing loner with more love for his guitar than for fellow humans, suffers more than cabin fever when Rachel pops out of the future into his birch tree. Once Sam and Rachel recover, Snaker O'Malley, his wife, Ruby, and a whole host of in-touch-with-the-universe souls are stirred into the plot. Predictable enlightenment, deeply felt music, and sexual antics occupy the next hundred pages or so, then the dark secret fears of Sam collide with the future funnies of Rachel, and Sam dies. Robinson, of course, is lying about that. Sam lives again. More predictable things happen. Satori. Sigh.

Parts of this novel are excellent; most of it is interesting; all of it is sincere. It still remains juvenile. While blessedly not cyberpunk, Robinson's cyberhippie world --for all its lack of violence and hopeful aspirations--remains as neurologically nonsensical. I say this three times for truth: We are not going to plug our brains into computers, in this or any other fiction soon. Read this one for its wisdom about wood stoves. Termites have stripped the rest.

#### INTERVENTION

by Julian May  
Houghton Mifflin, 1987, \$18.95

A distinction between category fiction and mainstream may be noted when one character asks another about a distant bird call and is answered with the entire evolutionary history of the loon. Frankly, I'm sick of fantasy writers trying to "pass" as mainstream--especially when publishers continue to name such products science fiction. And what would May have wrought here, had she succeeded in amusing the New York daisy chain of critics? A MOTEL NEW HAMPSHIRE mayhap? A MOBY CHIC?

This "I alone am escaped to tell thee" tale chronicles the first couple of centuries in the life of Rogatien Remillard, of the New Hampshire Canuck Remillards, and his less than immortal relatives. The odd Scot, Cossack, and Chicago crook dots the ponderous page, as well, but the sprinkled erudition is mainly langue d'oil as she is spoke in the northwoods, save for the occasional five-letter word that's more a matter of how scholars think the common folk swear. Tant pis!

Uncle Rogi's merrie clan is metapsychic, you see, and just to make sure that nephew Denis' friends and lovers don't blow Earth's chance to enter the Galactic Milieu of ESP peace and goodwill, Rogi has the grand-pere of all ETs on his shoulder to help the sauvages nobles along, n'est pas? Quel pet! Trouble is, while all these braves hommes are turning the American and Russian nuclear arsenals into museum pieces (while Israel turns radioactive, eh bien, soit), our hero doesn't believe any of this stuff that Shirley McLaines are made of. Pas du tout! On page 498, if you've remained awake that far, the French oncle tells us that: "Extra-terrestrial redeemers are an old fashioned aberration to psychiatrists. . . . It's the perennial human desire for a fairy godmother or a deus ex machina to save us from our mortal folly--and I don't believe in it." Exactement, Uncle Rogi, right on, bro'. I, too, don't believe this pretentious twaddle, this mumbo of Jung, this jumbo of Teilhard de Chardin. And I actually own an original deck of Zener cards; I wonder whether May is just shuffling wavy lines? I wonder, also, if she wished to appear racist with the implication that Jews and some other ethnic groups just don't have the brains for intra-galactic brotherhood?

For all the celebration of the Dartmouth campus in this seemingly psychological tome, Burrhus Frederic Skinner should make suit

from Harvard for May's gross misuse of "operant conditioning." But I fear that even attack by Boston Brahmin won't inhibit this metapsychic jaeger, now that the tiger is loose, and many more volumes of such house will follow. People I respect liked Inter-vention. Perhaps you will too. I can't imagine why.

**CODE BLUE - EMERGENCY**

by James White  
Del Rey, 1987, \$2.95

For two decades James White has escaped Northern Ireland for Sector General Hospital, an incredible multi-species bit of galactic Medicare (or perhaps, National Health) in his fertile imagination. In the past, Earth-human characters have played a major role in these medical problem-solving stories, but White's latest novel introduces a new lead character and several new alien lifeforms.

Cha Thrat, a multi-armed biped from the newly discovered planet Sommaradva, is a warrior-surgeon in his semi-feudal society. When he heals an injured alien of a kind he's never seen before, that patient, who just happens to be Major Chiang of the Monitor Corps, insists that Cha Thrat come to Sector General for further training. Once on board the massive artificial satellite hospital, Cha Thrat's cultural background and medical ethics come into immediate conflict with hospital policy. A lowly Trainee, he quickly runs afoul of his superiors, and actually implies that Chief Psychologist O'Mara is shirking his duty with a whale of a patient.

More disasters follow, and he is finally assigned to the Maintenance staff, well behind the scenes of medical treatment. Unfortunately, this "last resort" duty brings him aboard ambulance ship Rhabwar just as an emergency call from Diagnostician Conway's pregnant Gogleskan telepathic friend comes in. Cha Thrat really makes mental hash of that problem, only to encounter an even more bizarre situation on Rhabwar's return trip.

All of Sector General's characters and exotic environments are back again for White's fans, but as background this time.

The alien focus adds refreshingly new spice. This one's well worth your time.

**DOWN ON THE FARM**

by John W. Stchur  
St. Martin's, 1987, \$15.95

Two hardcover first novels came my way from St. Martin's Press last week. One, Mercedes Nights by Michael D. Weaver, was heavily hyped, pointedly compared to the late Philip K. Dick -- and unreadable. The other, the simple tale of a Michigan farm family and their neighbors in the grip of an evil horror from beyond the stars, gained my respect and merits your attention.

Ignore the cover blurbs on this one; it really is science fiction; the alien entity doesn't "suck souls," and you won't be able to put it down.

As Casey Dubois ends the last day of the school term and looks forward to a summer of farming on the lands first claimed from Michigan forest by his grandfather, he finds a dead cat near the old barn. Before he can dispose of the flattened body, a favorite of his two children, Dubois is sidetracked by unusually lustful attentions of his wife, Anny. Once he finally does find time to bury the corpse, he's startled to find most of the flesh gone via some obscene pink root-like protuberance from the ground. It seems that the alien presence under the concrete floor of Grandfather's barn is awakening, metamorphosing, after its long self-exile from those entities who search the galaxy for such evil. Blood lust is just one of the telepathic emanations from this horror, which grows a wormlike extension to aid in its psychic domination of the neighborhood. While the Dubois' marriage is threatened by the powerful, buried mind, teenagers Chris and Colleen pay an even higher price for a literal roll in the hay. As Casey comes to recognize the true nature of the threat below his barn, the reader is caught in a page-turner for a long night in a brightly lighted room.

While I might normally despair at a first novel with characters named Chris, Colleen, Casey, Downy, Denton, Dubois, such novice failings are easily forgiven. Watch for more by this unique name.

## Book Reviews by *Maia*

**TWEEDLOOP**

by Stanley Schmidt  
TOR, 1986, \$8.95

I needed this book. It's been a long time since I read a story about genuinely decent people doing the right thing.

NASA engineer Bill Nordstrom is backpacking in Alaska, trying to reconcile himself to the death of his wife and son in a fire, when he meets a squirrel that isn't a squirrel. The creature, whom Bill dubs "Tweedloop" after the first "word" he hears it speak, convinces Bill of its extraterrestri-

al origins and gains Bill's determination to help. On his way out of the wilderness, Bill reluctantly enlists the aid of lawyer Danni O'Millian and her 9-year-old daughter Laurie.

The government gets involved, of course, and of course behaves a little less than nobly. The President, who otherwise seems to be a good sort, decides to hold Tweedloop hostage until its people agree to "reward" the Earth with advanced technology. Bill, Danni, and Laurie are appalled. Their struggle first to keep Tweedloop healthy and secure, and then to reunite it with its

people, is ultimately successful though not without its price.

The high-handed and selfish behavior of the government is probably quite realistic, and without it there wouldn't have been much of a story. I was a little disappointed, though. A little idealism and virtue from at least one official would have been refreshing. BUT overall, the book is a pleasant study of the good side of human nature.

I just wish the cover didn't remind me so much of Close Encounters or E.T. It's not particularly accurate, and there are better scenes from the book that could have been used. Besides, I don't think Danni wore a skirt anywhere in the book.

#### IMAGINATION:

The Art & Technique of David A. Cherry  
by David A. Cherry  
1987, Donning, \$12.95

This gorgeous book is a glimpse into David Cherry's hard work and sheer talent. It reproduces a variety of his paintings: book covers, astronomical art, portraits, and pieces of the artist's imagination.

He tells us why and how he produced each piece. The explanations include both technical information and insights into the "personal vision" artists bring to their work. Cherry's vision, judging from these paintings, includes humor, insight, and an appreciation of beautiful things. We're all lucky he shares it with us.

LIVING IN ETHER  
by Patricia Geary  
1987, Bantam, \$3.50

Does Living in Ether live up to the hype that Bantam has been generating for it?

That depends on your literary tastes.

Stylistically it is delightful. Geary contrasts the unnerving and potentially dangerous events in Deirdre Gage's life with a blithely spirited narrative. Deirdre takes the visitations of her dead brother, a mysterious and possibly threatening client, and her own compulsive spending equally in stride. She is manipulated by her own psychic gifts and her memories of her eccentric mother, but seemingly unfazed by the oddities of her life.

Geary surrounds her characters and the readers with sensual images --the smell of tea, bright kitchen colors, desert heat, the physical exertions of dance studio and health spa. The book excels in this contrast between the "ethereal" world that Deirdre believes controls her life, and the physical world which she so clearly appreciates.

The narrative bounces along with an odd detachment. At every turn what Deirdre believes or expects goes awry. The story ends without offering answers to the questions raised, or resolutions for the situations in which Deirdre has become entangled.

Normally I resent books where style replaces substance. Living in Ether, however, is so stylish, indeed so charming, that I can forgive it its modern pretensions. Try it, for love of the English language.

THE CURSE OF SAGAMORE  
by Kara Dalkey  
1986, Ace, \$2.95

A refreshing trend in fantasy is more and more evident: humor. Not cuteness, or whimsy, or mere one-liners; but wry points of view and ironic situations and the occasional touch of surreality.

The Curse of Sagamore combines all of these with a deft style and engaging characters. I particularly enjoyed the wizard Dolus with his gift for sonorously meaningless pronouncements; and Horaphthia, a wizard of an aunt who takes no nonsense from anyone.

The curse's history suggests the tone of the book. An ancient king despaired of all his "rightful" heirs and so left the kingdom to his court jester. The jester's descendants are expected to live up to his reputation, which means the royal family is less interested in politics than in practical jokes.

It's not all fun and games. There's a dangerously magical sword, a nasty cult, and a revenge plot that goes back generations. There's also a single-minded dragon, a warrior whose nobility just avoids parody, and an amnesiac talking sparrow.

Kara gives an entertaining originality to her assortment of not-always-familiar fantasy novel plot twists and characters. Sagamore, alas, is out of print, so it may be difficult to find copies. Still, look forward to her next novel.

1987 ANNUAL WORLD'S BEST SF  
by Donald A. Wollheim, ed.  
1987, DAW, SFBC

Donald Wollheim's 1987 Annual World's Best SF represents not just a wide range of themes and styles, but the epitome of each writer.

Roger Zelazny's PERMAFROST covers several of his common themes: "human" computers, conflict between godlike powers, death and rebirth. PRETTY BOY CROSSOVER by Pat Cadigan shows us that "cyberpunk" can be eloquent as well as disturbing. Lucius Shepard returns to the familiar territory of war-torn Central America in R&R.

Suzette Haden Elgin's LO, HOW AN OAK E'ER BLOOMING is anti-male and mordantly funny. Tanith Lee's INTO GOLD is redolent with poetry and esoteric dangers.

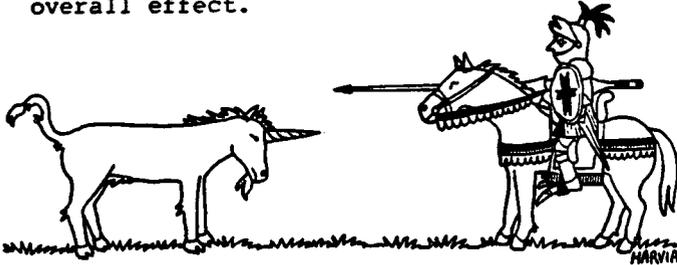
Damon Knight's STRANGERS ON PARADISE is perhaps the most "traditional," not using any of the latest pet topics or stylistic gimmicks. Instead, he claims our attention for the moral issues involved in a scholar's disturbing discovery in a self-righteously "pure" society.

Only Robert Silverberg goes against recent type; instead of a Hero from Hell or a mythic theme, in AGAINST BABYLON he depicts the collapse of a near-future man's personal world.

Howard Waldrop describes an alternate history, or perhaps a slice of the future, without making a fuss about the differences. THE LIONS ARE ASLEEP TONIGHT focuses on a young would-be playwright, only indirectly showing us his world.

The writers are all well-known, except for Jerry Meredith & D. E. Smirl from Writers of the Future Volume II, and newcomer Doris Egan. Meredith and Smirl put a twist on the ideas of cyborgs and space travel, in DREAM IN A BOTTLE. Egan provides my personal favorite, TIMERIDERS, as brash and challenging as its heroine.

This collection is certainly a representative overview of the latest and greatest in science fiction. Even if we dispute individual choices, we can appreciate the overall effect.



**THE PIG, THE PRINCE & THE UNICORN**  
by Karen A. Brush  
1987, Avon, \$2.95

In The Pig, the Prince, & the Unicorn, Karen Brush uses the familiar fantasy plot of Small, Intrepid Band Against the Ultimate Evil. For the usual characters, she substitutes a variety of animals; her "Frodo Baggins" is a pig. A young, very cute pig. The cover admits as much: "In The War Against Chaos, It's the Good, The Bad, and The Adorable."

The effect is not satirical, but saccharine. The Pig, Etc., might be more successful as a children's book. Or a Disney movie. It has a certain charm, but it doesn't do anything really original, and I don't know if most adults could take this much cuteness.

**THE THIEF OF BAGDAD**  
by Achmed Abdullah  
1987, The Donning Company, \$12.95

The Thief of Bagdad is a neglected classic, revived by Donning and illustrated (not very profusely) by P. Craig Russell.

The introduction describes it as "probably one of the first movie novelizations ever," based on Douglas Fairbanks' silent

film. Never mind that. Whatever its inspiration, it's an enchanting, engrossing story, poetic and rollicking at once, romantic and satiric in equal measures. It deserves to be read aloud for the music of its language. The price is a bit higher than most people would think to pay for a paperback, even an oversize (8-1/2 x 11, 120 pages), but this book will give you full value.

**AEGYPT**  
by John Crowley  
1987, Bantam, \$17.95

Aegypt is exquisitely poetic. Alas, that's about all it is.

I could be intrigued by the book's premise that the world has "two histories," equally real: fact and myth. I was intrigued by the characters' descent into the fantastic world described by the romantic historian Fellowes Kraft, and his depictions of such distant figures as Giordano Bruno and John Dee.

Unfortunately, to pursue these aspects of the book I had to slog through the mundane travails of people whose lives are a mess through no one's fault but their own. I wanted to shout, "Stop whining and do something about it!" at least every tenth page.

If you can read a book simply for the artful arrangement of its words, by all means read this book. If you like to learn, eventually, why all these things are happening, pass over Aegypt.

**THE FOLK OF THE AIR**  
by Peter S. Beagle  
1987, Del Rey, \$16.95

I enjoyed this book. Peter Beagle can make the most ordinary event or person seem magical, the eeriest event seem normal.

He takes his time working up to the crux of the story, but no matter. There's a slow pleasure in discovering the place, the characters, the feel of the book. [Some readers of this fanzine will be amused (or outraged) by Beagle's portrayal of "The League for Archaic Pleasures."] The buildup is steady and strong to a tempest of magic and mixed passions.

I only hope we don't have to wait another decade for Beagle's next novel.

## Book Reviews by *Mike Resnick*

### KIRBY'S LAST CIRCUS

by Ross H. Spencer  
Donald L. Fine, 1987, \$?.??

Time for a sweeping statement: Ross Spencer is the funniest writer alive. (I know this because on occasion I am the second-funniest writer alive, but I've never come close to Spencer.)

Spencer found out early on that pure humor is not a viable commodity in the literary marketplace, so he began disguising his efforts as mystery stories. His first hero,

Chance Purdue, lasted through five novels from Avon -- The Dada Caper, The Reggis Arms Caper, The Stranger City Caper, The Abu Wahib Caper, and The Raddish River Caper -- and if you can find them in your secondhand paperback store, you're missing five evenings of belly-laughs if you don't buy them.

After Avon dropped the Purdue books, Spencer found himself in a bit of a literary strait-jacket, as his next few publishers, all prestigious hardcover house, demanded more mystery and less humor, but in Donald Fine he's finally got himself a publisher who is willing to allow him to do what he

does best, and Kirby's Last Circus is his funniest book since The Stranger City Caper.

What's it about? Spencer's usual dumber-than-dumb detective hero, Birch Kirby, possessed of an IQ that would surely freeze water, is sent out on a mission that's too tough for the CIA, the FBI, and the combined state and local law enforcement agencies, and without ever quite realizing what he's up against or how he has triumphed, he manages to do the job in typical Spencer fashion. This particular job requires him to catch for the worst minor league team in history, get stepped on by an elephant, bed the CIA's most brilliant and beautiful operative, and ultimately stop the KGB from taking over the world. Considering that Kirby can't even spell KGB, this is no small accomplishment.

Highly recommended.

#### WHEN GRAVITY FAILS

by George Alec Effinger  
Arbor House, 1987, \$16.95

No one admires George Alec Effinger's short fiction more than I do. If there is a Maureen Birnbaum fan club, I am its most vociferous advocate. I await each new science fiction sports story with unbridled anticipation. I will cherish forever his tale of a one-legged horse that breaks down right after winning the Kentucky Derby.

I have been less elated with his novels. They've been good, workmanlike jobs, and Effinger at his worst is more accessible than 90% of the writers in the field, but up until now I have been convinced that he is at his best at shorter lengths.

So it is with some surprise and great pleasure that I tell you that, with the publication of When Gravity Fails, Effinger has not only produced the best science fiction novel of the year, but the best cyberpunk novel yet written. It is a work of sheer creative brilliance on every level, and if it doesn't make the Hugo and Nebula ballots, there obviously is not enough justice in the world to go around.

When Gravity Fails is also a hard-boiled mystery novel -- quite possibly the best mystery of the year as well. Effinger says it's his tribute to Raymond Chandler, though I find the voice to be more that of Dashell Hammett.

In this book Effinger, who himself is hardly a cyberpunk, seems to have studied the body of work that the cyberpunks have produced and decided to show them how to do it right. His prose is as accessible as ever, yet conveys the complex, unique flavor of his world at least as well as those cyberpunk writers who mistake impenetrable prose for literary craftsmanship.

Unlike Gibson, who writes sets most of his stories in a Japanese-dominated urban sprawl, Effinger has taken a good, hard look at the world, realized that there is very little likelihood of the existence of a Japanese under-class in the near future, and extrapolated an Islamic society existing on the underbelly of his future world. Unlike Cadigan, whose heroine is happy to try on

anyone's neuroses or insanity for size, Effinger's hero takes enormous pride in the fact that his mind is his own in a world where anyone can plug in to other personalities, and fights like hell to keep it that way. Unlike Sterling, who doesn't write about recognizable human beings very often, Effinger writes about nothing but recognizable people with understandable motives. Furthermore, unlike almost every established cyberpunk writer, Effinger gives you a protagonist that you can root for.

Effinger's Islamic quarter, the Budayeen, is brilliantly realized, his cyberpunk science has a somewhat closer relationship to reality than most examples, his characters are unique and memorable, his imagery is exceptional, his plot and motivations are properly complex, and his sense of pacing never fails.

This is the novel we've been waiting for him to write. Now he's done it, and I can only hope that the science fiction community will recognize the magnitude of his accomplishment.

#### THE JEHOVAH CONTRACT

by Victor Koman  
Franklin Watts, 1987, \$16.95

The plot of this novel, summarized in a single sentence, is perhaps the most audacious of the decade: an assassin is given the ultimate assignment: to kill God.

There is only one problem: having stated the plot -- and it's stated very early on -- there's not a hell of a lot left that the author can do with it.

How do you find God? Having found him, how do you kill Him? If He truly exists, WHY would you kill Him?

Koman has chosen to handle the story in the first person, affecting a hard-boiled style. Not impossible, but he is not yet the literary craftsman that, say, George Alec Effinger is, and a style that works to perfection in When Gravity Fails frequently seems strained and awkward here, as do a number of forced confrontations on the road to the ultimate hit.

Koman almost manages to pull it out in the last few chapters, a series of metaphysical discourses with a God that most of us would prefer not to worship, but it goes on too long, and this novel must ultimately be rated as a near-miss, though an incredibly ambitious one.

#### LOST IN TIME AND SPACE WITH LEFTY FEEP

by Robert Bloch  
Creatures at Large, 1987, \$12.95

If there is any set of stories in the history of science fiction that would qualify as Cult material, it would have to be Bob Bloch's delightful Lefty Feep series, which appeared in Ray Palmer's Amazing Stories magazine during the 1940s. For years people have been lamenting that they have never been collected, and for just as many years one specialty house after another has

announced plans to publish them, only to have the plans go awry.

Now, finally, a house named Creatures at Large has brought out the first of three Lefty Feep collections, and -- miracle of miracles! -- they're every bit as charming as we remembered them.

Subtlety was never a weapon in Bloch's arsenal when chronicling Lefty's adventures. This collection is a turkey shoot, science fiction as Damon Runyon would have written it, with puns that would have been beyond even Runyon's ability to create.

Here are such classics as "Time Wounds All Heels", "Son of a Witch", "Jerk the Giant Killer", "The Little Man Who Wasn't All There", "The Pied Piper Fights the Gestapo", "The Golden Opportunity of Lefty Feep", "Gather Round the Flowing Bowler", and my own personal favorite, "The Weird Doom of Floyd Scrilch". An added bonus is a brand-new story, written especially for this edition, appropriately entitled "A Snitch in Time".

If you remember the stories, I don't have to say anything further; if not, then treat yourself to Lost in Time and Space with Lefty Feep, settle down for an evening of chuckles, and try to imagine what John Campbell's reaction would have been if any of these had been submitted to him first.

#### MINDPLAYERS

by Pat Cadigan  
Bantam Books, 1987, \$3.50

Mindplayers is Pat Cadigan's first novel, and I'll give it this: it is an ambitious, continuously creative book that never condescends to its audience.

Cadigan's narrator, Deadpan Allie, is forced through circumstances to become a mindplayer, a futuristic shrink who literally gets into the minds of those people she's analyzing. There is a considerable amount of what I can only term "mindtalk", that stylistic device created by Alfred Bester in The Demolished Man and never really improved upon; there is an interesting future society in which neuroses are peddled, memories can be erased, personalities can be donned like suits, and even dead men's minds can be probed. There is a biotechnology that essentially changes humanity as we know it.

As I said, Mindplayers doesn't lack for creativity.

Which is not to say that it doesn't have some problems. Most first novels have difficulty with pacing; because Mindplayers incorporates some previously-published short



"I'M ARRESTING YOU FOR  
HAVING NO VISIBLE  
MEANS OF SUPPORT"

stories, it is a little more episodic than most, and some of the episodes, though never uninteresting, border upon the redundant. The prose is what I term Cyberpunk Dense: it's not difficult or opaque (as in, say, some of Samuel Delany's recent works), but it's nowhere near as accessible as, to take two wildly divergent examples, Leiber or Card. Skim and you're lost -- which leads me to the conclusion that, despite Rudy Rucker's and John Shirley's predictions that this is the writing of the future, a piece of prose can be TOO densely packed with information.

Still, there's a nice, mordant sense of humor at work here, and an enormous amount of creative energy. While this is no When Gravity Falls, I consider it a nice, promising first novel, not in the must-read category, but a challenging piece of work that won't make you feel you've wasted your time and money. If you can accept certain of the book's premises -- that people would actually pay money to experience someone else's fears and neuroses, that bad and painful experiences will be sought as vigorously as ecstatic and euphoric experiences -- and if you understand on the front end that this is not an effortless book to read, you may rank it even higher.

#### THORGAL 2 The Archers

by Jean Van Hamme & Grzegorz Rosinski  
Translated by Chris Tanz & Jean-Paul Bierny  
The Donning Company, 1987 (1985), \$6.95

I found the first graphic novel of Thor-gal uninteresting and so nearly gave this one a pass. I'm glad I didn't. It has a good story-line and attractive art. The idea of the archery contest is not new, but some of

## Tape & Book Reviews

by *Lan*

the events of the contest were certainly inventive. The Archers has won a couple of awards in Europe for the story and art. This is worth reading.

The story: Throgal's boat is wrecked by Tjall and then rescued by him. Since all his money went down with his boat, Throgal joins up with Tjall and his uncle Arghun, a weaponsmaker and journey to enter an archery contest hosted by the lord of Umbria. They aid one of Arghun's clients, Sigwald, in rescuing his companion Kriss (who is herself a master of the bow, and headed for the same competition) from rogues who have raped her (in both senses of the word). They all do well at the contest, but there are other people after Kriss, which makes things a bit more interesting for all involved.

## MECHTHINGS #1, 2, 3

by Brad W. Foster  
Renegade Press, 1987, \$2.00 each

Brad Foster, the 1987 Hugo winner for best fan artist, finally has a regular comic book. Set in the 41st Century, where so many things are done by mechanical things, problems happen. Things break down, and some robots go wild. Bertram Baum wants to be a writer, and so takes any job necessary to support himself while he pursues his career. His latest is as a live-in junkman, where he meets all sorts of cast-off mechanical contrivances whose main goal is the continue to exist. In the bowels of the junkyard Baum and his mechthing friends find a "funny-animal" character, a Moose, whose mechanical invention, a giant mouse, is programmed to destroy mankind. Through issues #2 and #3, the Mouse chases Baum and begins its rampage through the world but is finally stopped by Baum's mechthing friends.

The art is black and white, and a little cluttered, but it's that background that adds charm to the work. Brad fills the pages with little visual and verbal jokes which add to the fun of reading the story. I am reminded somewhat of the incidental cartoons added to Mad magazine, which made it so much fun to read.

This is not a comic book to be zipped through quickly. It is meant to be savored, and I recommend that you buy it, read it slowly, and note all the little background funny additions Brad has put in. Highly recommended.

**DUNCAN & MALLORY**  
The Bar-None Ranch

by Robert Asprin and Mel. White  
Starblaze Graphics, 1987, \$6.95

In this second episode of the adventures of Duncan and Mallory, the two gain possession of the Bar-None Ranch (through a card game, no less), a plot of desert ground on which are raised ... tarantulas. The tarantula-herders have not been paid for two years, but they are patient. Also mean. Nothing will set them off faster than someone spooking the tarantula herd.

Duncan and Mallory try to unload this losing investment, and set up a con for Humphrey, Sadie and Bilgewater, characters from the first book. Humphrey, whose job it is to get the capital with which he and his two cohorts could cash in on Duncan and Mallory's "hot deal", borrowed money from a loan shark, and the whole crew ends up being "leaned on" for payment. Meanwhile, all plans at making the tarantula ranch profitable fail. The solution is rather unique, though set up earlier in the book.

Mel. White's art adds much to Bob Asprin's storyline. She adds a nice touch in putting verbal and sight gags in the background, though not as many as Brad Foster does. The books was quite enjoyable, and I even recognized a few friends in the pages. I am already drooling for the next one.

## STILL RIVER

by Hal Clement  
DelRey, 1987, \$16.95

Hal Clement's Still River is a very good hard-science, intellectual puzzle. A group of students doing graduate work are sent as a team to explore a small planet whose atmosphere envelope is too large for its size. There is a lot of conversation, particularly about science, and preconceived notions among the aliens. When the Human, Molly, said that she was looking for ice and other solids, Charley, one of the aliens, whose mean body temperature is between 200-250 degrees Kelvin, said that they are the same thing to him. There is a lot of discussion along those lines, and about the discoveries that are made. It's a little slow in spots, but a refreshing change from all the fantasy that has been put out recently.

## THE PET

by Charles L. Grant  
TOR Horror, 1986, \$17.95

Donald Boyd is a teenager going through some rough times. His father is the principal of the high school he attends, and the teachers who are demanding higher wages and benefits from the school board are taking out their frustration on Don. The teen's parents are on the verge of divorce, and are coming down on him for his desire to be a veterinarian, and in some ways holding him responsible for the loss of his younger brother Sam. Although Don hangs onto his love of story-telling and his collection of posters and stuffed animals, he feels the flutter of first love-- for classmate Tracey Quintero, rivaling his best friend's interest in her. He runs corss-country, yet is held in low esteem by thew other athletes. In short, Don is a typical teenager beset by typical teen problems.

Until he kills a murderer.

Tanker Folwer believes himself to be a Howler, a werewolf. Only when the moon is full does he go out and kill. And eat. Don defeats him -- but not by himself. He has help from something he conjures up from his

fertile imagination, a pet horse...from one of the posters in his room. Close to being killed by the Howler, Don materializes his pet and with his permission it kills the assailant.

From then on the pet becomes Don's protector, killing his enemies, whether he consciously desires their death or not.

This is undoubtedly Charlie Grant's finest book to date. The characters are very well drawn and the plot is multi-faceted. I left it on my "to be read" shelf too long before picking it up to read it. I scheduled tests in all my classes so I could finish it during school time, so engrossing was the story. For horror fans, this is a must. (The Pet was nominated for best novel at the World Fantasy Con last year.) For non-horror fans, you might want to read it for the language. Charlie knows how to use it.

#### THE ORCHARD

by Charles L. Grant  
TOR Horror, 1986, \$3.95

The Orchard by Charles L. Grant is an Oxrun Station novel. It is structured episodically. A group of college kids take a break from studying and have a picnic near the old Orchard on the outskirts of the small Connecticut town of Oxrun Station. Eventually a game of keep-away starts up and the chase leads them through the twisted trees of the orchard. These kids become the springboard for strange happenings thereafter. The initial story which relates the picnic ends up with the point-of-view character going somewhat insane, particularly after several of his classmates die within days of their party (one that very night). The rest of the stories have point-of-view characters that were not there, but someone in the episode was, and is the catalyst for the strange events that occur. It's a different sort of structure than I would have used, but Charlie Grant is innovative with his writing. The Orchard is not as good as The Pet, but it is better than much of the popular horror I have read.

#### TRIPLET

by Timothy Zahn  
Baen Books, 1987, \$3.95

There are three worlds occupying the same space. Threshold is the world in our universe. Through a tunnel one emerges in Shamsheer, whose science is so advanced that it seem like magic. From there lies a tunnel into Karyx, where magic rules; demons, pixies, sprites, and other spirit creatures are summoned casually to perform various functions. The most experienced Courier, Ravigan, takes Danae (a very spoiled graduate student), through Shamsheer to Karyx for her studies, and things start happening that really shouldn't -- mostly because of Danae's desire to prove herself an adult. As is usual for a Zahn novel, there are lots of plot twists and complications, but every-

thing is there for the reader to unravel if s/he pays attention to the details. It is a thoroughly enjoyable novel.

#### AN EXALTATION OF LARKS, or THE VENEREAL GAME

by James Lipton  
Grossman Publishers, 1968, \$??.

I picked up James Lipton's An Exaltation of Larks, or The Veneraal Game at Keith Allan Hunter's suggestion, and was fascinated by it. Keith is a member of D'APA and talked about it at great length in the June, 1987, mailing. Every group of animals and things has its own collective name. A few of these people know because they are used fairly frequently: a pride of lions, a gaggle of geese, etc. This book collects these terms of ventry (terms of the Hunt) and sets up some rules by which one can expand the idea of collectives. Maia and I have come up with "a collation of apahacks". Some strange collectives include: A Cry of Players (actors), A Watch of Nightingales, A Clowder of Cats, A Parliament of Owls, A sentence of Judges. It's an interesting book for a quick read.

#### DIRK GENTLY'S HOLISTIC DETECTIVE AGENCY

by Douglas Adams  
Simon & Schuster, 1987, \$18.95

On the plane during our trip to England I read Douglas Adams' new book, Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency. Gordon Way, one of the characters (who is killed and sparks the investigation by Dirk Gently) invents a computer program that takes existing facts, and the conclusion one wishes to draw from them, and supplies a scenario which connects them. It was called Reason, and was immediately bought by the Pentagon. I think North and Poindexter have used it, and probably Reagan in his more lucid moments.

Richard MacDuff (one of Gordon's employees), Susan Way (Gordon's sister, whom Richard has been dating), and electronic Monk and his horse, Gordon's ghost, and Dirk Gently (whose approach to detection is a holistic one), are a few of the characters in this adventure of determining Gordon's murder, the invention of mathematical music, how to get a sofa-bed unstuck from a staircase, and the creation of the world as we know it. In short, it's a typical Douglas Adams story filled with twists and turns and madcap humor.

#### THE WASP FACTORY

by Iain Banks  
MacMillan, 1984, L7.95

I started The Wasp Factory by Iain Banks. I never heard of this author before CONSPIRACY, but he was on a panel (with Clive Barker and William Gibson) about how he (and they) handled their "overnight success." Based on his witty comments I picked up this

novel, and his latest, The Bridge (which I haven't read yet).

I was impressed with The Wasp Factory. The narrator Frank is a 17 year old non-person -- his birth was never registered. He was raised and taught by his father who seems to be independently wealthy (Frank tries to find out but gets little information from his father). Frank sees himself as the king and protector of the island on which they live off the coast of Scotland. He sets his "spells" around the perimeter of the island, and names the various places and haunts he loves or avoids. His brother has just escaped from an insane asylum and Frank knows he's headed for the island. This he tries to keep from his dad. The brother is intelligent, but something happened while he was away at college which sent him over the deep end. (You do find out what it is in the course of the book; try not to be eating when you do.) He was committed for forcing little kids to eat worms and maggots, and for setting dogs on fire. Frank himself has committed three murders, but worked them in such a way that he was determined innocent. These too are described in the book.

At the end several things happen to twist the reader around and see things differently. It's very well done and well constructed. It's a bit gruesome in spots, but well worth reading. I don't think it's available in the states, though maybe it will soon be picked up by an American publisher.

#### BLACK ASHES

by Noel Scanlon  
St. Martin's Press, 1985, \$2.95

One of the jacket blurbs says: "Noel Scanlon is Ireland's answer to Stephen King." If this is an example of Ireland's finest horror writer, King has nothing to worry about.

Bob Roberts is a bank manager who is sent to India to replace the previous manager who has committed suicide. The ghost of Johnny Johnson haunts the mansion used to house the managers, and causes grief for Bob, his wife Diedre, and their daughter Monica. There seems to be some connection among the suicide, the haunting, the Bank, and Swami Ramesh, whose influence seems to include power over Monica.

Although Scanlon tries for mood and sinister background, he doesn't succeed. I was never fully drawn into the story. The local color descriptions are fairly well done, but I was never unaware that I was reading a story. You can pass it up.

#### FIRECHILD

by Jack Williamson  
Bluejay Books, 1986, \$16.95

Once again Jack Williamson delves into genetic engineering and the possibilities it may provide. In this case, the anti-scientists get the upper hand and vie for ownership of the Firechild, the result of genetic manipulation and the only hope of mankind surviving a genetically-manipulated disaster.

The Firechild changes the lives of all who come in contact with her. From the earliest stages of pre-born life she manipulates their emotions and tries to make each person better. The anti-science people refuse her attempts to help them and come close to killing her before she is able to fulfill the purpose of her creation.

Jack writes an intriguing, taut and suspenseful novel. He still knows how to tell a darn good story, and I look eagerly for each new novel. Long may he continue to write!

#### IVORY

by Mike Resnick  
TOR, 1988, \$3.95

In the year 6303 of the Galactic Era, Bukoba Mandaka hires researcher and authenticator Duncan Rojas to find the tusks of the Kilimanjaro Elephant. These ivory tusks are each over 4 meters long and priceless, yet Mandaka is willing to pay anything to find them; he is the last of the Maasai, an ancient tribe of Africa whose destiny is tied to the tusks.

During his search, Duncan learns the stories of those who had, at one time or another, possession of the ivory. While investigating the likes of gamblers and graverobbers, warlords and politicians, artists and thieves, Duncan tries to find out why the tusks are so important to Mandaka, why he is obsessed with possessing them, and finally what he intends to do with them.

The story is told in non-linear fashion, so the reader learns about the history of the tusks along with Duncan Rojas. The solution to the final mysteries -- where the tusks are hidden and what Mandaka has planned for them -- is a fitting end to the story and has a profound effect on the reader. One leaves the novel with a feeling of satisfaction and the resolution of one of the mysteries of the universe.

This is Resnick's best novel to date. The characters of Duncan and Mandaka play off each other; their similarities and differences are used to typify both the nobility of the modern and African man. Mike uses the ivory tusks as a springboard not only for some very significant events in his future history, but also for some seemingly insignificant episodes, whose effects appear to be the most important of all. Ivory is a thoroughly enjoyable novel and well worth your attention.

#### ANNA TO THE INFINITE POWER

by Mildred Ames  
Vagabond, 1981, \$1.95

Anna Zimmerman Hart is a strange young lady whose interests are wrapped up in herself. She is a science prodigy and takes every opportunity to let everyone around her know. She thinks she's unique in the world until she encounters a duplicate of herself, a young girl with the same middle name who looks exactly like her. With the aid of her older brother Rowan, Anna tries to find out about her "twin" and uncovers a plot of geh-

etic cloning unknown to the rest of the world. Captured and isolated by the masters behind the plot, Anna suspects that she may not live to reveal her knowledge. She hopes that Rowan might be able to find her and together they might escape...alive.

The story is fast-paced and intriguing. Anna and the supporting characters are very well-done, especially Anna. Her advanced knowledge of science and mathematics isolates her from her adolescent friends, and she has trouble controlling her stealing -- what she wants, she takes. Through her slight interest in music, Anna begins to discover emotions and feelings she didn't think she had. The growing relationship with her brother is a traumatic, real experience.

An underlying theme is that of a mistrust of authority figures. Some adults are good, and some evil. Even though their motives are understood, even those with the best of intentions can make decisions harmful to the youth of the country. Anna to the Infinite Power is a cautionary tale on many levels, and an interesting read not only for the young adults at which it is aimed, but also at adults who may have lost some insights that adolescents have.

#### THE SILVER LINK, THE SILKEN TIE

by Mildred Ames  
Point, 1984, \$2.95

Timothy Starr is a good kid. He obeys the adults, and he tries not to be a problem. Inside, however, he has lots of problems, all stemming from the guilt he carries from killing his sister. It was an accident, of course, but he had never come to terms with the guilt of shooting his sister.

Felice Garliano also carries some guilt around with her. For some reason she feels responsible for the death of her family -- they didn't survive the sinking of a cruise ship they had been on. Felice is also beset by "demons" who attempt to control her life, which she thwarts by "rituals" she has made up.

Midred Ames takes these two characters and mixes them with a private day/boarding school background, a history teacher whose methods are unorthodox but effective, and a psychiatrist both Tim and Felice are seeing, unbeknown to each other. Tim and the Looney, as Felice is known around campus, work together on the school paper, and slowly become friends. A link grows between them, more than the "common" guilt each carries, which borders on telepathy. However, history teacher Dr. Grausman has a special group of students that has attracted Felice, but leaves Tim out. His distrust of this teacher leads to a personal investigation of Grausman's goals and intentions towards the students in the "Inner Circle" of the group, which may soon involve Felice. And that concerns him...a lot.

Once again, Ames works the theme of adults being both good and bad, and the struggle of independent action for adolescents. The story and characters are both very good, and worthy of your attention.

#### DRAGON'S BLOOD

by Jane Yolen  
Delacorte Press, 1982, \$11.95

Although listed as a "fantasy" novel on the cover, this is definitely not fantasy. It is a good, SF story about a young man growing up in the dragon barns on the planet Austar IV. Jakkin Stewart has a feel for working with the indigenous dragon animals of the planet, helping to breed them for the Pit Fights that have become extremely popular in the galaxy. However, Jakkin wants more than this menial job on the dragon farms. He steals an egg and raises a dragon of his own, only to find out that he's been discovered. But by whom, and what the consequences might be, he has yet to find.

Although not as complex in characterization as the books of Mildred Ames, the story that Yolen tells is every much as adventurous and interesting. Jakkin is competent and in some case inspired in his plan to raise the dragon on his own, but the young woman Akki gives him practical advice and help in getting his dragon to the pits and actually fighting.

The world is well done. Austar IV is laid out with a balanced ecology, flora and fauna that complement each other. The society developed seems reasonable, and based somewhat on Australia -- Austar was a prison planet.

Jane Yolen has written two more books in this series, which I hope to read soon.

#### BOOKS OF BLOOD

by Clive Barker  
Scream Press, 1985 (c 1984), \$30.00

I have heard two quotes from Stephen King that describe Clive Barker:

"I have seen the future of horror, and his name is Clive Barker."

and

"Now I know how Elvis felt when he first saw the Beatles on Ed Sullivan."

Since I have not read any of Stephen King's novels, I can't make a comparison between the two, but compared to the many horror writers I have read, Barker stands alone. Barker has more explicit horror than Richard Laymon, and less psychological horror than Charlie Grant. His ideas are definitely wilder than anyone else I've read, which does make him stand out.

This Scream Press edition of Barker's Books Of Blood is the original manuscript than he had submitted to McMillon books. That publishing company proceeded to divide the short stories into three volumes, which were then printed as Books of Blood, Vol. I, Vol. II, and Vol. III. At CONSPIRACY, Barker said he was pleased with this publication, since the stories appeared as he intended -- as one volume.

The first story, "The Book of Blood", establishes how these stories have come to be



written. A young man who pretends that he can communicate with the ghost of an old haunted house. The house itself turns out to be a crossroads of the dead, and they take exception to his presumption. On his body they write their stories, stories written in blood.

"The Midnight Meat Train" is a story of mutilation murders and how the bodies are used, that is those that aren't discovered by the authorities. "Pig Blood Blues" shows a new form of god worship. "Sex, Death and Starshine" tells an unusual tale of a touring Shakespearean company.

Battle between two remote cities in Yugoslavia takes on a unique twist in "In the Hills, the Cities." And a battle between Good and Evil takes on a new twist in "Hell's Event".

"Dread" is probably the closest that Barker comes in terms of psychological horror. Quia determines what a person's person fear or dread is, and then proceed to use it against them. Explicit horror, chillingly told.

In "Jacqueline Ess: Her Will and Testament", a woman finds a special power within her that can bend unseen forces to her will.

Demons romp around the Arizona deserts in "The Skins of the Fathers". And Barker adds a strange angle to the Poe story in "New Murders in the Rue Morgue". A monster tamed by the Church fathers centuries ago, is released and rampages through the town of Zeal in "Rawhead Rex". Mutilated bodies and old movies mix in "Son of Celluloid".

Lest you think that Barker has no sense of humor or justice, a man falsely accused of dealing in pornography and killed while taking out his vengeance, is allowed to complete his revenge as a ghost. "Confessions of a (Pornographer's) Shroud" has a satisfying, if ironic ending. In "The Yattering and Jack", Jack Polo battles wits with a minor demon, and actually bests it.

The ghosts of the drowned dead haunt a small group of pleasure boaters in "Scapegoats", and mythology and prostitution mix in "Human Remains".

These descriptions only sketch the stories that Barker has written. If you like horror, and have a strong stomach, read Clive Barker. Whether in the Deluxe Scream Press edition, or in the individual volumes of the Books of Blood, he is a horror writer to be reckoned with.

#### THE SOFT WHISPER OF THE DEAD

by Charles L. Grant

Donald M. Grant, 1982, \$15.00

Illustrations by R. J. Krupowicz

#### THE DARK CRY OF THE MOON

by Charles L. Grant

Donald M. Grant, 1985, \$15.00

Illustrations by R. J. Krupowicz

#### THE LONG NIGHT OF THE GRAVE

by Charles L. Grant

Donald M. Grant, 1986, \$20.00

Illustrations by Jill Bauman

These three books comprise a trilogy about 19th century Oxrun Station, Connecticut, Charlie Grant's town of horror. I bought the second and third books first, but waited until I got the first one before reading the set. That wasn't necessary, for each book stands alone. And, in fact, chronologically, the second book comes before the first one.

Ned Stockton is the detective in charge of the gruesome killings in The Soft Whisper of the Dead. The evil Count Brastov and a former inhabitant of Oxrun Station return to the village and the murders begin. Bats, wolves, and ghostly shadows are seen haunting the townspeople as vampires stalk the streets.

Ned's father Lucas is the hero in this tale of werewolves -- "... the wolf that walks on two legs." The Dark Cry of the Moon takes place about 15 years earlier than the first book, but is every bit as horror-ridden and haunting as its predecessor.

In the third book, Ned is mentioned, giving the series more continuity than a just a common setting, but the main character is John Vicar, whom Ned Stockton has consulted at times during baffling cases. The Stocktons are off in Europe when these strange killings occur, and the only clues are that the killer has enormous strength, and the strange pieces of linen cloth that no one can identify. Could the Egyptian couple visiting the archaeologist Jeffrey Isle have something to do with it? The mummy returns in The Long Night of the Grave.

Charlie does not dwell on the gruesome descriptions of the killings -- he leaves that to the readers' imaginations. Charlie is a superb wordsmith; his descriptions of the setting, the feelings, evoke fear and uneasiness. He makes us scare ourselves. He knows how to use words, and is a superb craftsman with the language. This alone will keep me reading his books, but the stories are good too. The paperbacks of these novels should be out now. Don't miss them.

## TOOL OF THE TRADE

by Joe Haldeman  
Morrow, 1987, \$15.95

A couple of summers ago, Joe read the first chapter of a novel at a SPACECON. As soon as he finished, several of us wanted him to go back to his room and finish it immediately. He did finish it, eventually, and it came out this past spring as Tool of the Trade.

This is not science fiction, exactly, though it does use some devices that could be considered science-fictional. Nicholas Foley is a sleeper agent for the Soviet Union, but is very much an advocate of peace. He has a plan to effect a universal disarmament treaty, and has the means to do so, if only he can get close to the leaders of the super-powers. His secret is that he can control a person's actions against his will, but within a limited range.

Tool of the Trade is a super spy thriller that keeps you moving from page one. Highly recommended.

## WINTER CITADELS &amp; ACCIDENTAL SAINTS

by Barry Childs-Helton  
Peach Mountain Studio, 1986, \$?.00

This is a book of poems by Barry Childs-Helton. Most of them come from his years as an college student in undergraduate and graduate school, some revised or "fine tuned" since then for this publication. Included are some illustrations from Dover Books clip art which are "intended as visual comments on the poems, rather than as literal illustrations," as Barry comments in his introduction.

Most of the poems are personal. A few are decipherable in terms of Barry's life if you know him; I don't know him that well, but I learn more about him with every encounter we have -- and I like what I learn. As with most poetry, one interprets the words in terms of his/her own experience. Since Barry and I are about the same age, many experiences are similar, but our life-tracks are different enough to make the interpretations personal to me. Some are fun, some painful, but all are interesting. I enjoyed them.

## THE BARBEQUED SONGBOOK

Edited by Scott Merritt and Samuel Mize  
Pegasus Music, 1987, \$?.??

Subtitled "Music Sung in the Filking Community of Texas and Oklahoma", The Barbequed Songbook gives a wide selection of filksong lyrics, chording and music, augmented by artwork. Many of the songs were unfamiliar to me, but the music was given to most of them so I could pick the melody out rather easily. Some had traditional tunes, or at least familiar tunes which were listed. The production is very good and if you want a taste of filking from fandom in another part of the country, this is an excellent introduction.

## PAST DUE

by Bill Sutton  
Off Centaur Publications, 1986, \$9.00

## THE GRIM ROPER

by Bill Roper  
Off Centaur Publications, 1987, \$9.00

## FRAGILE WALL

by Clif Flynt & Mary Ellen Wessels  
Wail Songs, 1985, \$9.00

THE KHA-KHAN'S LAMENT  
Songs of the Dark Horde

by Yang the Nauseating  
a.k.a. Robert Lynn Asprin  
Pegasus Publishing, 1986, \$9.00

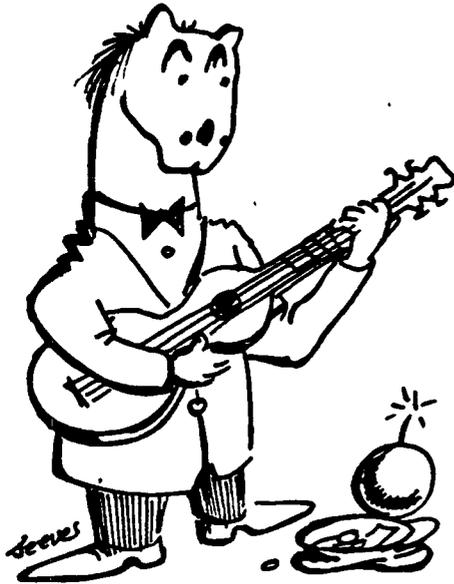
Attending filks and hearing in-concert tapes of filks are many times similar. While a member of the filking audience, much is forgiven of a singer who flubs a line or is a little off-key. In fact, many of these mistakes are unnoticed, only recalled if the particular session has been committed to tape and can therefore be re-run. Even though in-concert tapes have those mistakes, the simulated power of "being there" makes the listener much more forgiving of the singers. In the case of the above group of filkers, I have heard all in filksings and have enjoyed their performances.

One expects more from a "polished" tape. The songs should be done until they are perfect; the harmonies and backgrounds support the melody, and the lead singer is at his or her top form. There are problems with all of these tapes.

The Kha-Khan's Lament is a history of the Dark Horde in the Society for Creative Anachronism. Bob Asprin was the founder of the Horde, and he gives his view of the origins, rise and decline of this subgroup of the SCA, and the reasons why he left. The songs are good, but the execution is just okay. His voice, which I had only heard in filksings, is not as strong, nor as solid as I remember. He wavers on extended notes, and is a little off-key in a few places. Still, the tape is quite passable and of interest to those in the SCA.

Fragile Wall is a mixed bag. The lyrics and melodies are fine; Clif knows how to write and has an ear for melody. His voice, however, is not the best. He does well in filksings because he warm and personable, and can ad lib comments better than anyone I know. In the cold reality of magnetic tape, the flaws stand out. Mary Ellen Wessels is good, very good. Whether singing in person or here on tape, the voice \*sings\*. For her voice alone the tape is worth it, but I must also add that Clif's lyrics and songs add value to this tape. It's a good buy.

Bass voices are few and far between in popular music, and to get two decent ones in filking is most unusual. Both Bill Roper and Bill Sutton have put out decent tapes. But as I said above, there are some problems.



The backgrounds in The Grim Roper detract immensely from the enjoyment of the songs. The arrangements that Off Centaur used in this production over-used the percussion. The drums were fine in the first couple of songs, but after that it was very repetitious and not very creative. In some cases the background drowned out the vocals. Roper's songs, like Clif Flynt's, are very good, creative and melodic.

Past Due probably comes the closest to being very good in production values. Bill Sutton has a little trouble holding notes, but beyond that, this tape is the best of this group. His songs are witty, or sensitively moving, and all in all the arrangements support his voice. Occasionally one of his songs would pop into my head, and I'd have to dig the tape out to get the words straight. Definitely worth the purchase.

#### PLEASE STAND BY

by Technical Difficulties (T.J. Burnside,  
Linda Melnick, Sheila Willis)  
Fesarius Publications, 1986, \$9.00

I had heard a lot about this tape before actually hearing it. And first impressions upon hearing these three Ladies of Technical Difficulties was: did people hear the same thing I am hearing. That was for the first side. Even TJ's classic "Lullaby for a Weary World" didn't quite make it, to my ears. And I really wanted to like and enjoy this tape, after talking at length to Linda Melnick at OHIO VALLEY FILK FEST III. It was the second side that did it.

The harmonies were clear, the mixing was balanced, and the lyrics were humorous/serious as the songs demanded. The blending was wonderful. Yes, the tape was well worth the price, and I'm looking forward to their next tape. Technical Difficulties learned a lot from producing this album, and I suspect that tape two will be as professional as any commercial tape.

#### ESCAPE FROM MUNDANIA

by Barry and Sally Childs-Helton  
Book and Tape, \$9.00 each

Barry and Sally found fandom in 1982, but didn't get into the filking end of it until 1985 when Sally sat in on the open filk at MARCON XX to take notes for her Doctorate in Ethnomusicology, and Barry to try out a couple of tunes he had written back in the seventies. He was a hit; they were a hit. Sally backed him with congas and tambourine. From that point on, it was ever upward.

The duo are talented, there's no doubt about it. Barry's experiences in coffee houses of the 70s and Sally's work with various symphony orchestras and jazz ensembles bring together a sound unique in filking. The songs that they've written before knowing they were filks are every bit as good as the stuff produced today, and the material the two have produced and written since.

So what do we have here? A unique combination of folk-rock with tunes from the stars. Barry's vocals are very strong, the words are enunciated, and the lyrics are sometimes humorous, sometimes profound. The tunes are occasionally borrowed from familiar songs (credited appropriately), but many are original. The topics dealt with are fan-nish ("Con Man Blues," "Flying Isle Farewell (Isle of When)," "Mundania," "Stairway to Fandom"), satires of contemporary topics ("Pearly Gate Blues (Jimmy and Tammy)," "Secular Humanist," "Woman in Space (A Women's-Liberation/Science-Fiction Calypso)," "Pigeon Mail"), or just science fictional concepts ("Away Behind the Sun," "(Goin' Down the Cosmic Drain," "(The Ballad of) Frankie and Igor: A Contemporary Tale of Horror," "Gravity Exiles," "Sailplane," "Science Fair," "Two Moon Blues").

The songs are polished on this tape. The melody lines are clean, and the back-ups extremely supportive and not overpowering. Having heard several of their songs in filk concerts and on different tapes, I sort of missed the audience reaction to some of the lines. Some may consider a couple of the songs a little long (like "Cosmic Drain" -- there are additional lyrics in the songbook to make it even longer), but one usually doesn't care because the lyrics are good, and Barry is pleasant to listen to.

An added bonus is the art. The cover of the tape, and all the illustrations in the songbook are by Barry. Overall, both the tape and book are recommended; if you only have money for one, get the tape.

#### HONOR AMONG THIEVES "Smooth as Silk"

by Julia Ecklar,  
Tom Howell and Rusty Westbeld  
Gateway Graphics, 1987, \$1.50

I reviewed the first chapter of Honor Among Thieves in LL #23, wherein I said that I was eagerly looking forward to the next installment. Now that I have "Smooth as Silk" in hand, I don't know if I can wait another three or four months for chapter

three. The plotting is still the strong point of this graphic novel, and the mysteries deepen as Galan and Daven try to help the people of Mir. The comments and little "touches" that Julia is feeding us makes me eager to see what will be happening next with the story.

In particular, the fact that Galan and Daven practice fighting is something rarely touched on in "realistic" fantasy novels. The mention of "the ring" by Kief and Jarfy, and the ensuing discussion brings up echos of Tolkien, but I doubt he'd ever approach the story in this manner. The threads of the

plot are getting more complicated, and I can't wait to see the final weaving (some seven years from now!).

The art has indeed improved, which I find overwhelming; I thought Tom's art was good in the first installment but he has outdone himself. My only objection is that the background seems almost too clean for the period. But considering that his style is very much art-deco, and one that I haven't seen anywhere else in the comic field, that's a trivial point.

Now for chapter three -- soon, please?

## Film & Book Reviews by

# Kathleen Randolph Conat

### THE WITCHES OF EASTWICK

The movie, 1987

The book by John Updike  
Random House, 1984

A comparison by Kathleen Randolph Conat

Although I had not read the book prior to seeing this, I left the theatre feeling there must have been more. After reading the book, I was assured I was right.

The film begins with three women (who may believe in witchcraft, but certainly aren't witches), getting through their various daily routines.

Cher, as Alexandra, is a throwback to the 60s, selling her clay sculptures and raising kids as a single parent. I could see why Cher got the role. Although Alexandra is described as fat and sagging in the book, she is also the quintessential earth mother, and Cher projects the earth mother well.

Michelle Pfeiffer, as Sukie, mother of six offspring, works as a reporter for the local weekly rag, and tells everyone within earshot how fertile she is. Although this fertility angle strikes a false note, Pfeiffer's portrayal comes the closest of any to capturing the character as Updike wrote it.

Jane, played by Susan Sarandon, is the school music teacher, with only her cello for company, although it's hinted she wouldn't have to be lonely, if only she'd lower her standards. Jane, in the book, is a cellist who gives private lessons and plays the organ at churches to support her children, and has affairs whenever possible. However, Sarandon strives valiantly to capture the bitterness and futility of Jane.

In the movie, all three live frustrating and unfulfilled lives in the straight-laced, inbred village of Eastwick, waiting for Mr. Right to come along. God knows why. In the book, all three have gotten rid of their husbands through witchcraft and, while not jubilantly happy,

are relatively content with their singleness and their group efforts in the occult.

Jack Nicholson enters in the persona of Darryl Van Horne, a man of obvious wealth if equally obvious mental unbalance, with so much charisma that no one can resist him. He buys a local abandoned mansion and moves in. It soon becomes apparent he intends to woo all three of our lovely ladies by taking them from their drab, dull existence and teaching them the wiles and wealth of witchcraft, not to mention True Sexual Fulfillment. The goal: infants sired by himself.

Most of the movie is taken up with the wooing, the ladies using their developing powers to destroy one local biddie, and all of them partying at Van Horne's place.

Updike's Van Horne is not nearly as fascinating and, despite his apparent wealth, in the beginning manages to repulse everyone, including our witchy ladies. Since they already are steeped to the gills in witchcraft, Van Horne doesn't teach them much, if anything, except how to forget the neighbors are watching and have a good time. Although the subplot of the death of the local biddie is virtually the same, its repercussions are vastly different, leading to a very different story twist. Infants, sired by Van Horne or nor, are not mentioned.

Instead, Updike's version has the daughter and son of the biddie arrive to attend the funeral, then stay on in their inherited house. The daughter has the makings of a witch, and our three take her under their collective wing. So does Van Horne, whose assistant she becomes. Shortly thereafter, she also becomes Van Horne's wife. The three witches, in a frenzy of jealousy, sculpt a doll in which is imbedded hair and nail clippings of the new wife. By inflicting various small tortures upon the doll they manage to eventually kill the wife. Van Horne, in his grief and to escape his creditors, leaves town. The witches use their powers to gain each one a satisfactory husband and move away from Eastwick.

In the movie, when the women realize

they are each pregnant with Van Horne's child, they band together to destroy him. (What? No jealousy? How noble!) Using a book of what appears to be spells and incantations which has never before been mentioned, they turn the tables and finally, after a rather comical clash of powers which was probably meant to hold suspense, he vanishes. One would think he is gone forever. Wrong.

An epilogue scene, supposedly some time later, shows the three ladies with their Van Horne offspring, merrily living in Van Horne's mansion and, apparently, making a living from their witchcraft. Their only problem is Van Horne, who gets into their television screens every now and again to talk to his children. Since the women are denying him visitation rights, they turn him off and he is, evidently, powerless against them. Merrily, this ends the film.

The movie turned out to be a vehicle for Nicholson, with Cher, Sarandon and Pfeiffer thrown in to make the scenery interesting. It's title should have been changed to "The Devil in Eastwick", since the "witches" weren't given much to do. What a waste of talent. Although I've heard some critics say Nicholson gave a wonderful performance in this one, there were some scenes of his which had "U.S. Grade 'Choice' Ham" stamped all over them. Van Horne could have been an interesting, meaty role, if somewhat subordinate to the women, had the scriptwriters followed the original storyline. As it is, he's a broad characature and a disappointment.

Also disappointing was the lack of exposition in the movie's storyline. The "witches" ability to handle an awesome amount of power (enough to vanquish their teacher) in a very short time is never explained. Neither was the hostility of some of the townspeople. The earth moves beneath their feet, ripping up sections of sidewalk, and they run away in fear and amazement. Yet it is obviously the result of something they did, and this comes after they've contributed to the death of the biddie by using their powers.

In contrast, the original Updike story has both a strong plot and satisfying depth to the characters. Motivation is evident and believable. There are no lose strings left dangling.

On a scale of 1 to 10, give the movie a 5. And, since the paperback costs \$4.50--the cost of a movie ticket--spend your money wisely: buy the book.

#### WAR FOR THE OAKS

by Emma Bull

'Ace Fantasy Special, 1987, \$3.50

A book review by Kathleen Randolph Conat

Rarely do I pick up a book and read it in two days. My schedule no longer permits that luxury. However, a few pages into this one, luxury became necessity. I had to know what happened next.

The story centers around Eddi McCantry, a rock and roller of undetermined age who,

as the tale begins, has reached a crossroad in her life. She decides to leave the two-bit bar band she's been playing with, and her lover, the band's leader. She doesn't know where she's going, but she's darned sure where she's been--and she's been there long enough.

Unbeknowst to her, the Seelie Court is going to war with the Unseelie Court and need the presence of a mortal on the battlefield to bring death to their enemies. The people of Faerie, you see, don't die unless there is a mortal, bound to the cause, on the battlefield. Eddi has been chosen to be the lucky mortal. Now all she has to do is live long enough to participate.

Enter the phouka, a being who can take the shape of either a rather short black man, or a big black dog. Not only is he the one who chose Eddi for this less-than-desireable assignment, he is in charge of her health and well-being until the time for the war. This is not an easy task, for those alligned with the Unseelie Court are out to do her in.

This is Bull's first novel, but she obviously knows her stuff. Although there's nothing particularly unusual here, her handling of the material sets it apart. She sets her tale in Minneapolis, where she lives, which aids in the crisp detail throughout. Her characters are drawn cleanly, pulling the reader into the story by empathy. From the beginning, her unrelenting pacing keeps one turning the pages long after the time for "lights out". If Bull keeps up this high quality in her subsequent endeavors we'll have a major new star in our galaxy.



MORDOR MERCHANT

# Book Reviews by *Ben Schilling*

## THE WITCHES OF WENSHAR

by Barbara Hambly  
Del Rey, 1987, \$3.95

The continuation of the story of Sun Wolf and Starhawk. After having been forcibly ejected from Mandrigyn, our heroes are headed West in hopes of finding a teacher for Sun Wolf, who has also been forced to become a wizard. Wenshar has been a city controlled by witches, all of whom are thought to be long since dead. On the other hand, people are dying in the same manner by which witches killed their enemies. The obvious puzzle must be solved by the Wolf and the Hawk before Osgard, King of Wenshar, has them executed for the crimes -- Sun Wolf because he's the only known wizard in the area, and Starhawk because she's with Sun Wolf. There are no loose ends at the conclusion of the story and, while I recommend it, especially since it's a good read, you really don't have to read The Ladies of Mandrigyn first to get the whole story. Another good book by a much-underrated author.

## FRAME OF REFERENCE

by Jerry Oltion  
Questar, 1987, \$3.50

**\*\*Some Spoilers\*\***

A first novel, which is an expansion on the Analog story of the same name, which is the first section of the book. A quick review of the story reveals what appears to be a universe culture on a runaway starship with no drive engineers to correct the problem. A thousand years later, one of the crew/passengers decides that she will become a drive engineer and fix the problem. Unfortunately, the Starchild isn't a starship; it's a four hundred forty story building with only the top three stories above ground. Our heroine is convicted of sabotage, and tossed out an airlock. That's what appeared in Analog. Now comes the messy part.

It seems that the Eyullelyans, a six-limbed, four-sexed, hermaphroditic race has arrived to "help" the surviving Terrans. These creatures speak English (!), and in general really want to help. At this point I found that I lost my suspension of disbelief, and the rest of the novel to be a bad space opera. In the end our heroine gets the "colony" established and decides to head for the stars with the man of her dreams. As a first novel, it's close to acceptable, but the short story that it was built upon was much neater and the characters, while not totally 2D, didn't really need to have their adventures extended. A true example of a short story idea badly expanded to novel length.

On the other hand, you might try Oltion's other short stories. They are recommended.

## L. RON HUBBARD: MESSIAH OR MADMAN

by Bent Corydon & L. Ron Hubbard, Jr.  
Lyle Sturat, 1987, \$20.00

It only took twenty nominations to put a book on the final Hugo ballot in the best non-fiction category last year. I'd say that a biography of an SF author would qualify for that category, even with the new definition. I plan to do so.

This book details the way that L. Ron Hubbard raped the public in an attempt to divert funds from non-profit organizations into his own pockets. I really cannot give you a decent capsule description, and much of it reads like the sort of thing that you'd see in a pulp mystery. All I can do is recommend that you read it.

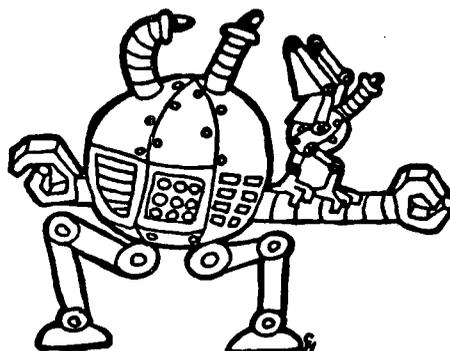
## A LION ON THARTHEE

by Grant Callin  
Baen Books, 1987, \$3.50

This is obviously the middle book of a trilogy which began with SaturnAlia. The first book concerned itself with Humans finding an obviously alien artifact in the Saturn system, leading to the discovery of the fact that there is an alien ship circling the sun at six times the distance of Saturn, which, if we can make it there and provide our own life-support system for roughly two years, will take us to the aliens' planet. This is the story of the trip there and back, and of course what happens when our heroes arrive.

The aliens are mostly reasonable. Their culture runs on a rather strange idea: if you can't take a joke, you don't belong. If something doesn't have a "joke name," either it isn't important enough to be noticed or it's extremely serious, beyond life and death. (Check Tharthee for anagrams.)

The Humans manage to get away without any serious difficulties and the hooks are in place for when the aliens arrive about forty years after this story takes place. The main question of the book is, do the aliens have FTL or not? (I'm not throwing out a spoiler.) It is a good read, but is most definitely the middle of a trilogy. The final question of what the aliens will do when they arrive is left hanging.



# Reviews by Dennis K Fischer

RADIO K.A.O.S.

by Roger Waters

A record review by Dennis K. Fischer

Remember a few years back when Paul Kantner and the original Jefferson Starship were nominated for a Hugo for Best Dramatic Presentation? Well, rock albums aren't often considered for dramatic presentation Hugos, then as now, but there is a rock album out that does warrant the attention of the discriminating science fiction fan.

The cover is a solid black with green dashes and dots that spell out the artist and the title -- Radio K.A.O.S. by Roger Waters. Waters was the seminal force behind the last great Pink Floyd album, The Wall. He has since split off from the group (who weren't always into his obsessions) and embarked on a solo career. Radio K.A.O.S. is his third and most recent effort, a rather strange but listenable science fiction concept album.

In many ways, the album is Waters' tribute to radio itself, covering the complete spectrum of the medium from Morse code to short wave to FM rock stations. The entire album is sequed by disc jockey Jim Ladd who is a major DJ in the Los Angeles market and who plays a jock named Jim on the album, the mainstay of radio station KAOS. Between each of Waters' songs we get Jim's chatters with his audience and the kind of sonic exercises one has come to expect from a Waters' work. (Waters helped pioneer such concepts as using a cash register for percussion on "Money," making the sound of breaking glass become a harmonic part of the music on The Wall, and here uses a ticking clock for percussion on the cut "Four Minutes." Additionally, we have Margaret Thatcher delivering a pro-nuclear deterrent speech and a man extolling the virtues of Ronald Reagan ("Do you think third-rate military dictators would laugh at America and burn our flag in contempt if Ronald Reagan were president?") counterpointed with a speech by Hopalong Cassidy's sidekick elsewhere in the background.)

The plot as such centers around a Welsh handicapped person named Billy who is played by the BBC Master Computer. Billy has the odd ability of receiving radio waves in his hearing aid without the aid of a tuner. His brother Benny is put in jail and Billy has been sent to California to live with his Uncle David, who is haunted by having worked on the Manhattan Project. Billy enjoys listening to the radio in L.A. and makes contact with Jim, developing a relationship over the phone with him. KAOS is a lone rear-guard station fighting against pre-programmed format radio. However, secretly Billy begins to envision a higher purpose that the airwaves can be put to. He hooks into "the powers that be" (i.e. various sophisticated computer equipment) and decides to simulate a nuclear attack everywhere. However, he has

managed to insure that when the SAC prepares to retaliate, their equipment doesn't work.

Why has he done this? Well, as Waters sings,

After a near mission the plane  
You swear you'll never fly again.  
After the first kiss when you make up  
You swear you'll never break up again.

In other words, by scaring everyone into confronting the possibility of a global thermonuclear war, he hopes that everyone will resolve to work as hard as they can to prevent it from happening. The airwaves and satellites that were used to direct bombs and weapons are now used to communicate compassion and "light." All over the world candles are burned and "the tide is turning."

Now rock stars have never been the best people from which to get political ideology. Waters is no exception in some of his simple-minded views, but nonetheless, it is an interesting conception and one can see how he was inspired by Live Aid's attempt to entertain people and raise millions of dollars for the compassionate purpose of fighting starvation in Africa -- something that would have been unthinkable in terms of scope without the technological developments of the last couple of decades.

The music is more rock than Waters' last couple of albums, has a nice horn section, and should be pleasing to long-time Pink Floyd fans even though it is not up to the best of the Floyd's work. The use of Jim Ladd is ironic in that shortly before he started work on the album, Ladd was fired from L.A.'s oldest rock station when it changed its call letters and format and switched to an all electronic, light jazz, and new-wave music format sans any disc jockeys whatsoever. Waters still has a great FM voice, but the kind of FM music he excelled at in the late seventies is no longer getting much airplay.

As with Waters' more grandiose projects, this isn't just an album; it's also an elaborate rock show which will tour the country in 1987. Waters, his back-up musicians, Jim Ladd, et al., will re-create the rock station KAOS in each of the arenas that they play. While the central idea does borrow somewhat from Orson Welles' famous "War of the Worlds" broadcast (though Ladd's comments just after learning that the button has been pushed are incredibly banal), it is a bold project and carried off with a bit of panache.

Unlike many more purely commercially-minded artists, Waters does have something on his mind and is not afraid to experiment of even occasionally be absurd, but his music can be resonant even when the lyrics and concepts aren't. As Ray Davies, leader and songwriter for the Kinks (rock's oldest still-existent band), observed, "It's only Jukebox Music." But there are times on Radio K.A.O.S. that suggests it can be something much more.

## SONG OF KALI

by Dan Simmons  
TOR, 1987, \$3.95

Mark Twain once wrote something to the effect of the difference between the right word and its second cousin is the difference between lightning and a lightning bug. Dan Simmons is a writer who really knows when to select the right word, and his World Fantasy Award-winning novel Song of Kali proves it.

Horror novels are a dime a dozen these days and are rarely cause for rejoicing; nevertheless, Simmons' work breathes with the pungent flavor of life and a tale well spun. A writer is sent to Calcutta to bring back a major new poem from an Indian writer who was presumed dead. While the Calcutta that he visits is worthy of our most horrible nightmares, it also has its basis in the Calcutta of today. (A short while ago an acquaintance of mine related to me her trip to India where she had the daily experience of stepping over starving people in the street -- so numerous that you couldn't avoid them -- just to get to her dinner.)

Bob Luczak and his wife go to Calcutta where they are briefly met by a strange Indian gentleman named Krishna. When Krishna takes Luczak to meet Muktanandaji who had an outre experience involving the poet M. Das, it makes for one of the most incredible and page-turning tales you will ever encounter.

Slowly Simmons builds a feeling of pervasive evil emanating from the goddess Kali (the title refers to the epic poem that M. Das has written in her honor) that is spell-binding, and when Luczak resists, there is a terrible price to pay with an emotional impact as great as anything John Updike has ever written.

This is not a book about which one should say too much of the plot, save that it moves quickly and well, and is filled with details that create an uncanny atmosphere of foreboding. If you have the slightest appetite for the macabre, Song of Kali is a tour de force you should not pass up.

## GUIDE FOR THE FILM FANATIC

by Danny Peary  
Fireside Books/S&S, 1987, \$12.95

For the film fanatic on your shopping list, Guide for the Film Fanatic proves to be an unqualified delight. Written by the author of Cult Movies 1 and 2, Danny Peary, this book is chockful of short, concise, and (especially rare for this kind of book) insightful capsule commentaries on literally hundreds of old films. This makes a great companion to Pauline Kael's 5001 Night at the Movies, which by and large gave capsule reviews of mostly mainstream movies. GFTFF goes after the most interesting cult classics and epics. Overall, I find GFTFF more inviting and fun to read as well.

As a critic, Peary admirably does not disdain any genre, hence along side some of the greatest films in the cinema he presents

numerous reviews of exploitation, slasher, and even popular porno films, though not without some critical perspective as to the relative merits of each. He does without a deceptive star-rating system, leaving it to the reader to decide which film sounds better or is more interesting to him.

Occasionally there is an obscurity that Peary misses that I wished he would have included, such as Shack-Out on 101, but overall he gives a very good selection of influential and interesting films, including some he obviously did not care for but felt should in his book. Peary tries hard to examine the films he covers from a fresh perspective, particularly concentrating on any overlooked feminist overtones, and this is very welcome. Occasionally I feel he is off the mark or coming from the wrong direction, but you can't expect to agree with any critic all the time. I feel that Peary shows a remarkably high degree of taste and accuracy on the films that I am familiar with, and am delighted to be introduced to numerous others that I am not. Also, Peary is not afraid of speculating a few sacred cows.

All in all, a thoughtful tome designed to stir up arguments, thoughts, and a love of movies. Highly recommended.

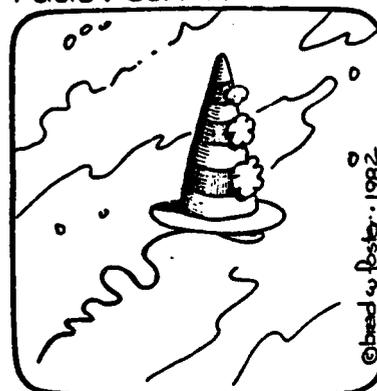
## GODBODY

by Theodore Sturgeon

Godbody, the late Theodore Sturgeon's last work, is not his greatest work (that honor still belongs to More than Human), but it is a tour de force and one which ties together many of his themes on his primary subject: love.

Cast in the form of an elaborate parable, the book presents the gospels of eight witnesses to the last days and demise of a Christ-like figure, Godbody. Not all of these witnesses are sympathetic or disciples, but Sturgeon makes excellent use of the multiple viewpoints to bring out various aspects of his story. The entire project is told simply, directly in the simplest language, though its very frankness may offend some, as well as the faint suggestion that lingers through the story that when God told people to love one another he may have meant

## FUNNY SEX #7:



— SPERMATOZOON IN PARTY HAT —

it physically as well as spiritually.

One of the beauties of Sturgeon's technique is that each character, as Heinlein observes in his perceptive introduction, has his or her own voice. One cannot be mistaken for the other. Each character has his individual fix on humanity and relates epiphanies appropriate to that character with those experiences.

Godbody is a naked, red-haired stranger who has a calming, restorative effect on most of the people that he meets. He causes them to look deeply into themselves and question who they are.

The characters include a well-intentioned and good-hearted preacher, his wife, a hobo who is twisted inside because he feels he can only have sex when he hurts women, a twisted gossip columnist and hypocrite, a poor woman (whom the columnist has under her thumb) who longs for someone to notice her and love her even if it's a man like the hobo, a free-spirited artist, and a misanthropic banker who has been so inculcated with ideas of properness that he was prevented from ever learning how to express love.

Sturgeon demonstrates an astute observational eye, relating the inner workings of some of these characters' minds that seems unquestionably right, though he is not above pulling a few minor miracles and relating his story with a folksy charm to gloss over the less plausible aspects. One could see Mark Twain admiring this book for its penetrating look at humanity on a simple level, largely centered around love and sexuality, while at the same time never daring to be as sexually frank in his own work. (Forthright

as Twain was, this aspect of his personality was always kept in check by his wife Livia and her ideas of properness.)

This is a book to give the so-called moral majority qualms as it in no uncertain terms presents the idea that hypocrisy and religion have distorted God's message of love and that the imposition of these things brings about an unnaturalness in the most natural of our activities. While others have suggested that Sturgeon would have given the book further polish, it is a major work as it stands, and may cause you to rethink some basic assumptions you have about people and the nature of love. How many books that you read will do that? Even more, Sturgeon loves his characters, even the most twisted of them, and tries at all times to be understanding of each of the very different character's feelings and motivations.

The book has garnered mostly mixed reviews and not a lot of attention, but that is unfortunate. Perhaps the expectations were too high, or Sturgeon simply told a kind of tale that reviewers didn't expect. But I suspect that with perspective readers will find *Godbody* to be one of Sturgeon's most keenly felt and keenly observed books that daringly updates the *Passion Play* into modern times and invests it with new meanings. By all means, this is a book to be sure to read, if only for its artistically sublime craftsmanship. Sturgeon was a major American writer, and his recognition as such, outside of the science fiction and fantasy field, should not be long in forthcoming.

## Book Reviews by Evelyn C Leeper

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### THE HANDMAID'S TALE

by Margaret Atwood  
Fawcett Crest, 1986 (1985c) \$4.95

They say politics makes strange bedfellows, and they point to the feminists and the fundamentalists marching side-by-side to "take back the night" and punish all those horrible, evil pornographers. Well, Margaret Atwood has brought new meaning to that cliché of bedfellows. In a world where the fertility rate has been drastically reduced because of pollution and who knows what other evils, the Gileadean solution is that of Rachel and her handmaid Bilhah. And this is made palatable by couching it as the solution that both the anti-pornography (AP) fundamentalists and the AP feminists have been promoting for years. The AP fundamentalists get the strict morality, the elimination of divorce, the return of woman to her role as keeper of the home. The AP feminists get the banning of pornography, the death penalty for rape, and the elimination of violence against women. So why do I have the feeling that none of those promoting these goals today would actually want the reality Atwood gives us?

Actually, one of the characters makes the point best. There are two kinds of freedom, she says, freedom-to and freedom-from. Both the AP feminists and the AP fundamentalists have been emphasizing the freedom-from: from fear, from violence, from anything that offends. They have forgotten that freedom-from and freedom-to have to balance out: an increase in one is only achieved by a decrease in the other. In *The Handmaid's Tale*, women have achieved the freedom from fear, etc., by giving up the freedom to live as one chooses, to work in a profession, to have financial independence, to have an identity of one's own. The handmaids are "Ofglen" or "Offred" --which Atwood mislabels as patronyms-- having given up their own names when they were recruited. The AP fundamentalists and the AP feminists have been so busy joining forces on what they want everyone to have freedom from that they have overlooked the fact that they disagree on what people should have freedom to. If they achieve their goals, they may discover that the world they have made is not to their liking after all.

The other interesting point about the society Atwood portrays is that it is very similar to another science fictional society

--that of John Norman's "Gor" series. Bizarre though this sounds, let's examine the two. Atwood describes women's roles as being one of five types: Marthas, Handmaidens, Wives, Aunts, or Colonists. The Marthas do the cooking and cleaning; they are the equivalent of Norman's state slaves. Both dress in drab colors and do the menial work. The Handmaidens provide procreation (and sex); they are the equivalent of Norman's pleasure slaves. Both dress in red. The Wives are the equivalent of Norman's free companions -- honored and respected, living their lives on a pedestal. The Aunts are the equivalent of the slaves who train the pleasure slaves. The Colonists have no direct parallel, though a disobedient slave on Gor does end up doing some sort of unpleasant/dangerous work. While it's true that these roles are not unpredictable, the parallels between Gilead and Gor are thought-provoking, to say the least. Add to this that Atwood, as part of the main character's description of her indoctrination, includes graphic descriptions of violent sex, and one wonders if those who would ban Norman's books would do the same to The Handmaid's Tale. Consider the following excerpt from a proposed anti-pornography ordinance: "Pornography is the sexually explicit subordination of women, graphically depicted, whether in pictures or in words, that also includes one or more of the following: ...women are presented dehumanized as sexual objects, things, or commodities...." (Note that the portrayal does not have to approve the dehumanization.) My reading of this is that The Handmaid's Tale would be considered pornographic by this definition.

I haven't said much about the book itself. That's because the plot itself is not that original, or enthralling, or amazing. It's what the book makes you think about that counts. Atwood makes you think about what can lead to this society and, conversely, what the actions and attitudes of today can lead to. It doesn't bear multiple readings the way a novel like Last and First Men does. It's not a masterpiece of literary style. But the thoughts it generates will stay with you long after the details of the book itself have been forgotten.

#### VARNEY THE VAMPIRE

by James Malcolm Rymer  
or Thomas Peckett Prest

Dover, 1972, 2 volumes, \$10  
(originally published 1847)

As the heading indicates, this is not your normal horror novel. It's old, almost 150 years. It's long (868 pages, or close to 900,000 words --by comparison, Dune checks in at about 200,000). No one is sure who wrote it. The greatest of the penny dreadfuls, it is described by E. F. Bleiler as "the most famous book that almost no one has read." Well, I'm never one to turn down a challenge, so I determined to sit down and read it.

It's not half bad. Okay, so that's not a

glowing recommendation. But considering the length, I think the fact that I managed to read it all and have a reasonably enjoyable time of it says something. The first half moves along at a good pace, as the Bannerworths find themselves tormented by the actions of Sir Francis Varney, who is trying to drive them from their home. There is the romantic subplot, with Charles Holland and Flora Bannerworth, which follows the standard Victorian pattern. There is comic relief, with Admiral Bell and his first mate Jack; this comic relief becomes a bit overdone at times, with the plot stalled while the admiral and Jack have yet another squabble.

Eventually we find out just what Varney wants the house for. We begin to sympathize with him and his predicament as he is chased by the mob and forced to seek shelter with the Bannerworths, the very family he has been tormenting. There is a brief section in which Varney is describing his history, reminiscent more of Frankenstein than of Dracula. In fact, throughout the whole first volume, the vampiric elements are quite understated.

In the second half, Rymer (or Prest or whoever) seems to run out of steam. Instead of a single story, we get a series of episodes of the sort:

Mysterious nobleman comes to town. Greedy mother arranges to have her daughter marry him, even though the daughter doesn't love him and/or loves someone else. On the wedding day, someone shows up, points to the groom, and shouts, "That's Varney the Vampire!" Varney flees and (optionally) the girl marries the man of her dreams instead.

After several iterations of this plot, interspersed with musings by Varney himself on how much horror and misery he is bringing to the people he meets, Rymer finally changes direction and wraps up the novel by having Varney tell his life story, or at any rate major parts of it, to a sympathetic minister. Having done this, Varney apparently decides that he has served his literary purpose and departs, somewhat dramatically, from the scene. Without ruining the ending (what makes me think anyone will read this, anyway?) let's just say a sequel is unlikely.

If this seems like a flimsy plot to hang almost a million words on, remember how many films Universal Studios, Hammer Studios, and who knows who else have made based on Bram Stoker's Dracula. Yes, it's padded unmercifully --at one point a character is waiting in someone's library and picks up a book to read and the next chapter of Varney consists of the story she reads! Yes, many of the characters are two-dimensional or less. But there is also genuine humor, and a genuine story. I'm not sure that I'd recommend that you plow through the whole of Varney the Vampire, but you might give the first half --which can stand on its own without the second half-- a try.

THE VAMPYRE  
by John Polidori

in THREE GOTHIC NOVELS

edited by E. F. Bleiler  
Dover, 1966, \$3.00  
(originally published 1819)

If you thought Varney the Vampire was old, here's an even older novel, or rather, novelette, since the word count on this is about 8,500. This is one of three works produced as part of a "challenge match" one night in Geneva, Switzerland, in 1816. The other two were a fragment of a novel by Lord Byron, and another, slightly better known work, Frankenstein by Mary Shelley. It's clear that Shelley was the winner.

The Vampyre is too straightforward a telling of a vampire story to generate horror or tension the way Shelley's story does. As Bleiler points out, however, a large body of work was produced in the remainder of the nineteenth century that was inspired by The Vampyre; including, of course, The Vampyre. Bleiler describes this as the repetition of the incidents of The Vampyre until the author (and Varney) ran out of steam.

Not up to Varney the Vampire in characterization, plot, humor, or even writing style, Polidori's The Vampyre does have the virtues of briefness and historical interest. Polidori's Lord Ruthven has been the model of innumerable vampires through the years since The Vampyre was written. This makes the work a "must-read" for students of the genre.

DOWN TOWN

by Viido Polikarpus and Tappan King  
Tor, 1987, \$2.95

I suppose the cover quote ("...a book that today's readers will pass along to their children in 20 years' time.") should have alerted me to expect what used to be called a "juvenile" novel and is now called a "young adult" novel. Cary Newman's parents are getting a divorce. So he and his mother move back to the city. (His father very conveniently also moves back to the city.) Cary runs off one afternoon and finds himself "Down Town" --not the downtown towards the Battery, but the "Down Town" underneath New York. Well, not really underneath, though Cary gets there through a subway station.

"Down Town" is a parallel city, though not an alternate universe in the usual sense. Apparently all that is lost or abandoned in "Up Town" ends up in Down Town, including people. The places in Down Town have "clever" names: Time Square, Broad Way, the Antiquarium. It's all a fairly average rite-of-passage novel which won't mean much to people who are unfamiliar with New York. The ending is far too pat: in fact, the whole interconnection of the plotlines is contrived. The illustrations would be interesting if they could be appreciated; unfortunately, they seem to have been drawn with a larger format in mind and a mass-market paperback does not do them justice. Perhaps

the adolescents of today do need more modern fables than they can find in the pastoral writings of years ago. But this is too grounded in one city to have appeal to the rest of the country, let alone the world. I can't see a twelve-year-old in Peoria getting much out of all the references: the setting of (say) The Hobbit would serve the purpose as well. A curiosity, but recommended only for New Yorkers and then only as a curiosity piece.

Robert Adams' BOOK OF ALTERNATE WORLDS

edited by Robert Adams,  
Martin H. Greenberg,  
& Pamela Crippen Adams  
Signet, 1987, ISBN 0-451-14894-0, \$3.95

When I first looked at the table of contents of this book, I noticed that the stories were novelettes or even novellas rather than the usual assortment of short stories. And the editors have managed to avoid the usual over-anthologized stories for some less well-known ones. In his brief introduction, Adams says the two are connected: the better alternate-history stories run to longer lengths and hence are usually left out of anthologies, whose goal (it often seems) is to have the longest table of contents possible. The nine stories included here average fifty pages in length.

Murray Deinster's "The Other World" is the story of what might happen if the ancient Egyptian magicians had found a way to travel through portals to a parallel, uninhabited world and then sustain themselves there by looting our own world. It's old-fashioned science fiction, and written with such vibrant images that I couldn't help but think it would make a great movie.

Subtitled "The Role of the Air Force Four-Door Hardtop," George Alec Effinger's "Target: Berlin!" is typically bizarre Effinger, applying what Darrell Schweitzer has called the "silly factor" in alternate histories. In this case, the silly factor seems to be that in this alternate world, the aircraft of World War II were all modified cars: the Americans flew Mustangs, the Germans flew Volkswagens, and the Japanese flew Toyotas. No, that's not an anachronism; World War II was delayed by agreement of all concerned (maybe to give them time to develop cruise control?). This may be some people's cup of tea, but frankly it doesn't do it for me.

Fritz Leiber's "Adept's Gambit" seems mostly an excuse to put Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser into our own world. After a few pages, I decided I didn't care what world they were in, or what happened to them. H Beam Piper's "Last Enemy" I had read before and found fairly mundane then, so did not reread and cannot comment in detail on.

L. Sprague de Camp's "Aristotle and the Gun" is "Alternate History Plot #2A": man goes back in time and tries to change things for the better; things don't work out the way he planned. (For the curious, Plot #1 is "things just happen to turn out differently," and Plot #2B is that "man goes back in

time and tries to change things for the better; things do work out the way he planned." Plot #2B makes for a fairly dull story and is not often used.) Since de Camp knows something about history -- a requirement that many alternate history authors seem to overlook -- the story has a very authentic feel to it and is one of the better ones in this anthology.

Larry Niven's "There's a Werewolf in My Time Machine" is one of the many stories in which Svetz goes back in time to get some historical animal and ends up picking up some fantastical parallel in a parallel world instead. His time machine, like Dr. Who's TARDIS, seems to have some sort of permanent glitch.

Robert Silverberg's "Many Mansions" has so many parallel threads that it's almost impossible to keep track of them all. Silverberg even uses the old hackneyed Plot #2C: man goes back in time, kills grandfather (either his own or someone else's, it doesn't seem to matter), and things may or may not change. Silverberg, as usual, makes even this old plot new.

T. R. Fehrenbach's "Remember the Alamo!" is a combination of Plot #1 and Plot #2B. Normally, it would be a strong story, but it has too much to compete with here. It does have the advantage of dealing with alternate American histories, while most authors in the genre still seem to prefer fooling around with European history.

Jerome Bixby's "One Way Street" is another common plot (okay, Plot #3, if you want a number): man has an accident and finds himself in a world similar to, but not exactly like, our own. Bixby is best known for his story "It's a GOOD Life," adapted for The Twilight Zone. This story will remind the reader of another Twilight Zone story, "The Parallel."

Thought not all the stories are great, the assortment provides something for everyone and a good look at some of the better alternate history stories that you may have missed until now.

#### KNIGHT LIFE

by Peter David  
Ace, 1987, \$2.95

Arthur's been sleeping for 1500 years and now he returns -- to New York City?! Why he's in New York rather than Britain is not entirely explained, though it probably has something to do with Morgan Le Fey being there. How he manages to cope with modern city life is more the point of this story anyway.

This book presumes that Arthur is under some stricture never to lie, even a "little white lie," so a lot of the suspense is supposedly based on how he answers people's questions without lying or getting thrown into Bellevue. That battle between the forces of good and evil becomes a side-plot to whether Arthur will be elected mayor of New York. It's a fun frivolous read, but on closer examination the picture of benevolent dictatorship that Arthur seems to be building up toward may worry the more literal-minded of the audience. Though I enjoyed it

while I was reading it, I can't recommend it as anything more than a timefiller.

#### THE CENTAUR IN THE GARDEN

by Moacyr Scliar,  
Translated by Margaret A. Neves  
Available Press, 1984, price unknown

There are several things that will get me interested in a book. Jewish fantasy is one. A Latin American author is another. A remaindered fantasy is a third. (Okay, so I'm cheap!) So a remaindered novel by a Latin American author about a Jewish centaur is a sure bet to be picked up by me.

Unlike most of the Latin American authors I have read, Scliar is Brazilian; hence his works first appeared in Portuguese and his literary roots are not planted in quite the same soil as the great Spanish-speaking South American fantasists (Borges, Garcia Marquez, et al.). Perhaps because of this, or perhaps for some other reason, The Centaur in the Garden is more realistic than the works of most of the other well-known fantasists of that continent.

Told in a combination of first person and first person speaking in third person, The Centaur in the Garden tells of the life of Guedali, born of Jewish parents who immigrated to South America from Russia. Guedali is doubly an outcast -- in addition to his Jewishness, he is a centaur. This presents some problems from the very beginning, and he spends much of his childhood hidden from the outside world. Eventually he must make his own way in the world, seek love, try for acceptance.

The story is told quite straightforwardly. There is no explanation of why Guedali is a centaur; he just is. Much of what is magical in this book is not explained, and in that regard it is similar to the other authors I have mentioned. It may be a Hispanic trait to accept the mystical more readily than other cultures do. Certainly the Catholicism of Iberia and Latin America tends more toward the mystical than that of other regions, and though Scliar is Jewish, he was educated in part in a Catholic school. For those who want a literate view of the outsider from a different perspective than one usually sees, this book is definitely recommended.

#### THE LAST ELECTION

by Pete Davies  
Vintage Contemporaries, 1986, \$6.95

This is a non-cyberpunk novel or, rather, a non-cyberpunk novel. The England of the future (1990s would be my guess) is definitely punk, but the technological revolution that Gibson et al portray has bypassed England and pretty much everywhere else. Instead, London is a decaying city, with crumbling building, pot-holed streets, thousands of homeless living in garbage heaps, and 24-hour-a-day televised snooker matches to keep the populace happy. All this is overseen by "Nanny," who from the description is an aging, possibly senile, Margaret Thatcher and

the leader of the "Money Party." On top of everything else, the "Last Election" is coming up.

Cyberpunk novels postulate a society of great technology, where many, perhaps even most, live in comfort. Though the characters portrayed in them are the lower strata, we do get a glimpse of the better life that most people live. In The Last Election, few people are at that level. The mass of people are unemployed, kept on the dole and pacified with television. People who do manage to drag themselves away from snooker go to state-run discos where they can get loud music, drinks, and drugs. Naturally, there is more to the plot than this. There are the antics of Wally Wasted, top snooker commentator, and Thor Thunders, the candidate of the People Party. There is the whole question of what the Money Party's plans really are, where the new drugs that are circulating at the disco are coming from, and whether there is any hope for the future.

The Last Election is an engrossing book. It is, however, extremely depressing. The blurb compares it to 1984, A Clockwork Orange, Brazil, and Blade Runner. Of the four, it is most like the vision of the recent version of 1984, that of a Britain slowly falling apart while everyone tries to pretend that everything is fine. The solutions held out by Nanny are dishonest in much the same way as Big Brother's --they are solutions, true, but they are not what they appear to be. As long as you're not the type who gets suicidally depressed by the shape the world is likely to be in ten years, I would recommend this book.

#### MEMORIES

by Mike McQuay  
Bantam Spectra, 1987, \$3.95

There are some ideas that are around as stereotypes or cliches for ages before someone looks at them lopsided and says, "What if?" Certainly the traditional inmate of a mental institution who believes he is Napoleon is a familiar character. But not until now has anyone taken that idea and said, "What if he really were Napoleon?"

Well, Mike McQuay has done so. Memories is set in the same future that McQuay used in his first novel, Lifekeeper. That novel was basically a re-telling of Brave New World, but in Memories McQuay breaks new ground. Individually, the ideas are not new; consciousnesses travelling in time and inhabiting new bodies, the sorts of personalities that an ultra-regimented future will develop, the grandfather paradox. But McQuay combines them to make something new. It's not entirely successful. I felt that the love story tended to get in the way of the rest of the plot, and some of the coincidences were to deus ex machina. But on the whole, Memories gives us some interesting views of how characters from different backgrounds would react to the power to travel through time and (possibly) affect history.

This novel, to some extent, follows the predestination theory of time travel: that

is, whatever you do in the past was already done. In one sub-plot (and there are several) one character does what he did because he had done what he did. (I am being purposely obscure here to avoid giving any spoilers.) Unfortunately, part of the impact of that sub-plot revolves not only around the character not knowing history very well (which is believable) but, more importantly, around the reader not knowing history very well either. The reader may very well react with a "Well, of course that's what would happen!" when the light finally dawns on the character.

On the other hand, I found much of the main plot and other sub-plots not as obvious, and I believe that the interplay of the characters was much more the point of the novel than the plot. In the aforementioned sub-plot, the character's feelings are far more important than the actual events that transpire, the reasons for the actions more important than the actions themselves. There is much of the child's wish "Please make that it didn't happen" in this novel. Yet, just as in real life, people who think they can make things better often actually make them worse. All revolutionaries think they are making things better; some succeed, but many are trading the frying pan for the fire.

In Memories, many of the characters are trying to make things better. To the extent the results are pre-ordained, the results of their actions are often the exact opposite of their intent. Think of it as "conservation of effort": whatever effort is put forth, whether for or against a goal, will help to bring about the inevitable outcome. This conservation of effort is not so obvious as the Twilight Zone episode in which a man goes back in time to prevent an accident and ends up by causing it through the actions he takes to stop it. But it is there.

As a time travel story, Memories has more than the usual number of ideas floating around in it. The characters are real, and their predicaments are real. Though I was not impressed by McQuay's Lifekeeper, I would recommend Memories.

#### WINTER'S DAUGHTER

by Charles Whitmore  
Timescape, 1984, \$14.95

There are a lot of post-nuclear-holocaust books these days, but no others like this one. Face it, how many novels of any genre are written in the style of a Scandinavian saga?

This book was recommended at READERCON. The person recommending it talked about its lack of commercial success, which he attributed to the fact that readers who picked it up didn't realize they were reading a modern Scandinavian saga, and felt the style too episodic and terse. By the way, I call this style Scandinavian for lack of a better term. Most of the sagas known today in this country are Icelandic, yet this book could not be called Icelandic. Calling it a "Viking saga" doesn't seem right either. All in all, "Scandinavian" seems the most neutral term.

Divided into three major sections, the story covers the life of Signe Ragnhildsdatter and her family in the years following Ragnarok, a.k.a. the Twilight of the Gods, a.k.a. World War III. Signe was born in Africa shortly after the war, to a Norwegian mother and an American father who were there when war broke out. Africa was spared most of the destruction and aftermath of the war, but Europeans and Americans were looked upon with distrust. Her early life was not easy. Eventually Signe and her children leave Africa and travel first to America, then to their home in Norway.

The episodes average between one and two pages each. You could think of it as learning about someone's experiences by looking at individual snapshots from a scrapbook, or by hearing them describe isolated incidents. It's very much the way movies work, yet in novel form most readers find it awkward and stilted.

The introduction, like the introduction to Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, is written from the perspective of a scholar of the novel's future. In this case, the writer talks about how the style of this novel makes it more accessible to the readers of his present, a comment which can only seem ironic in view of the novel's apparent inaccessibility to the readers of ours.

The episodic nature of the story allows Whitmore to cover a lot of time and territory in a couple of hundred pages. He can give us glimpses into many different aspects of post-holocaust society: the enclaves that are set up, the reinstatement of trade and international relationships, the attitudes of people toward strangers. He shows us sketches; we need to fill in the details.

In spite of this, the characters come alive. They have depth and seem very real, not the caricatures you might expect from the terse style. Whitmore manages to avoid being harpooned by the limitations of his medium. Even though I have not read a lot of Scandinavian sagas, I found this book enjoyable and would recommend it. If you have some background knowledge of sagas, you will probably appreciate this even more.

#### TIME AFTER TIME

by Allen Appel

Dell, 1987 (1985c), \$6.95

[This book should not be confused with Karl Alexander's book *Time after Time* or the movie of the same name based on it). Nor is it related to the 1986 John Gielgud movie, *Time after Time*, which has nothing to do with science fiction. Nor is it Jack Finney's *Time and Again*, which was made into *Somewhere in Time*. Do you get the feeling that there's a shocking shortage of time travel titles?]

Alex Balfour has been blacking out and having strange dreams about the Romanovs, the Bolsheviks, and Rasputin. Or are they dreams? When he wakes up with mud on his shoes and Rasputin's coat on his back, he begins to have his doubts.

This book is a mixed bag. The time travel aspect is not, shall we say, entirely new. Appel describes time travel accomplished without mechanisms; just as John Carter "wishes" himself to Mars, so is Balfour "wished" to Russia. But is he doing the wishing? Certainly the clues to the mystery, if mystery it is, are all laid out for the reader.

I am suspicious of the historical accuracy. I cannot believe that the Okhrana would be as benign as Appel portrays them. Of course, it wouldn't do to have his main character killed off halfway through the novel, but still.... He also fails to convey the chaos of the times, at least as compared with, say, *Reds*. Rasputin serves no purpose but to give the reader something familiar to latch onto from that period. The Cossacks seem very stereotyped.

What is the most annoying, though, is Appel's tendency to turn a historical novel into a cookbook. Several times in the first half, he lapses into passages such as:

He ran the knife under the skin of a chicken breast, pulled it out at the top, then stripped the breast down. He severed the small tendon at the top of the meat, ran his thumb into the pockets between the two fillets, and cut the large one free. With two more quick cuts he removed the small fillet ....

The description goes on for five more paragraphs; you can cook, actually cook, the meal from his description. Perhaps Appel was making some subtle joke on the fact that one of the reasons for the Russian Revolution was that peasants were starving while the nobility ate at lavish banquets, but I doubt it.

Happily, Appel leaves off from this tendency (though he slips back into it briefly in a description of how to make hot coffee in a prison cell with no cooking facilities). He does have the ability to convey emotion, as in his simple description of Balfour's reaction to a hot bath after spending a couple of months in prison: "Once, in college, he'd gone to bed with two women at the same time. That had been great, one of life's treasured memories. It didn't hold a candle to this."

Towards the end, all is explained and the loose ends dealt with in a moderately satisfactory way. Appel does not really come to terms with the implications of changing history, and that may be disappointing to people who are looking for that based on the book's blurb. This book has apparently gained much acclaim in mainstream literary circles (including *The New York Times Book Review*, which is quoted extensively on the front and back covers and the first page). My reaction as a science fiction reader is much the same as my reaction to Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*: it is interesting not for what it says but for how it says it, not for bringing new and original ideas to the field but for bringing a new perspective to old ideas.

I think it is important to read science fiction novels written "outside the ghetto,"

not to put on an aura of culture, but to look with an outsider's perspective at a field we know. Looking at things differently is, after all, what most of science fiction is about.

### GOD GAME

by Andrew M. Greeley  
Tor, 1987 (1986c), \$4.50

Like Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale and Appel's Time after Time, God Game is another science fiction novel written by a "mainstream" author. [[I differ; Greeley has appeared regularly in F&SF and Amazing. He is more of a "cross-stream" author. \*Lan]] In this case, the author is a mystery author who is also a Catholic priest, and my understanding is that his previous novels have been set in the Church. In this novel, his main character is a priest, so he retains that connection with his past. But this is not a mystery; it is entirely science fiction, and in some ways fantasy.

The "God Game" of the title is an electronic role-playing game called "Duke and Duchess" that the narrator's friend Nathan has designed and given to the narrator to test-play. While he is testing it, a bolt of lightning hits his satellite dish. It apparently doesn't damage either the television or the computer attached to it (no, this isn't the fantasy aspect, though anyone who's had a similar occurrence knows it's extremely unlikely there'd be no damage), but suddenly the animated blips on the screen turn into a "real" movie. The game is still running, but differently than before. The narrator begins to realize something has gone wrong. He gradually comes to understand that the lightning has opened a portal into another universe --there's some scientific hand-waving to explain this-- and that he is God in that universe.

This novel has been likened to Frankenstein, but that is inaccurate. The narrator has not created anyone; he has inherited all his characters. He spends most of the novel trying to reconcile his position as the Supreme Being of that universe with his belief in God and his priestly training. The writing is straightforward. Greeley does not rely on style to tell his story. He relies on plot. In this case, he relies on two plots: the main plot of the narrator who finds he is God, and the internal plot of the events in the other universe, a fantasy kingdom with dukes, duchesses, witches, sprites, and all the trappings. The inter-weaving of the two keeps the book moving along. This means the philosophical monologues of the narrator, which you would think might slow the book down, are kept shorter than if Greeley had only one plot to deal with. The resolution is perhaps not entirely satisfactory, but that may be the point.

Greeley has achieved such success with God Game that his next (and most recent) novel is even more definitely science fiction. I am curious to see if he continues using his religious background to give us novels of the sort that C. S. Lewis and James Blish used to write.

### ISAAC ASIMOV'S ROBOT CITY BOOK I: ODYSSEY

by Michael P. Kube-McDowell  
Ace, 1987, \$2.95

A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper  
Copyright 1987 Evelyn C. Leeper

Michael Kube-McDowell's Odyssey starts out with two strikes against it: it's set in someone else's universe, and it's the first book of a series. So why did I buy it? Good question --I wish I had a good answer.

I understand why authors like to write stories set in preformed universes. After all, one advantage that mainstream writers have over science fiction writers is that they don't have to think up a society or other background to go with their plot. And for those who like Sherlock Holmes, or Star Trek, or Asimov's positronic robots, the lure of a new addition to the oeuvre can be a powerful inducement to part with their \$2.95.

And the trend is becoming popular. Recently the science fiction and fantasy field has seen a lot of "shared-world" anthologies (Robert Asprin's Thieves' World and Janet Morris' Heroes in Hell are among the most popular.) Now in addition, we are seeing more and more books with the blurb "X writing in the Science Fiction Worlds of Y." (Usually this can be expressed more accurately as "Joe Unknown writing in the Science Fiction Worlds of John Multiple-Hugo-Winner.") In the last few months, in addition to the "positronic robot" series we have seen Charles Platt's Plasm (a sequel to Piers Anthony's Chthon and Phthor), two interactive fiction books by Mark Acres set in Robert Heinlein's Starship Troopers world, and undoubtedly other I have missed. There's even a new "Venus Prime" series (the first one, Breaking the Strain, by Paul Preuss) which claims to have been inspired by Arthur C. Clarke, whatever that means. What's odd about this is that these books are appearing while the original authors are still alive --it used to be the case that such novels were written after the original author died and people had to give up all hope of ever getting any more from him or her.

However, as Orson Scott Card has so eloquently observed, when an author writes a novel in another author's universe, s/he doesn't write an original novel. Not just, mind you, that the novel that is written is unoriginal, but also that there is an original novel that isn't written. As Card observes, Heinlein's "Lensman" novel might have been great, but luckily he decided to write Starship Troopers and Glory Road instead. And I'm sure Haldeman's sequel to Starship Troopers would have been excellent, but the field has been enriched by the fact that he wrote The Forever War instead. What novel did Kube-McDowell not write when he wrote Odyssey? Is there a Jimbo for unborn novels, as many believed there was for the souls of yet-unborn children. If so, what lives there?

Odyssey's other flaw is more prosaic--and also more and more common. Once again we have, not the first book of a series, but

the first third (?) of a novel. There is no resolution at the end of this volume. The second part (Mike McQuay's Suspicion) is now out, but any future parts remain unavailable. [[Actually, part 3, William F. Wu's Cyborg, and part 4, Arthur Byron Cover's Prodigy, are now out. \*Lan]] At least in the movies, when you paid for Chapter 1 of The Phantom Empire you got a full-length complete feature film with it (or even two). The flaw is exacerbated by the omission of any mention on the cover that this is not a self-contained story.

So with two strikes against it already, what would I say about the book itself? Well, it's not even a good addition to Asimov's positronic robots. The robots are a very small part of what is going on, they don't ring true, and there are non-human alien races, a very non-Asimovian touch. All in all, I would have to rate this book a strike-out. It could be that the second and third novels will make it all worthwhile, but I'm not inspired to spend my money to find out.

#### NAPOLEON DISENTIMED

by Hayford Peirce  
Tor, 1987, \$3.50

This novel by Hayford Peirce is the second in the "Ben Bova Discoveries" series (the first is Rebecca Ore's Becoming Alien). From the introductory blurb, I get the impression that Bova is attempting to imitate the "Ace Science Fiction Specials" series that Terry Carr edited so successfully be-

fore his death. But judging from this novel --admittedly a very small sample, statistically speaking-- Bova has a way to go. While it's true that some of Carr's selections were somewhat traditional science fiction (Kim Stanley Robinson's The Wild Shore, for example), others like Lucius Shepard's Green Eyes and Carter Scholz's Palimpsests were more unusual stylistic experiments. Napoleon Disentimed is straightforward time travel/alternate worlds science fiction.

The style seems inspired more by Chelsea Quinn Yarbro's "Saint-Germain" series than anything else --long, flowery descriptions of clothing, furniture, and so on. The idea is that there is this device, Godhead (Gathering, Organizing, and Dispersing Holistically Extratemporal Autonomous Device), which belonged to a scientific swami but somehow came into the possession of the MacNair. This device is an alternate worlds device (time travel is also involved). Pretty soon people are skipping around from world to world, meeting other versions of themselves and getting involved with a group trying to use time travel to overthrow Napoleon before he takes (took?) over all of Europe. None of it struck me as original. The style seemed to bog down the action. The whole thing reminded me of nothing so much as Jacobean drama.

It is not fair to judge the series on the basis of a single book. It is certainly true that the "Ace Science Fiction Specials" had their share of duds. So I will reserve judgment on this series until I sample one or two other novels. But for me, it has gotten off to an inauspicious start.

## Book Reviews by Terry O'Brien

#### ARROWS OF THE QUEEN

by Mercedes Lackey  
DAW, 1987, \$2.95

Talia, child of the patriarchal and parochial farming Households, is Chosen by the horse-like Companions to be a Herald. Heralds are the kingdom's paladins, the visible presence of the monarchy, as well as being judges, diplomats, couriers, and figures of legend. This, of course, was beyond Talia's most secret and fervent desire, yet she had no idea that this was going to be the most difficult thing she could ever have gotten involved with, thrusting her directly into the fierce (and possibly fatal) political situation surrounding the Queen.

Talia is not only Chosen as a Herald, she is chosen to be the Queen's Own: an office combining the duties of a counselor and confessor, and all-around good friend; a most difficult task for anyone, let alone a thirteen year old girl, especially considering the rumors that the previous holder of the office was murdered by plotters against the throne. Fortunately she has the experience of her Companion to draw upon, plus her own unquenchable spirit and considerate nature, to help her through. She needs them, and all

of her friends, in order to help both her and the Queen to survive.

Added to her trials is that she must help tame Elspath, the unruly daughter of the Queen, who by law must be Chosen as a Herald or be refused acknowledgement as the Heir. Elspath, commonly known as "The Brat," is being gradually spoiled and turned against the Heralds by plotters from within and without the kingdom. How Talia manages to reverse this is a very believable and excellent sub-plot to the story.

In certain ways, this is a coming of age story. Talia when she first appears is a painfully shy young girl, a result of the difficult upbringing she was forced to bear. Fortunately for her, it was not enough to break her spirit (or else she wouldn't have been Chosen), but she is sorely tested, especially when her strong empathic gifts start to appear. She was born and raised in a culture that keeps women in the Household, marrying them off at a young age and denying any possibility of growth (as if many of the women were capable of it). That she manages to overcome that upbringing marks Talia as a special individual, indeed.

The story has a little more depth than is usual in the first books of trilogies. It sets the stage and populates it with those

will turn out to be Talia's firmest friends, along with vague hints and shadowy glimpses at the enemies of the Queen. Fortunately Talia has little contact with them. The one threat to Talia is dealt with early on, and then she is left alone.

This book is the author's first full-length novel (although she has done quite well with shorter fiction), and I hope she continues to maintain (or better) this level of quality through the rest of the series.

#### RUNESPEAR

by Victor Milan and Melinda M. Snodgrass  
Questor, 1987, \$4.50

This is a good book; not a great book, but certainly a worthwhile one, one that can be described as a "fun read." It maintains a fine sense of humor while managing to remain deadly serious throughout the story.

The story is about three individuals in pre-World War II Berlin (Melbourne Shrewsbury, Oxford don and Professor of Nordic History at the University of Berlin; Rafe Springer, adventurer and ex-pupil of Shrewsbury's; and Billi Forsyth, female (but certainly not a lady) reporter), and their recruitment by Himmler to recover Gungnir, the legendary spear of Odin, believed to be somewhere in the heart of Greenland. They are to be accompanied by several elite members of the German military.

On their way they must contend with assorted spies from foreign governments and even other German espionage services who have no intention of allowing this quest to continue. And when they arrive in Greenland, not only do they have to contend with the weather and climate, but also with several beings from Norse mythology, including the spear's owner. That they manage to survive, let alone win the goal of their questing, is a compliment to their abilities.

I'm sorry, but several times I expected Indiana Jones to step out from behind a rock to take part in this adventure. The basic plot is certainly analogous to Raiders of the Lost Ark, but there are a number of serious elements involved. The overall tone isn't helped when Professor Shrewsbury starts talking about his old friends Clive and Ronald back at Oxford (being C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien). Not to mention the ship they sailed Greenland on, the Holger Danske.

Aside from that, there is a considerable feeling of realism in this book, especially in the first half which takes place in Berlin. The scenery is quite convincing, but what really brings the feeling home is the political in-fighting going on between the different security forces in the German government and Nazi party. It is certainly far from the monolithic apparatus that the casual reader (or watcher, especially of late-night WW II movies) of WW II history would expect.

The society of the Greenland Eskimos, as well as the harsh terrain they are traveling through, is also very well described. I have to commend the research that the two authors put into this work: it reads almost like a travelogue, but the details don't get in the



way of the story line, something many other books have been far less successful at.

There are a number of nice scenes in this book. A memorable one is the group being taken to the opera (Wagner, of course). Another is Billi's embarrassing their Gestapo guard while they are being kept under house arrest.

There's also a nice scene where Rafe puts a .45 automatic in Billi's hands and tries to teach her how to shoot. She wonders what was wrong with her present pistol, a .25-caliber Beretta, and Rafe dismisses it as a BB gun. (A .25-caliber Beretta a lady's weapon, but not a man-stopper? Sounds like we've been reading the same James Bond books.) Billi surprises everyone by being a fine shot.

I was rather amused that Shrewsbury attracted Billi's attention, and not the younger Rafe. It wasn't against character for her to prefer the older man, and I was actually glad she did. Actually, Shrewsbury is not that much older; he was still fit enough to go on a grueling Arctic expedition. I think she preferred his maturity over Rafe's schoolboy nature.

Like I said before, this is a good book, and I would definitely recommend it. There's danger, adventure, romance, spies, deities, just about anything anyone could want, all blended together in a lively tale.

#### THE SWORD AND THE DAGGER

by Ardath Mayhar  
FASA Corporation, 1987, \$3.95

This is the second book based on the Battletech series of games produced by FASA. The first book, Decision at Thunder Rift by William R. Keith Jr was reviewed earlier.

This book involves more than the simple scenario of guerrilla and Mecha combat that comprised most of the first book. It involves the political intrigue that stand behind the battles of massive armored figures stalking across the battlefield, intrigue where a simple thrust of a knife could win a war that no army could.

The story revolves around Hanse Davion and his life-long friend Ardan Sortek. Hanse is the Prince of the Federated Suns, one of the Successor States, the five great empires left after the collapse of the Star League, and Ardan is the commander of his personal guard. The trouble starts when Ardan becomes disillusioned with Hanse and the entire political process. A warrior born and trained, Ardan cannot stand the political intrigue that surrounds his friend, and the political maneuvers he must make. When a competing State attacks the outpost world Stein's Folly, Ardan decides to return to active combat.

Ardan's experience and intuition prevents the Federated attack force from dropping into an ambush, but he is captured in the fighting. While captured, he discovers a plot against Hanse, but cannot convince anyone of it. Finally, he must take matters into his own hands, relying only on his own abilities and his few close friends in order to rescue Hanse.

Aside from the two main characters, there are several interesting secondary characters. Maximillion Liao is the ruler of the Capellan States, the weakest of the Successor States, but he has built one empire and nearly topples another with his cunning and plotting. He would make a most dangerous enemy, if one was unfortunate enough to stand in his way.

On the other side, Hanse's future wife Melissa, daughter of the leader of the Lyran Commonwealth, is the one who takes Ardan's fragmentary information and pieces together the plot, discovering a traitor within their own staff in the process.

The title is a description of the personalities and interplay between the two primary characters, Ardan Sortek and Hanse Davion. Ardan is a soldier, with a soldier's straight-forwardness and lack of tact; a sword, a blatant killing machine. Hanse, on the other hand, is a politician and diplomat, who keeps his intentions hidden from view: a dagger, hidden and used when least expected.

The book is somewhat slow moving in the first several chapters. There is some awkward phrasing in spots, especially when trying to describe Mecha combat. The author relies too much on giving passive descriptions of weapons instead of active descriptions of them.

Adding to the drag is that there appears to be padding, such as with the natives of Stein's Folly. There is no adequate groundwork of preparation for the introduction of them as a plot element, which made the whole scene very stilted. The story to that point would have read just as well, and perhaps a little better without them in it.

I also had a complaint about the plotting. Why would the enemy let Ardan get a glimpse of Hanse's double when he was captured? This calculated plot did not seem very intelligent, no matter how hard the author tried to explain it. All it seemed like was a convenient means of helping Ardan convince someone else of the veracity of his story.

The story does pick up speed later on,

especially when the true plot is revealed and Ardan must move quickly before the plot is sprung against his old friend Hanse, and then afterwards, as well, to prevent the plot from reaching a climax.

I can't say this book is better than the previous one, but there are some things that recommend it.

#### FRANK HERBERT: THE MAKER OF DUNE

Edited by Tom O'Reilly  
Berkley, 1987, \$7.95

This is a collection of essays, articles, and interviews with Frank Herbert, and a complete bibliography. The essays and articles are drawn from a number of sources, reflecting among other things Herbert's fascination and genuine concern with the ecology. The interviews are among the last that Frank gave. All of these pieces range throughout his writing career, but are as relevant today as when they were written.

Frank Herbert cared deeply for humanity, and was honestly concerned about its present and its future. His essays reveal his deep and guarded optimism about the human race. No matter how awful the future, the feeling that he believed that humanity could survive whatever the universe or itself could set against it.

He was (obviously) very interested in and concerned with ecology, even before it became a buzz-word and a political issue. He had an understanding of the process of ecology, which he described as being far different than the views held by people with whom ecology was merely a political issue. Of course, you can see that in books like Dune and The Green Brain. But you wouldn't know the depth of his feelings unless you had talked with him or had read his essays on the subject. Unfortunately, the former is now impossible, so we have to make do with the latter.

And, of course, he was also interested in writing, and in writing science fiction. Reprinted is his introduction to the fifteenth collection of the Nebula Awards. Also included are several essays on the themes of writing "Men on Other Planets" should be required reading for most new authors). There is even an essay on writing poetry.

Then there is a chapter on the origins of his best-known work, Dune. Included is the correspondence Frank had with John Campbell, including Campbell's guarded congratulations of the publication of Dune in Analog, as well as other essays dealing with the actual plotting and writing of the trilogy, insights into the character of Paul ("Dangers of the Superhero"), and the ecological underpinnings of the book. I hadn't known that all three of the first Dune books were plotted and written almost at the same time. In fact, some of the chapters of Dune: Messiah and Children of Dune were written at the same time as Dune.

Ignore the blurb on the cover ("The definitive guide to the life work of science fiction's grandest creator"). I'm sure this description, which is not entirely unfounded, was just the result of some stupid or

overzealous (there is a difference: stupidity has many forms, of which overzealousness is only one) copy editor. It's like trying to name the "Best Science Fiction Writer," and how many times have people fought over that? But that's hardly a reason to ignore this book.

This book demonstrates how good of an essayist Frank Herbert was, even better than the majority of his fiction. It is definitely required reading by anyone who wants to better understand a landmark author in the field. The field of SF has been lessened by his passing. Frank Herbert, we'll miss you.

#### LIEGE-KILLER

by Christopher Hinz

St. Martin's Press, 1987, \$19.95

The Human race of two hundred years in the future lives in orbiting colonies. Earth itself was blasted during the years of the Apocalypse, and is now only barely livable, but Humanity has survived. The Colonies are peaceful and, for the most part, content, primarily through the efforts of E-Tech, an organization dedicated to slowing the birth-rate of technology.

Into this still pool is dropped a Paratwa assassin, a creature of one mind in two human bodies, of blazing inhuman speed and deadliness. And also quite insane. A leftover from the dark years before the Apocalypse, when thousands of such were in use, this assassin was held in deep cryo-suspension on Earth and smuggled back to the colonies where it goes on a seemingly senseless rampage of killing. And the effects of these killings will ripple out to affect the entire colonies.

When Councillor Rome Franco, Director of E-Tech, learns of the existence of the Paratwa, he orders a search through E-Tech's data systems for information, a search which uncovers two men in cryosuspension, Nick and Gillian. They are the only survivors of an E-Tech Paratwa hunt team of the time before the Apocalypse. They are the keys to defeating the Paratwa. It is Gillian who discovers that the assassin is the deadliest of the Paratwa designs, one that Nick and Gillian's hunt team fought and lost to before the Apocalypse, a Jeek Elemental known as "Liege Killer." And Nick discovers the sense behind the killings, the plan of the even-more-dangerous Ock Ash Paratwa, designed and bred to conquer and subjugate, not kill.

At this point the hunt takes on a much more personal and deadlier aspect. The disguised identity of both the individual bodies of the Ock Ash Paratwa must be discovered, especially when it becomes apparent that it has been using its position to facilitate its own long-range plans (and these beings are very long-lived, so these plans are scaled in decades and centuries) for the ultimate domination of Humanity. And the assassin must be stopped, a task that a trained and experienced team could not accomplish in the past. But the hunt team is not without its own secrets and abilities.

This is a first novel, and a very good

one. There weren't very many dull moments, and I found very little (if any) padding. There are a considerable and welcome number of surprises in the book. In many ways this is a mystery novel, and the unraveling of these mysteries form some of the pleasant moments during the story.

I did like the technical detail that went into the fighting styles and skills of the Paratwa. Having two positions of observation gives a greater view of the field of battle, and being able to attack and defend from both positions is an incredible advantage, and the author presented both excellently. In addition, the methods of combatting such an assassin was also well defined, and could have worked.

I was also impressed with the way the author held back story elements, springing them on the reader when most effective. I was totally unsuspecting if the identity of Gillian until he is finally revealed, and his identity is a greater part of the larger plot than the assassin's.

The end of the book promises a sequel, sometime in the future when the rest of the Paratwa return to Earth. Humanity was to be held in check with no scientific progress that might provide a defense and no warning of the danger it holds. Now the Colonies are indeed warned, and have been educated in the manners of their would-be conquerors. How will it defend itself? Will the Colonies be forced to give up their peaceful and contented existence in order to protect the possibility of that existence? How have the other Paratwa been preparing for their attempted conquest? And what will Nick and Gillian do, having themselves put back in cryo-suspension? I for one would like to see these questions answered in another book.

#### IN THE FIELD OF FIRE

Edited by Jeanne Van Buren Dann  
and Jack Dann  
TOR, 1987, \$17.95

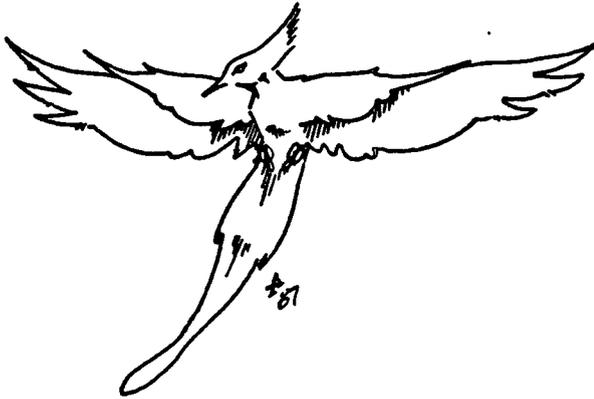
Stories are by: Brian Aldiss, Ben Bova, Susan Casper, Ronald Anthony Cross, Gardner Dozois, Harlan Ellison, Dennis Etchison, Karen Joy Fowler, Robert Frazier, Charles L. Grant, Joe Haldeman, John Kessel, Barry Malzberg, Bruce McAllister, Kim Stanley Robinson, Richard Paul Russo, Lucius Shepard, Lewis Shiner, David Smeds, Craig Lee Strete, and Kate Wilhelm.

This is an anthology of stories dealing with the Vietnam War, and its effects and after-effects. It is in places vivid, disturbing, controversial, and frightening.

It is also depressing.

After all, the dominant themes of the Vietnam War is death and destruction, so how can it be otherwise? Wars, especially those of the past several decades, are depressing. These stories show us the truth about war, the bloodiness and horror of it, the darker side of man's soul.

The people involved know what they are talking about. Some, like Joe Haldeman, have served in 'Nam. Some, like Jeanne Dann, are professionally involved with the psychologi-



cal problems of Vietnam veterans. Others use a writer's unique empathy to weave a story, taking the archetypical elements of war and death, and fear, and destruction, with the particular scenery of the Vietnam conflict (whether there or in the streets of the U. S.) to color it. No matter how they did it, each story is a unique reflection of war and its effect on those caught up in it:

This is not a book that can be read in any one sitting by anyone with any empathy at all. It is best read in small doses, with plenty of rest between the stories. But for those of us who were too young (or too old, or any other too) to experience fully the totality of Vietnam, this book will at least present a hard look at it. And that should be done, if only to prevent something like it from happening again.

## Book Reviews by Ann Cecil

### Three Science Fiction Fantasies

#### TRIPLET

by Timothy Zahn  
Baen Books, 1987, \$3.95

#### SWEET SILVER BLUE

by Glen Cook  
NAL/Signet, 1987, \$3.50

#### THRESHOLD

by David Palmer  
Bantam Spectra, 1985, \$2.95

These three novels are officially fantasies, by authors whose reputations were gained in "hard" science fiction. In all three, it is obvious that the author is straining to conform to a genre in which he is less than comfortable. Surprisingly, Zahn, who has always been the typical "Analog" author, with characters and emotions subordinate to the idea, is the most successful of the three.

Triplet refers to a world which has two "twin" worlds, so that all three occupy the same spatial coordinates. A determined young heiress, out to establish her own identity, hires a cynical, experienced guide for her trip through the "gates" to first Shamsheer, a world of "magic-like" advanced technology, and then Karyx, where magic really works and dealing with demons is an everyday problem. All of the magic obeys logical, rigorous rules, is internally consistent and understandable (if occasionally not immediately obvious). There is a puzzle to be solved, as well as numerous dangers to survive, and -- surprise -- a nice romance, the best characterization Zahn's done, and a good balance of suspense and humor.

Sweet Silver Blues treats its trolls and goblins as casually as if they were aliens and robots. What makes this truly fantasy is

the darker elements of the plot, the nightmare behind what's really happening. A Sam Spade type detective (Garrett) agrees to track down an old girlfriend, to notify her that she's inherited a fortune in ill-gotten silver. Playing on the best of the hard-boiled detective cliches, there's a dead old war buddy involved, a sexy bitch who's the buddy's sister, a sexier innocent, a dumb but loyal and super-strong pal, and corpses all over the trail leading to the heiress. The finale would be memorable -- Cook has a neat idea, and some effective imagery -- but Cook made the fatal mistake of treating his characters like jokes. If he had taken them seriously, this would have been an impressive blending of detective story and fantasy. It just misses.

Threshold has cutesy names (wWyh'j, famM'hr) and bullshit pseudo-science to explain traditional magic as misunderstood technology. The hero is an arrogant self-made macho man, Peter Cory, who is contacted by a blonde witch named Meg, whose twitty dialogue is meant to be charmingly distracted, and her cat-like familiar Memphis, whose smart-ass replies belong in a TV sit-com. Peter is needed to save the universe, but first he must go through a rite of passage (literally) forcing him over a powerful threshold, so he can become Superman. The novel is mostly comprised of the boringly detailed account of Peter steadily overcoming all obstacles in the passage to win his rightful place at the head of the universe with his true blonde by his side. Threshold is truly fantasy in the sense that the plot and theme represent every high-school boy's daydream. There is no redeeming touch of reality to lift this novel out of wet-dream status and into literature.

Comparing these three novels brings up the inevitable question: what is fantasy? Is it the use of magic, as in Triplet? Is it the day-dream realized, as in Threshold? Is it the sense of things beyond our rules, outside our comprehension, just around that next corner, as in Sweet Silver Blues? I'm not sure there's an answer, though I suspect

the very best fantasies are all of the above. In any case, Triplet is recommended as a "good read" to all; Sweet Silver Blues is recommended for those who like detective parodies; Threshold is recommended for adolescent boys of whatever chronological age.

#### THE HYADES CONTRACT

by Wynne Whiteford  
Ace, 1987, \$2.95

This is classic science fiction: the emphasis is on the ideas and the engineering. Character are thinly sketched, developed only to the minimum necessary to carry the author's ideas. In contrast to the current wave of "just average joes in space" (the Alien influence?), all the Humans and the dominant aliens in this book are bright, well-trained, and extremely civilized.

The Hyades Contract explores a range of possible Human responses to meeting a race of manipulative aliens which prove repeatedly to be better. While the underlying theme is about losing your number one status (yes, the author is British), the aliens are very logically worked out. There is even a second alien race, demonstrating a possible horrible fate for Humanity.

There are some nice twists on standard cliches. There are some interesting characters, like the only marginally Human "zero G" people, and the woman from the heavy gravity all-female planet. Unfortunately, the author doesn't do much with them; the hero is a very standard macho type, as uninteresting as his Barbie-Doll mate.

The Hyades Contract has some interesting situations and solid problem-solving action; it is pleasant reading, but thin.

#### THE GLASS HAMMER

by K. W. Jeter  
NAL/Signet, 1986, \$2.95

What would a "modern morality tale", a parable, be like? This book is an attempt at one -- a format like a rock video, with flash-backs and -forwards, images reacting to images, people judging themselves and being judged. This is technology in service of truth, the multi-layered, inexact goddess of many answers.

The Glass Hammer is about Ross Schuyler's involvement with the cult known as the God-friends, in which he unintentionally becomes a major figure. The life he leads as a smuggler/driver across a future post-catastrophe America is a background to his struggle with his theological problems. Revelations about the true source of the dangers he faces propel him to face reality. His final decision, to acknowledge his responsibility for his actions and what he does about it, are the plot.

The outward trappings of the book are reminiscent of other books: Damnation Alley, for the scenery, Hard-Wired for the quirky love/hate relationships, and of course almost any Philip K. Dick novel for the religion-gone-berserk aspects. Like Dick, Jeter packs an intensity of ideas, references, and

images into every sentence. But Jeter's voice is his own, carrying an distinctive tautness and high tension. His imagery is remarkable as he invests seemingly ordinary objects with increasing layers of significance. My favorite from The Glass Hammer is the cathedral window which perhaps was never there -- and maybe more beautiful because of that. Highly recommended.

#### GOLDEN SUNLANDS

by Christopher Rowley  
DelRey, 1987, \$3.50

This book, which seems to be the first of a series, involves snatching a world full of Human colonists off to an artificial universe built in a Space-Time Discontinuity. Since my knowledge of physics is null, I have no way of judging whether the theory discussed is reasonable or not. The world, which is full of alien novelties, is not so stunning that this reader failed to notice the cardboard characterization and (appropriately) wooden dialogue. An assortment of unlikely types (a boy genius hacker, his athletic mother, his "Fonzie"-type buddy, a Federal Ranger named Cracka Buckshore, a corrupt Frontier Sheriff, the Sheriff's old-maid sister, and a couple of moonshiners) stumble from one adventure to the next. None of them are particularly funny, but since it's impossible to take the characters seriously, none are particularly interesting either, and most are vaguely reminiscent of better books. Not recommended.

#### WILD CARDS

by George R. R. Martin  
Bantam/Spectra, 1986, \$3.95

This is a "shared gimmick" anthology, stories set in a common world (ours) which reflect a common premise: What if, in 1946, after the end of WW II, an alien race had released a plague virus over New York City that either 1) gave you a superpower (hereinafter called an Ace), 2) gave you a grotesque deformity (hereinafter called a Joker), or 3) killed you (hereinafter called dead).

Taking this premise, a set of 11 top authors (Zelazny, Martin, Lewis Shiner, Walter Jon Williams, Howard Waldrop, etc.) created connected stories bringing the revised history of our times up to the '80s. The stories, many of which are simply vignettes of what it would mean to be different (good and bad), reflect common themes: superpowers won't buy happiness, and there's no point in trying, cause one can't fight the system, even with superpowers.

The best of the resulting stories are the "evil superpower" stories, like Stephen Leigh's "Strings", or Victor Milan's "Transfigurations". By far the best writing in the book is Martin's clever "Interludes", which parody styles of various commentators. This anthology has been highly praised, and has already spawned two sequels. I disliked it intensely -- waste appalls me -- and don't recommend it.

## FREE LIVE FREE

by Gene Wolfe  
Tor, 1986, \$7.??

This is only marginally SF; except for the ending gizmo, the story seems to be about the effect of hope and an example of pride and courage on four dismally shabby losers. An overweight hooker, a salesman that makes Willy Loman look like a terrific success, a sleazy private eye, and a gypsy trying to upgrade her act into real magic are all enticed to come live with an old man, because he offers free rooms. He's trying to save his house from the wrecking ball of progress.

About the time all this builds into a readily interesting story, with a climactic free-for-all in a mental hospital, Wolfe switches tracks. Suddenly each of the characters is offered a chance to make an absolute fool of him or herself. Of course they all take it, and the reward for this ordeal by humiliation is a gimmicky ascent into the heavens where they are reborn as improved versions of the persons they were.

It's possible to draw mystic and sarcastic parallels with various religious experiences, and see deeper levels of meaning behind the plot. Unfortunately, the story itself doesn't work; it feels ridiculous, unbelievable -- and ultimately unsatisfying. Parables are only effective when the reader can identify with the characters and believe them -- all the way through the story. When Wolfe systematically trashes his characters, he lost this reader. Borrow it from the library or a friend, if you feel compelled to read it, but don't expect a fun read.

## THE JOURNAL OF NICHOLAS THE AMERICAN

by Leigh Kennedy  
Atlantic Monthly Press, 1986, \$16.95

Nicholas has inherited his family's gift, the ability to literally feel what other people are feeling. While Nicholas was born in Denver, Colorado, his family is Russian, giving him an outward difference to match his inner difference from the rest of humanity.

In the course of the book, we learn what it would be like to have true empathy, particularly in confronting both love and death. While this is a slender volume, it moves slowly, sensitively exploring the good and the bad of Nicholas's "gift" (he thinks of it, for reasons we find out, as a curse).

The book has suspense, particularly in relation to our discovery of Nicholas's past, and the truth about Great-uncle Mikhail (the family scandal). In the main, though, it is a well-written portrait of Nicholas, through his relationship with his first real lover and her dying mother.

I had problems with the book. I liked Silverberg's treatment of the subject in Dying Inside better. Silverberg used a third person narrative to present David's point of view while still retaining some objectivity. Kennedy uses first person, to make us iden-

tify with Nicholas, and to preserve the suspense; this means that we get a lot of self-pity, with which I have very little patience. Everyone in the book outside of Nicholas and his family is relentlessly ordinary, main-street American, unimaginative and intolerant. The book has lots of good, literary touches, especially the metaphors: I liked the "fire in the head" particularly. Overall, I though it was worth reading, but recommend it with reservations.

## GALAXY JANE

by Ron Goulart  
Daw, 198?, \$7.??

This frothy romp is set in the Barnum system, where everyone is trying to con everyone and vice is a cheerfully accepted fact of life. There's some sort of plot about drug smuggling under cover of a movie set, but the fun is in the insane, almost logical bits of local color Goulart invents (drumgoggles were my favorite), and the merciless parodies of people (Harlan Grzyb was easy to spot). An excellent antidote for job pressure, or personal problems, or just for fun.

## ANGEL AT APOGEE

by S. N. Lewitt  
Berkley, 1987, \$2.95

While Angel at Apogee is uneven in pace and skill -- the characters lapse into cliches from time to time and parts of the plot are awkwardly done (our heroine, after pages stressing her training in Machiavellian game playing, suffers a brainstorm and lets herself be manipulated like a child) -- this book is a great deal better than its title. For example, the game of nerris, with its color-coded strategy, echoed and reformed in the "primitive" religious symbols, is a fascinating invention.

In spite of the title, the cover, and the first chapter, the book is about symbols and how far various cultures, starting from the same bases, could diverge in their mythology, understanding, and use of them. The blurb on the back cover, incidentally, quotes Andre Norton, who seems to be talking about another book. Worth reading as light entertainment.

## DAWN

by Octavia Butler  
Warner, 1987, \$15.95

As expected, an odd, disturbing book, with vivid characters, reacting reasonably in an unreasonable situation. Butler delights in challenging her reader, in shocking with her cynicism, the bizarre lives of her characters, leading the reader to adopt one point of view and then forcing you to realize how narrow and non-productive that view can be.

In Dawn, which is the first book in a

series, the heroine is Lilith, a strong-willed survivor of Earth's suicidal Armageddon. Lilith has been picked up by the alien Oankali, who have a master plan for her and the other Humans they have culled from Earth's ruins. The plot involves Lilith's manipulation by the Oankali, her adoption into their alien families, her reluctant work as a trainer for a Human group, and her final understanding of her true place in their schemes. The Human characters are normal, hopelessly Human people, with the full range of strengths and weaknesses. The Oankali are alien, as alien as any of Cherryh's creations, who are operating out of motives beyond Human understanding. They explain to Lilith, as much as they can, but like Lilith, who has lost a great deal of her capacity for trust, this reader is suspicious of what is unsaid, unexplained.

The novel has a complexity of themes, a dense layering of ideas and insights. Lilith experiences love among the aliens -- both Human love, and a kind of alien love -- and is forced to evaluate its importance in her life. Questions of mind versus body -- or desires of the spirit versus those of the flesh -- are presented in a completely new context. Because the heroine is convincingly intelligent, her struggles against the clearly inevitable fate the Oankali intend -- whether doom or rescue -- take on added suspense.

Dawn is highly recommended (as a Hugo nominee), a good read in and of itself (and I'll be waiting for the next book!).

#### THE RAPTURE EFFECT

by Jeffrey A. Carver  
Tor, 1987, \$18.95

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is "in" these days, direct communication with computers and machine sentience are Hugo-winning topics. Carver's jump on these "bandwagons" is The Rapture Effect, in which possibly the most implausible and unconvincing AI mind is introduced. It's called "The CORE" by the Human and alien characters.

The story revolves around confrontations between the Humans and the aliens over a potential colony world. The conflict has the potential to turn into a galactic-scale genocide. For a change it's Humanity that's the endangered species. Adding to the brew is a deep dark secret that only the reader knows about the world under contest. The AI mind plays a crucial role in resolving everything peacefully, aided by two Human heroes.

The Human characters, particularly the heroes, Sage and Ramo, are well-developed, convincing oddballs. Sage's neurotic fix on his dead mother, kept in "cyberlife", is oddly touching and repellent at the same time. The aliens are interesting, if thin. Their basic cultural traits, leading to a kind of mass neurosis, is well enough developed. The rest of the alien culture (are they "bred" for a specific position, e.g., warrior? telepathic binder? -- there are indications of this, but not all the aliens seems to be so restricted) is only sketched, and seems less consistent.

The biggest problem with the book is that it rambles along, as if the author was making most of it up as he went along. Several characters are introduced, given backgrounds with considerable depth, who then vanish from the story. An "invention" (which seemed to this reader to duplicate much of the gimmick that gives the book its title) is developed, used once, and disappears.

Given the problems, it's still an interesting book, first for the off-beat and genuinely interesting characters, and for a few genuinely off-beat dramatic scenes (Earth menaced by alien fleets, while our heroes dance madly to super-rock to convince the aliens that we're good guys). Recommended with reservations.

#### THE BOOK OF KELLS

by R. A. MacAvoy  
Bantam, 1987, \$3.50

This is a disappointment in many ways. The author created, in Damiano and in Tea with the Black Dragon, enchanting characters. Her plots in both books interwove fanciful and original ideas.

The Book of Kells is about unpleasant, unlikable people who plod through a thin, uninventive plot, driven by the author's mechanics. The most interesting character is a Berserker (Dane), whose idea of fun is to rip out the entrails of a man while he's still alive and can feel it.

The story tells of a 20th century man and woman, uneasy lovers, who journey back by magical means to 10th century Ireland. The author gets to show how many Gaelic words she knows, and how much research she did on early Dublin and Irish blends of Paganism and Christianity. The threat of harm to the main characters from the marauding Danes is magically resolved, leaving the 20th century characters to each reach different decisions about whether to go home or not.

There are flashes of talent in the book. The mysticism of "Holy Bridget" is well done, though her revelation and magic never ties into anything in particular. The image of the wimpy hero as "Owen Cow Leaper" is clever, a play at once upon his 20th century image to us as a nerd, and his 10th century quite different image.

The author talked a great deal, after being rewarded with prizes (The John Campbell Award), about how six earlier novels "just as good" had failed to sell. I suspect this is one of them, and I can see why it didn't.

Only recommended if you are particularly fond of 10th century Ireland, and can ignore bad characterization.

#### THE AWAKENERS

Northshore and Southshore

by Sherri S. Tepper  
TOR, 1987, \$14.95 & \$15.95  
SFBC Combined edition

Tepper has won a reputation for her fantasy novels. This book (Southshore simply continues from where Northshore left off) is

her first venture in SF. It has a number of problems.

First of all, it's sloppily written. Many characters are introduced and then fade away. It is not until the second section that it becomes clear that two of the "bit players" from the first section are actually major characters. While the characterizations are decently done, it becomes hard to care, let alone remember, the huge cast. The effect is as if watching a movie in which the camera pans through a crowd, holds a close-up for a few minutes, then there, then moves on.

The second problem lies in the basis of the story. Like *Courtship Rite*, *The Awakeners* concerns a Human colony that, to survive, adopted a gruesome and repulsive measure. In this book, it involves a compromise with local sentient aliens. Unlike Kingsbury, Tepper does not have the talent to make her "way of life" believable. Supposedly the compromise has been "working" for over a thousand years, yet in the second book it turns out that the compromise is unnecessary, and that practically all the Humans knew it all along.

The third problem, for me, lies in the author's specious logic. Her solution for the characters is to kill the aliens by indirect genocide. It's OK; we know, even though they don't, that more aliens who can coexist with us live on the unexplored continent. We're only killing bad aliens; warriors are only good when they're dead, Ms. Tepper pontificates, in a piece of purple prose worthy of the ditsiest of the flower children.

I find these books totally unrecommendable to anyone.

#### LAND OF DREAMS

by James P. Blaylock  
Arbor House, 1987, \$16.95

This book is like the carnival that figures as a center of much of the action. At first it is a jumble of half-built skeletons, but it becomes a wondrous thing of glitter and rides that take you to unexpected places. Blaylock's much-praised lyricism slows the initial chapters to a crawl, but like carnival rides, once the book gets going, it carries the reader along at a thrilling pace.

The major characters are three orphan children, Jack, Skeezix, and Helen. The book operates at once from their perspective and from a fully adult appreciation of what is happening. For instance, the eventual "revenge" worked on the cruel mistress of the

orphanage, is both a child's idea of the perfect revenge (she unknowingly eats something gross) and an adult's (she becomes a crazy bag-lady as a result of her own machinations).

The Land of Dreams is a kind of Over-the-Rainbow world in which time operates at a different speed. The Land can only be crossed into (or come back from) during the Solstice. Using the Land of Dreams, all things become possible, past horrors can be averted, and a happy future ensured -- if all goes well.

*Land of Dreams* is a charming book, full of memorable moments and powerful images. I particularly liked the use of a carnival ride (the fun-house ride) for one of the "passages" to the Land of Dreams. It is definitely worth sticking with the author past what I found to be an exceptionally slow start, over-endowed with lyric description, to what is an engaging story of childhood happiness regained.

#### HOMUNCULUS

by James P. Blaylock  
Ace, 1986, \$2.95

This is set in Victorian London, the world of Dickens where cruelty was normal, eccentricity was an excuse for any behavior by the rich and titled, the grotesque was considered comic, and the world was full of undiscovered lands and techniques. It is also Tim Powers' London, where impossible things happen regularly and everyone finds them normal.

The plot is complex, and involves a hunchback who raises people from the dead and sells them to a street preacher as disciples; a set of experimenters who want to build a balloon to go to the moon; a modern flying Dutchman piloting a ghostly dirigible; an actual UFO; and a set of almost identical boxes which contain marvelous (and magic) engines.

There are some incredibly funny scenes, and some brilliant ideas and images. Blaylock is a little too much in awe of Powers (we get regular references to characters from *The Anubis Gates*), so the book has an oddly distracting sense of homage that gets in the way of the fun. The writing is macabre, where Powers is bizarre, grotesque where Powers is terrifying. You never quite believe in the characters, or the evil that endangers them -- nor does Blaylock. *Homunculus* is a comic horror show (something like *The Vincent Price* version of *The Raven*) but it was a great read!

## Film &

## Book Reviews by

Dale L Skran

#### THE FORGE OF GOD

by Greg Bear  
Tor, 1987, \$17.95

WARNING: This review contains spoilers.

Greg Bear has produced another high-grade work of hard SF that happens in the near future. It starts with the disappearance of Europa. It ends with a frightening vision of



our place in the universe. Indeed, a vision so frightful I feel that Bear recoiled from all its implications in the end.

Basically, Bear seeks to answer the Fermi Paradox -- where is everybody? If it is possible to colonize the galaxy in a few million years using sublight arks, why hasn't it been done? There are various answers, including:

-- We are the only race in the galaxy.

-- We are a protected species (they're already here, and have been for many millions of years).

-- We've been lucky.

Bear explores the third possibility. In his universe, the galaxy is riddled with swarms of Von Neumann machines, some programmed by their makers to eliminate possible rival races by consuming planets, and other programmed by more ethical races to prevent this from happening. Activated by Earth's high-powered radars from World War II, the "planet eaters" have just arrived. A little bit late come the "ethicalals." Cosmic war ensues, and as you might guess, very few characters, human or otherwise, survive this novel.

Bear turns this idea into a good novel, although not quite up to the standard of his previous work, *Eon*. The real problem I have with this novel is that I don't believe the premise. It's almost right -- a big step toward realistically considering what might be happening in our galaxy right now. But there are a couple of questions that bother me, both in the novel and in reality. Why didn't the "planet eaters" make a pre-emptive strike? Why wait until you see the radar and "I Love Lucy"?

Answers might include:

1. There are no "planet eaters" in this galaxy.

2. There were "planet eaters" but the "ethicalals" got going first, occupied the galaxy long ago, and wiped out whatever small pockets of "eaters" that did exist.

They've since pulled back into a "watchdog" role.

3. The "planet eaters" need us for some reason. Perhaps they are interested in us as long as we don't pose a threat, but will smash us flat once we start to move into space. Perhaps they like a challenge, and will wait until we can give them a fight. Perhaps they want us to be advanced enough to understand and hence suffer more when they destroy us. Perhaps there is some military/strategic reason not to transform every solar system into a single immense fortress. Perhaps the makers of the "planet eaters" feared that large concentrations of their creations were dangerous, and insured that they would only act as necessary, with cosmic economy, to destroy new rivals. Perhaps...

Bear's "planet eaters" have no reason to preserve us. They just got going fairly recently, and the only reason we're still here is sheer luck. This makes Bear's story a fairly unlikely one.

My money is on that theory that they are already here. To suppose otherwise is to suppose that the human race is alone, which may be true, but goes against our long history of slowly realizing our non-specialness. Either they are "ethicalals," in which case we are in good shape, or they are "waiting planet eaters," in which case we have a very serious problem. Kinda sounds like heaven or hell, just around the corner. Bear shows us some of both, quite enough to make you think a lot.

#### THE WORLD, THE FLESH, AND THE DEVIL

by J. D. Bernal

Few writers saw so far, and with such bright insight, as J. D. Bernal. Although this tiny volume was written in 1929, it scarcely seems dated in 1987, nearly 60 years later. In it, Bernal attempts to discuss final solutions to the problems of material want, physical decay, and human friction.

His solution to material want -- the habitation of space in solar powered colonies -- seems still on the mark. The bionic approach to preventing physical decay that he proposed may be superseded by one based on genetic engineering, but Bernal recognized that "the Flesh" was little more than a fable. Whatever the method, Bernal understood that the modification of human capabilities would transform the meaning of the word "human." In the last chapter on "the Devil," -- basically the devil of irrationality -- he becomes more confused and less cogent. His hope that rational psychology would cure human ills now seems more naive than otherwise.

Bernal synthesizes his three basic thrusts into a vision of humanity split between the Earth- and the space-born, the normal and the modified, the irrational and the rational, a vision that may yet come to pass. If it does, and I suspect it will, we may live to see a period of tribulation and

upset that makes the Hundred-Years War look like a schoolyard brawl.

This tiny book (74 pages) is a little-known classic of this century, deserving far more attention than it has received. Nothing has really changed in Bernal's formulation. We are still bound by the world, the flesh, and the devil. Alas, however, the devil has mastered our worldly powers rather than being mastered by rationality. Still, perhaps the last, best hope of humanity is that our collective naked fear of nuclear devastation will induce rationality at long last, something Bernal did not anticipate.

#### THE LONG VOYAGE BACK

by Luke Rhinehart

The Long Voyage Back is one of the best post-nuclear war novels I've read, comparable in quality and tone to Pat Frank's class Alas, Babylon. It breaks new ground by telling the story of a mixed bag of people who escape the North American continent on a large trimaran, the "Vagabond." Some make it to Cape Horn. Others don't. Along the way they encounter fallout, the Brazilian Navy, the Black revolution, pirates, starvation, a new plague, heavy seas, and internal dissension. Rhinehart admits in a postscript that he pulls some punches, and he does, but he has a plausible explanation for why the war isn't quite as bad as expected; American attacked the Soviets first, destroying many weapons in silos and bunkers. Still, the initial escape from Chesapeake Bay is too prolonged to be believable, and I'd expect more bizarre weather than Rhinehart provides. Although not a literary masterpiece, The Long Voyage Back will give you your money's worth and keep the pages turning.

#### FOUR MORE NUKES

Film reviews by Dale Skran

#### ONE NIGHT STAND

This recent film set in New Zealand revolves around a limited European war scenario that ascends to large-scale nuclear conflict. The story, such as it is, focuses on a U.S. Navy deserter who hides out in a cultural center, two bimbos who find him, and the cleaning man.

The dialogue contains such wonderful lines as, "There's a war going on. All we can think of doing is playing strip poker. It's pathetic." And indeed, it is pathetic that the scrip writer could not envision a more engaging plot than these four colorless half-wits wandering around sound stages listening to rock music and saying, "I wonder what it's like to be dead." This plotless meandering distracts the viewer from such mysteries as the perpetually red sky and the ack-ack type explosions that cover it from time to time for dramatic effect.

Eventually, sirens go off. Our four heroes, having played out a dull strip poker and shared many dull flashbacks with the viewer, run down into a tunnel to die. When

all appears lost, the two women restore calm to the darkened tunnel by singing a song. Finis.

One Night Stand is at its best in one brief scene where one of the women wanders into a room, turns on a TV, and catches a graphically realistic news clip of New York subway tunnels crossed with horribly burned victims. My suspicion is that the director intended to contrast the glitzy atmosphere of the cultural center with the slowly decaying world outside. Unfortunately, so much effort is focused on strip poker and so little on the war that the contrasts are limited to one or two scenes. Rating: -1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

#### THE WAR GAME

This British (BBC) film has been an underground classic for years. Originally commissioned by the BBC as a documentary, it was so upsetting they refused to show it. A certain friend of mine has given this file a tremendous buildup. As is frequently the case with films much praised by others, I found it somewhat disappointing.

The War Game is a straight documentary, with no characters or storyline per se. Events begin with the Chinese invading Viet Nam. The Americans use nuclear weapons, and the British government responds with one of the more flawed plans in history. Women and girl children leave their husbands and sons to hide out in remote districts. The police compel locals, by force if need be, to accept the boarders. Rationing is soon imposed. The War Game shows vividly that any large scale evacuation could be as devastating as a normal war all by itself.

A humorous segment has reporters asking typical citizens questions about radioactivity. They are unable to explain fallout, bone-seekers, strontium 90, or almost anything about nuclear war.

Finally, fighting breaks out in Berlin, and the war spreads to Europe as the Americans use battlefield nuclear weapons.

An official appears describing a booklet that tells how a simple shelter could be built. The official mentions that the booklet was put on sale by the government some time ago, but "it didn't sell well." A closer examination of the shelter reveals that most poor Brits couldn't afford to build it. We focus briefly on a wealthier soul with a gun who intends to defend his shelter.

To the film's credit, it points out clearly that NATO depends totally on nuclear weapons to defend Europe, and is now reaping the consequences. Firestorms come, with 100 m.p.h. winds. Fortunately or unfortunately, the copy of the film I viewed was so poor the oft-described scenes of the burned and wounded had only minimal impact. I had great difficulty even figuring out what I was looking at much of the time.

Another interview segment focused on Bishops and their defense of "the just war." Given the currently strong anti-nuke tack of most Churchmen today, this sequence dates the film. Yet another interview segment shows the response of middle-aged women

asked if Britain should retaliate. All say yes.

Next we are shown police executing the mortally wounded as part of a triage program. The thousands of "shell-shocked" are also dramatized, as is the mass burning of bodies to prevent the spread of disease. Much of this material, including the bucket of wedding rings kept so people may have some hope of finding out who died, is taken from accounts of the Dresden bombings in World War II.

As things get worse, thousands drift into a state of profound apathy while other battle police for food. Firing squads of bobbies are shown polishing off food rioters. Finally, we are left with the warning that with nuclear proliferation, war may come as early as 1980.

Although clearly a breakthrough effort, The War Game is not as good as a later British effort, Threads. The War Game relies overly much on World War II experience. The viewer is left with the impression that nuclear war will be like a big Dresden everywhere. Like many other films, The War Game shies away from the implications of widespread fallout or what might constitute enough shelter to survive. Overall, I felt as if I'd watched the Citizen Kane of nuclear war films --an early, innovative film that doesn't have as powerful an effect on modern audiences familiar with its ideas from later films that copied it. Rating: +2 on the -4 to +4 scale.

#### LETTERS FROM A DEADMAN

Letters from a Deadman is a propaganda film, but so are most nuclear war films. This is a Soviet propaganda film, and even though it sets the story in an unnamed Western European country, it is really set in the Soviet Union. Where else, after all, would the entire plot center on people waiting to enter a "central bunker" to be sealed in for "30 or 40" years? It is difficult to imagine any Western country constructing a central bunker anywhere, let alone being organized enough after an attack to collect survivors for a long-term life underground.

Letters from a Deadman, which begins with a nuclear war triggered by a computer accident, is brought to us by the "Better World Society." With this opening statement, you may be surprised to hear that Letters from a Deadman is one of the better, and possibly the most artistic, of the nuclear war films I have seen. Letters from a Deadman is told from the viewpoint of a scientist who apparently had some involvement in weapons development. It shows both his daily struggle to survive in the basement of a museum, and a series of flashbacks. A supporting cast of catatonic children, a dying wife, a lost son, a harsh central bunker doctor, various road-warrior type low-lives, and grungy fellow survivors flesh out the story.

It is difficult to describe Letters from a Deadman as anything but excellent. The hall of burnt children and the drowned library are hauntingly effective, as is the scientist's final solution of a difficult mathematical problem he has worked on for

many years. At one point he says to no one in particular, "It may not mean much to you, but my institute worked on it for 30 years."

The scientist decides to stay with some catatonic children rather than be sealed in the central bunker. He finally dies after having restored the children's sanity through love. Unfortunately, the world has no place for the children. They march bravely to their deaths in a fierce nuclear winter blizzard, driven by the scientist's final words, "Go. While man remains on this planet, there is hope for him yet."

While Letters from a Deadman is yet another nuclear war film that deals with fallout mainly by ignoring it, or at least not discussing it, it is extremely effective though a bit slow. The contrast between the scientist's optimism, even to his death bed, and the depressing surroundings provide Letters from a Deadman with a dramatic tension most nuclear war films lack. Even the final message has a ring of truth that extends beyond the issue of nuclear war. In the end we shall all die, with or without the aid of nuclear fire, fallout, or winter. All our works will pass away, just as the scientist's did in Letters from a Deadman. We are all mad to hope, to love, to believe...to live, even as the scientist is mad. But it is a fine madness, a human thing.

Finally, Letters from a Deadman is much to realistic to be effective propaganda. People do survive, or at least hope to survive, in this central bunker. The scientist shows that the only death we need fear is the death of the human spirit.

Rating: +3 on the -4 to +4 scale.

#### CONTROL

This post-SDI nuke-war film begins with a foundation selecting a cross section of humanity to test a new type of fallout shelter they intend to construct across Europe. They have hired a famous American rocket scientist, who looks almost exactly like the real-life main mission controller at Cape Kennedy, to manage the experiment.

The shelter contains room for fifteen, a radio, intercom TV, M-16s or similar automatic weapons, body bags, generators, radiation suits, and so on. No fires are allowed, to cut down on oxygen consumption. The food resembles mush more than anything else. The contention is made that individual shelters are not cost effective, but surely fifteen people is not enough for effective long-term survival as a group.

The volunteers are assured a payment of \$5,000 if they stay in for twenty days. They include a tough reporter, a peace demonstrator, her kid, a rich shelter builder, his girl friend, a model looking to break into acting, an "artist," a retired woman, et al. Unlike the odd groups that appear in shelters in some films, these people at least have reasonable motives for being there. There is a clear explanation why a cross section of the population is selected rather than fifteen identical military personnel.

Soon a compressor failure in the air-conditioning almost leads to everyone being overcome with heat, and makes it clear that

not only are fifteen people too few to deal with all likely problems, but that the smaller a shelter is, the less complex its equipment should be.

We are treated to some short debates on nuclear war, including one in which it is passed off as a fact that the Russians are not building shelters. To the best of my knowledge, this is simply not true.

Soon radio reports begin to appear that indicate a MIRV has been fired at Europe. A dramatic, but totally bogus news report has each target of the MIRV identified by name, which seems unlikely in the extreme. One of the people decides to leave the shelter for his family. The reporter follows him out to the street, suspicious of something. Here they are greeted by a screaming mob and roaring police cars, so he retreats to the shelter. Soon a mob is pounding at the door, prompting an intense debate on whether to let anyone in. The vote allows the outsiders in, but the losers cannot accept that. They take over the shelter with the M-16s.

At this point, the model goes in the back room to commit suicide. We are introduced to the idea that everything so far has been staged without the knowledge of the foundation by the scientist managing the shelter as a "test to destruction" to prove what a bad idea shelter really are. When they see the model start to kill herself, they rush to the shelter and begin to break in with jack-hammers. This throws the people in the

shelter into total panic. The survivalists come out shooting, only to discover the guns are loaded with blanks.

As the shelter inhabitants file out, the reporter opines that "There is no shelter from the bomb, even in a shelter." This is only the last and heaviest of a long series of cliched pro- and anti-nuclear statements made throughout the movie by various characters.

I like Control more than I expected to, perhaps because I'd been told it wasn't good. Also, it was a solid, consistent story with a reasonable plot --up to a point. Unfortunately, the filmmakers clearly believe in their message, i.e. people would go nuts in shelters, or be reduced to animals clawing for survival. I find it hard to believe that a majority would have voted to open the door to a screaming mob, an action in the context of the film best equated to agreeing to death by an unknown horrible means.

Finally, the film-makers are right. There is no shelter from the bomb in shelters. Neither is there shelter in the confused notions of the nuclear freeze movement. We have lived with the bomb now for over 40 years, and we shall have to continue to live with it until we die --by whatever means. The bomb is not a demon we can exorcise by the correct political ritual. It is a tool we shall simply have to deal with, unpleasant though that prospect might be.

Rating: +1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

## Book Reviews by Sally A Syrjala

### TALKING MAN

by Terry Bisson  
Avon, 1987, \$2.95

First lines are the lure that can draw me into the pages of a book. They are the bait an author used to entice a reader into the world he has created

First lines are what draw me into the ever-changing landscape of the mind presented in Talking Man. I look for the words that can form into a prism that can allow nebulous thoughts of the author to travel the concrete bridge of the printed word into the imagination of the reader. To me, this form of mind linkage is akin to magic. It is something that permits a sharing of dream worlds and concepts.

The inner core of our mind's eye may have a view festooned with crystalline images which no other has yet discovered. An author acts as a tour guide through the passages of his mind trying to make its reality one which can be shared through the medium of the written word, allowing more to experience the insights seen by that one.

Talking Man proved to be such a vehicle for me. It started out based in a reality solid enough in concept to be accepted as concrete by a general group of readers. This reality was a junk yard on the side of a hill on the Kentucky/Tennessee line. From this grounding the plot carries us through a

changing pattern of events providing the base-line reality. We see the action within the book mainly from the eyes of William Tilden Hendricks Williams, a college dropout who happened upon the unworldly occupant of this junkyard.

Williams encounters Talking Man, who is so dubbed as "one of those deals where a tall man was called Shorty or a fat man, Slim." This meaning Talking Man never really spoke in a verbal fashion. Also contained within the confines of the junkyard is the wizard's 16-year-old daughter, Crystal, and a red and white '62 Chrysler New Yorker two-door hardtop with a red and white leatherette interior.

The journey embarked upon in this tale concerns a trip in this red and white Chrysler to the North Pole in a panorama of ever-changing world appearance. In this way it was vaguely reminiscent of Zelazny's Road Marks.

One thing this type of book allows you to consider is how the human mind accepts reality. Things may "seem" somewhat strange to the backs of our minds, yet we gradually come to block those feelings and to accept what the physical eye shows us. That outer state of being is then automatically accepted as the containment vehicle of our inner reality.

What this book shows to me is how many different quest themes can become the outer shell of existence for the inner searches we

all conduct. Our struggles within ourselves are given a solid outer coating. The quest to save our sanctum within is translated to that of a quest to save the outer physical world in general.

Therefore the "reality" of fantasy works in that we are dealing with the mythological segments of our minds. The mind has many realities. The surreal is every much a part of those realities as is the hi-tech world, and maybe more so.

Talking Man is an enjoyable escapade both of the physical quest/journey and of the surreal landscape surrounding us as well. It is a novel I found to be light, entertaining reading. It's perfect for an afternoon's mental shamanic journey.

### PLAGUE PIT

by Mark Ronson

A Critic's Choice Paperback

Lorevan Publishing, Inc, 1987, \$2.95

There are times the mind craves cotton candy to float within the cranial crevices. During one such mental sugar attack, I spied the title Plague Pit. Further investigation showed the person who constructed it had such other titles to his "credit" as Blood Thirst, Ogre and Ghoul. Figuring someone who had such works as these in print must have the formula in hand, I proceeded to delve

into Plague Pit.

Being careful not to expose the cover to any great extent, I began to read. This is not a terrible book. It is true there are no new ideas presented for ponderance; but for the purpose for which it strives, the novel presents itself well. The characters are not fleshed out as much as I would like. They seem to exist mostly to have the story revolve about them instead of their creating it. One of the people central to the plot is a radio personality and this seems to imply the manner in which the characters are utilized -- as vehicles to report the plague which goes on about them.

It all begins when that universal pitfall of man, greed, gets the upper hand and some construction workers remove artifacts they find in a freshly exposed common grave of plague victims from the Middle Ages. It is a standard scenario of government doing nothing at the outset, hoping all will blow over. Naturally, the concept of the book makes this impossible. What we get to see is the way one person envisions a modern-day recurrence of the Black Plague and how it would affect our present-day world.

The book is cliched and can only be recommended for reading as Twinkies could be recommended for eating -- quickly gone and with no nutrient value gained, not to mention later guilt pangs at the thought of having consumed the material in the first place.

## More Film Tape & Book Reviews

### MAKING MR. RIGHT

A film review by Terry L. Bohman

Sometimes you break rules.

For example, here are a few tired, over-worked cliches that should be resurrected only with extreme caution: the brilliant but nerdish scientist whose expert with data and devices but "not very good with people"; the stranger in a strange land -- be he alien, computer, or artificial life form -- who sees our society for the first time and draws our attention to the silliness of human customs, who is more human than the humans he meets, and whose wide-eyed innocence is more sexually alluring than the playboy's sophistication; the scorned, neglected, and humiliated wife who walks out cursing hubby's latest affair only to run sobbing to his aid when he gets in trouble again; the attractive, intelligent, dynamic professional woman who doesn't have the hang of handling a love life.

Making Mr. Right probably breaks no records by trotting out all these cliches but it certainly deserves an honorable mention. What is more surprising is that, for the most part, they are handled with a delicate balance of seriousness and tongue-in-cheek whimsy, and, for the most part, the film gets away with it.

Let me start with a few definitions: a robot is a more-or-less intelligent mechanical worker. It may be humanoid and only in-

telligent enough to make decisions on a relatively narrow range of issues, a la Gort. It may be humanoid, very intelligent, and capable of making rational decisions on a wide range of extremely complex issues, a la Isaac Asimov. Or, it may be the 20 ton machine which decided to leave several bolts out when it attached the left fender of the car you just bought, a la General Motors. An android is a more-or-less intelligent, more-or-less humanoid artificial biological being, a la Frankenstein and the replicants of Blade Runner. Of course there are other possibilities, but let's keep things simple. I go into this simply because there seems to be some confusion in the film.

Chemtec Corporation is in trouble. They have at great expense developed an android sophisticated enough to act as a human would in an environment too hazardous for human beings. The android, named Ulysses, was developed by Dr. Jeffrey Peters to be the solo pilot of a deep space probe. The android's development and programming are progressing well and Dr. Peters expects to have Ulysses ready by launch time. Congress, however, is losing interest in the project and is likely to allow the program to die through lack of funding. Chemtec needs some public relations. Badly. Enter Frankie.

Frankie Stone is a senior public relations expert with a PR consulting company. She decides that to sell Ulysses to Congress, she has to sell him to the working woman. The logic of that move escapes me,

frankly, but logic is not this film's strong point -- in fact, its frequent lack of logic provides some of its charm. How might Frankie sell Ulysses to the average working woman? Well, by polishing his social graces, that's how. If this wasn't a cliché before Pygmalion it certainly was afterwards. Unfortunately. Ulysses was built in the image of his creator -- he has no social graces -- so Frankie has to start from scratch. The film generally follows the Pygmalion concept with a few minor, and mostly predictable, twists. Okay, if Making Mr. Right is so derivative, why did I enjoy it so much?

While it may be true to say that this film is a hi-tech version of Pygmalion, it's also misleading. There are, after all, good remakes just as there are lousy originals. Three things conspire to enliven this film.

First, the acting is uniformly appropriate. Malkovich is an excellent stand-up comic in two different roles and Magnuson is entertaining both as his straight man, to use the applicable vaudeville term, but as the unique Frankie Stone, a character that begs to be overplayed. Magnuson, beautifully, does not. Not only do Magnuson and Malkovich endow their characters with wit, interest and believability, the minor characters do as well. Ben Masters is more than believable as the young congressman trying to simultaneously juggle his re-election campaign, his infatuation with Frankie, and the production of his new mustache. He is fun to watch. And he is only one of a multitude: Trish, Frankie's friend, and Donald, her actor husband, as well as Frankie's mother and sister, and even the busboy the sister marries ... well you get the idea -- are all minor characters that are somehow more engrossing than the major characters in your average pot-boiler. Susan Seidelman has masterfully cultivated all these roles into effective personalities.

Second, while the overall plot is old, the details are clever, inventive and entertaining. Again, there seem to be more tidbits thrown by the wayside here than are paraded front-and-center in many another flick. One example comes five minutes into the film when Frankie breezes in late for a meeting and picks up a pile of magazines from the newsstand: her reading list is both amusing and illuminates her character.

And finally, there are a number of subplots in this film more interesting than the main plots of many other films I've seen. Let's see, there's the thing between Frankie and the congressman, the thing between Trish and Donald, and then there's Sandy who has the hots for Dr. Peters and Dr. Peters who will do anything to avoid her, and the confusion that results when Dr. Peters thinks that Frankie is after him and Donald thinks that Ulysses is after Trish ... and I'm not going to list all the characters involved with Frankie's sister when she marries the busboy. Believe it or not, all this works, it's amusing, and it syncopates with the main action rather than distracting from it.

There are problems, of course. When this much happens in an hour and a half, you have to expect a few wrinkles. Some of the humor is a bit strained, there are loose ends

hanging right, left and upside down, the ending is less of a surprise than the director had probably hoped, and occasionally the lapses in logic are less than amusing: they become annoying or, perhaps worse, just confusing. The traditional fan might wonder, for example, what Ulysses is, anyway? He is called an android throughout the film, and he certainly looks like one. He eats organic food, for example. But when he periodically shorts out, he is restarted with a reset button in a mechanical linkage between his head and body. This is a minor point, and certainly the director has the right to her own definitions, but it's one of a number of points that didn't need to cause confusion.

Nothing, of course, is perfect. Making Mr. Right is a far cry from perfection, but its invention, wit, and humor make its flaws quite bearable indeed. Seidelman's film is not likely to join anyone's list of classics but it's something almost as good. It's entertaining.

Sometimes you break rules. And occasionally you get away with it.

Let's try a tentative +1 to +1.5 on the Leeper Scale.

#### MANNEQUIN

A film review by Giles

Mannequin is a silly movie about a young Egyptian girl (Kim Cattrall), in the time of the Pharaohs, who is due to be married to a dung salesman (or some such). She doesn't much appreciate the idea, and prays to the Gods that they do something to interfere. For their own strange reasons they do. Possibly they did it for entertainment -- I certainly got a good laugh out of it. She is re-incarnated several times down the centuries, and her latest appearance is as a department store mannequin, which can only come to life when no one but Andrew McCarthy is around. Yes, it's a very silly idea, but the people who made it were aware of that, and must have had a great time making it. It has been a long time that I heard applause at the end of a movie, but I wasn't too surprised when I heard it at the end of Mannequin; it is easy to get wrapped up in. A comedy, a fairy-tale romance, it is definitely not a thinking movie, but see it sometimes for the laughs.

#### RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD, Part 2

A film review by Russ Herschler

Punk-rock, Zombies, toxic waste, and nuclear warheads. This is the stuff of cult movies and the first Return of the Living Dead. This sequel tried to live up to my expectations left from the original, but on the whole just didn't cut it. While it did have its moments, the story tended to drag on a bit. One disappointment was that the creator of the original, writer/director Dan O'Bannon, had nothing to do with this sequel. The film, instead, was written and directed by Ken Wiederhorn.

The other big disappointment was in the music selection for the soundtrack (avail-

able on Island Records). The first had a definite new-music sound that really got the viewer engulfed in what was going on, while this one left me waiting. All in all I'd say that this is not a movie for everyone; it tends to be a bit gruesome, with the main plot device being that these zombies crave human brains. Fans of the original film could get a kick out of this film insofar as it does have more comedy value than the original and there are a number of actors from the original.

In closing, fans of the original and of corny, B-grade horror can find a fun night of entertainment in this "George Romero meets Chuck Jones" zombie flick.

Rated R, from Lorimar Motion Pictures.

### THE INTEGRAL TREES

by Larry Niven  
Del Rey, 1983, \$14.95  
(SFBC \$4.98)

A book review by Lloyd Penney

Few books have promotional campaigns the size of the one that announced Larry Niven's The Integral Trees back in 1983. I admit the ads, huge glossy ones that appeared in Locus and SF Chronicle, as well as in book stores in poster and promotional display form, induced me to buy the book. They worked! Those ads said that the book was even better than Ringworld, and was Niven's first solo effort in years, after several mili-tech collaborations with Jerry Pournelle, so I was intrigued, having enjoyed Niven's work for quite some time. I decided back then, what the heck, I'll buy it, and see for myself if I'd wasted my money.

No waste. It's an entertaining book, a good read, and I'd say vintage Niven. For Niven fans, it's a descendant of A World Out of Time. However, there is a large gap of imagination between the setting and the plot in this book. It distracts, but the sheer wonder of the setting is refreshing, and carries the book well.

The Integral Trees begins not with story, but with travelogue. Niven somehow has to show you what's in his unique solar system without taking up several dozen pages of description, so he starts with five pages of maps and diagrams to show you graphically the setting in which the story will take place. With the maps and diagrams, the first five chapters of the book are used to describe another wondrous Niven-type solar system -- a binary star system; one a G1 or similar type star, and the other a neutron star. Our characters live in a section of a gas torus encircling the neutron star. The gas torus' plant life, the integral trees, radiate like spokes out from the neutron star within the gas torus, providing the humans with food and a surface on which to build huts in the absence of a planet of similar gravity base. The home and world to these humans, the huge tufts of vegetation at the end of the trees are food and community centre, and the neutron star provides some horizontal gravity and some light.

After the travelogue and a fairly complete description of the binary system, gas torus and communal life comes a very familiar plot. The characters of the book are the descendants of a seeder ramship full of corpsicles, and the rest of the book is their story and adventures. It's the story of a fall from technological grace, a loss of knowledge with time, and a return to tribal warfare. The tribe the novel focuses on is decimated, and its survivors are captured by a hostile tribe on the other end of their integral tree. The survivors fight for their freedom.

This plot line, however, appears in countless other books. The fall-from-grace-and-knowledge plot is overused with very little room for originality. However, an unusual setting makes for unusual action to inject a little freshness in this slightly stale plot line, and as said, the setting carries the book.

Characterization is right up to Niven's standards; an interesting and wide-ranging group of humans who have had to adapt to this amazing new worldspace of theirs. Their dialogue sound very natural, and they meld into a believable social group. The plot, however stale, is fast-running, but the travelogue doesn't allow room for much action to happen in the rest of the book.

Whatever the faults of the book may be, the setting commands your attention, but (and this is its only negative point) it may do so much like a SF movie's special effects may overpower any plot the movie may have. Enjoy the setting, but relegate it to the background; keep it in mind and it will support the plot and action lines.

Overall, the book was a good read, but there was that feeling of lack of real action. The end of the book was left quite open, and when I first read the book in 1983, I could see "sequel" staring me in the face. I wasn't wrong. The Smoke Ring has appeared. I had hoped that The Integral Trees would be the book that laid out a marvelous universe that would lead to more novels with a lot more substance and action. I'll have to read The Smoke Ring to see if I'm right. Sure hope so.

### FINITY'S END:

Songs of the Station Trade

Off Centaur Publications (OCP-45), \$9.00

A tape review by Janice M. Eisen

This recent release from Off Centaur consists of songs based on C. J. Cherryh's Alliance-Union/Compact universe, including some written by Cherryh herself. If you are familiar with her work (and if you aren't, you should be), you'll enjoy this tape, which is of high quality overall despite some weak spots.

The songs are based on Downbelow Station ("Mazianni" and "Signy Mallory"), Merchant-er's Luck ("Merchanter's Luck" and "Luck of the Rileys"), Forty Thousand in Gehenna ("Forty Thousand in Gehenna" and "Weird Song"), The Pride of Chanur ("Pride of Chanur"), Serpent's Reach ("Serpent's Reach" and

"Tapes"), and the novella "The Scapegoat" ("Bitch Song"). In addition, there are four songs telling independent stories: "Sam Jones", "Finity's End", "Dockmaster's Song", and "Lullaby".

C.J. Cherryh's songs are, ironically enough, the weakest ones on the tape. "Sam Jones" seems to last forever (eight minutes, actually) and tells a predictable, cliched story. Even Leslie Fish couldn't hold my interest through the whole thing. "Bitch Song" has excellent lyrics, but the music betrays it. It's supposed to be a soldiers' song, but the melody is too elaborate and much too bouncy. "Finity's End" is fun, but nothing special; Leslie Fish wrote the music, and that helps. The only exception is "Lullaby", which is one of my favorites, though it doesn't have any real connection with the universe in question.

The other songs on the tape are all good to excellent. The standouts are "Pride of Chanur" (Leslie Fish), "Mazianni" (Mercedes Lackey/Leslie Fish), "Serpent's Reach" (Don Simpson/Leslie Fish), "Merchanter's Luck" (Cynthia McQuillin), and "Dockmaster's Song" (Anne Harlan Prather). "Signy Mallory" (Julia Ecklar) is performed in a different arrangement from that in the Horse-Tamer's Daughter tape and songbook, and I think it's superior. "Mazianni" deserves special mention, since it tells a side of the story we don't usually hear. The choral arrangement is very effective, but the sound reproduction unfortunately makes it somewhat muddy.

Aside from that problem, the sound is generally very good. While it's not quite professional caliber, it demonstrates Off Centaur's continued improvement. The songs are performed by the usual repertory company: Leslie Fish, Kathy Mar, Cindy McQuillin, Dominic Bridwell, Joey Shoji, Anne Harlan Prather, and various background musicians. The male singers, unfortunately, are not up to the level of the females; in particular, Bridwell's singing on "Tapes" is often flat.

Despite the weaknesses I've mentioned, I'd recommend this tape to Cherryh fans, even those who aren't normally interested in filk tapes. The high quality of most of the songs is a tribute to the fiction that inspired them.

#### SNOW MAGIC

Off Centaur Publications (OCP-53), \$9.00

A tape review by Janice M. Eisen

As you might guess from its name, Snow Magic features songs about magical creatures, some serious and others humorous. In addition to songs of elves, vampires, and werewolves (not to mention were-worms), five of the nineteen songs concern Greek mythology. While the quality of the songs on the tape is uneven, several of them are good enough to justify its purchase.

My favorite song on this tape is "Grendel" by Kathy Mar and Leslie Fish a retelling of Beowulf from an unusual perspective. "Snow Magic" by Mercedes Lackey and Cynthia

McQuillin, displays Lackey's gift for storytelling. Leslie Fish's "Cat Maiden" and "Were-House Blues" present two different -- and amusing -- views of shape-shifters. "Polyphemus" by Kathy Mar is a beautiful composition which manages to elicit sympathy for one of Odysseus's victims. "Snakes" by Cindy McQuillin deals with the practical aspects of Medusa's curse.

The most disappointing song is Meg Davis' "Elf Glade", sung here by Joey Shoji and Mary Ellen Wessels. Compared to the performance on Davis's tape Captain Jack and the Mermaid (also available from Off Centaur), this one is painstakingly amateurish. The other songs are of good to mediocre quality. "Dark Desires", about Cindy McQuillin's favorite subject (vampires), may offend some gay listeners.

While this tape is not one of Off Centaur's best, filkers with an interest in fantasy and mythology should enjoy it. "Grendel" alone is almost worth the \$9.00.

#### The History of the Runestaff The Jewel in the Skull The Mad God's Amulet The Sword of the Dawn The Runestaff

by Michael Moorcock  
DAW, 1977, \$2.95 each

and

#### The Chronicles of Count Brass Count Brass The Champion of Garathorm The Quest for Tanelorn

by Michael Moorcock  
Berkley, 1985, \$2.75 each

Book reviews by Ravi Chopra

These books, like many by Moorcock, are about the Champion Eternal. In this case the Champion is Dorian Hawkmoon. In The History of the Runestaff, Hawkmoon is not really shown so much as the Champion, and this series can be read without having ever read any other book by Moorcock.

The Chronicles of Count Brass on the other hand weighs heavily, not only on the previous events in The History of the Runestaff, but also, especially with The Champion of Garathorm and The Quest for Tanelorn, strongly deals with the legend of the Champion Eternal. It is for this reason that I suggest that before you read these books, you read first The Elric Saga, The Swords Trilogy (Moorcock's, Saberhagen's), The Chronicles of Count Brass, and The Champion Eternal. Yes, a lot of reading, but if you don't believe me -- go ahead, read Castle Brass first. You will be very confused, to say the least.

Now to the actual books. The History of the Runestaff takes place in a world that could be our future after a terrible occurrence called the "Tragic Millennium". A warped and powerful empire called the Granbretanian Empire, or the "Dark Empire", whose goal it is to rule, first the world,

then all the universe. Due to a particular Granbretanian general's (Baron Meliadus) swearing upon the runestaff, a strange and frightening series of events is put into motion with Dorian at its center, culminating in the final book with the seemingly final clash between Dorian and the Dark Empire.

These books are written in the same "Moorcockian" style all his books are written. This is not bad, though...just recognizable. The stories are, again, "Moorcockian". There is no other way to describe them. Those of you who have read Moorcock's books will know what I am talking about. Those who haven't will have to read them themselves. Leave it to say that these books are wonderful, exciting, and captivate the reader, drawing him or her along deeper and deeper into the story.

There are some, though, who have read The Elric Saga and thought it to be too long and verbose, and I felt that way to some extent myself. This is not true of the adventures of Dorian Hawkmoon. If anything, they seem a bit too short.

In The Chronicles of Castle Brass the first book, Count Brass, seems to be written much like the books in The History of the Runestaff, but dealing a good bit more with Moorcock's alternate dimensions of the multiverse. The second book, The Champion of Garathorm, first introduces Hawkmoon to his

identity as the Champion Eternal, and to one of his alternates from another world. The third book, The Quest for Tanelorn, is a must for all readers of Moorcock's Champion Eternal books, for it is in this one that everything, as far as the Champion Eternal is concerned, is "wrapped up" as it were. In this book there is a re-representation of the four-who-are-one scene from Hawkmoon's perspective, that was also seen in The Elric Saga and in one of the books of Corum.

If anything, The Chronicles of Castle Brass is better than The History of the Runestaff and both are definitely worth reading, if they can be found. I don't know about anyone else, but finding the first two books of The History of the Runestaff was next to impossible for me. The other books were not as hard to find, but were not readily available in quantity anywhere.

All in all, these books are gripping, intriguing, and make you want to read on. My only real complaint is that at the end of The Quest for Tanelorn, instead of feeling satisfied and happy with a complete and fully wrapped up ending, I was left feeling somewhat empty due to the death representations of some of my favorite persons, and a strong want for more tales on the Champion Eternal, whom it seems Moorcock has shelved, perhaps forever.

On a scale of -4 to +4, a solid +4 for all these books.

## Multiple Film & Book Reviews

### THE MOVEMENT OF MOUNTAINS

by Michael Blumlein  
St. Martin's, 1987, \$17.95

A book review by Dean R. Lambe

Just when you think that doctors and lawyers are hastening the decline and fall of the west, along comes a physician like Michael Blumlein who can both write and chew gum at the same time. Though rare as pterodactyl feathers, his like should be welcomed to SF with pennants unfurled.

Of the "write what you know" school, this first novel bears a protagonist who is a M.D., Jules Ebert, and a plot that concerns far-future drugs, epidemics, and human cloning. At the onset, Dr. Ebert works in a government clinic and treats those who live outside his protected arcology. The outsiders include his girlfriend, Jessica, who works as a hospital lab technician and pays her rent in sexual favors. Jessica wants "out," far out to the planet Eridis, where cloned fat giants harvest the underground fungus that is the source of the wonder drug Mutacillin. A self-satisfied glutton, Ebert is happy with his life, but agrees to accept a posting to Eridis in order to remain with Jessica. Bureaucratic delays occur, and he arrives on the planet of cloned slaves, the huge Domers, a year after his true love. The two renew their passionate relationship, although Jessica admits that she has broken all the rules and has had sex with a Domer.

She also details the perverted relationship between the staff administrator, Guysin Hoke, and a female Domer. Gradually, Ebert comes to share Jessica's feelings for the human clones, and realizes that their corporate slavery is evil. As the Domers approach the end of their five-year programmed life cycle, however, Jessica contracts the terrible new sexually-transmitted plague, Barea disease. Desperately, Ebert contacts Earth for a cure, and discovers that the government regards the virus infection as an extremely serious, truly social disease.

"God knows," the world's only double Nobel Laureate, Linus Pauling, has said, "medical doctors aren't scientists." What failings this novel has may rest with the truth of that statement. The story has ftl drive, distant colony worlds, sophisticated genetic engineering, yet the medical practice is right out of yesterday's AMA Journal. Occasional futuristic medical instruments, of dubious workability, are tossed about, yet Dr. Ebert wears out his thumb with contemporary hypodermic syringes. On the science side, then, the work suffers from poverty of vision with its AIDS inspired disease. On the fiction side, however, the thoughtful characterization and well-crafted philosophical dilemmas mark Blumlein as a writer to watch.

A book review by Ann Cecil

This is a highly original and fascinating book. The main plot involves a virus let

loose upon Earth that lets people share minds -- literally. It is, in its way, as destructive to civilization as Bear's virus on Blood Music, but this is a positive book that insists on turning your viewpoint to examine officially-labelled sins in a new light.

The hero is a glutton, proud of his fat, reveling in the sensuous pleasure of eating, though he also spares time for love-making (this is an R-rated book). He is also a doctor, and a privileged person in a future of vaster contrasts between the well-off and poor. In the course of the book he journeys off-planet to join his poorer sweetheart who hopes to escape the inevitable prostitution and humiliation of the unprivileged on Earth. On Eridis, among the fantastic Domers, gene-engineered to suit a corporate inhumanity, the doctor faces danger, loss, and a chance to make a major difference in both the Domer's lives and mankind's.

The characters are convincing, if unorthodox and occasionally more obsessed than normal. Blumlein has the gift of making you understand another viewpoint, even while allowing you to reserve judgment. The plot is not at all obvious, though it is entirely believable. Altogether frightening and fascinating at the same time; recommended for adults.

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#### THE UPLIFT WAR

by David Brin  
Bantam Spectra, 1987, \$4.50

A book review by Ben Schilling

This is the next book in the Startide Rising universe. This is our first view of the Tymbrimi, known for their humor, and the Thennanin, known for their lack of humor. The setting is the plaet Garth, whose last tenants were newly uplifted carnivores who revert and nearly destroyed the entire ecology. The humans, along with the neo-chimps, are attempting to restore it a reasonable balance. Unfortunately, the Gubru, a nasty flock of birds, have decided to invade and to use a gas on the human population which offers two choices: surrender or die. The Gubru are not expecting guerrilla warfare (Brin's pun, intended), but that's what they get. There's also the side issue of the gorillas, as humanity has agreed not to Uplift any more species for the moment, but we all know what's going to happen in this universe. As usual, there is an ecological message in the book, but it is very subtle. For those of you who don't care for Brin's handling of females (i.e., as a separate species), the females in this book are almost all neochimps (and one Tymbri), which are separate species. Another Hugo nomination? Maybe.

A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper  
Copyright 1987 Evelyn C. Leeper

This is the third in Brin's series of books set in the "Uplift" universe, the first two being Sundiver and Startide Rising. For those who are unfamiliar with this

universe, Earth has discovered/been discovered by other intelligences, much to their surprise (and probably ours, but that's not the issue here). They are surprised because we have made it to the stars on our own. All other races have been "uplifted," brought from pre-sentience to sentience and space travel by patron races and held in indentured servant status for 100,000 years as payment. Only humans have managed to uplift themselves. Not only that, but humans have already uplifted chimpanzees and dolphins, and freed them. All this makes the rest of the universe very uneasy. It strikes them as sacrilegious. After all, the Progenitors uplifted themselves, but for another race to do so seems somehow blasphemous. So the position of the humans in the galactic brotherhood is shaky, to say the least.

The Uplift War is set on Garth. The Bururalli, a recently uplifted race, had been allowed to lease Garth, and had promptly reverted and destroyed its ecological balance. Now humans have been given the lease, and they, along with the neo-chimps and the help of the Tymbrimi, are trying to develop Garth. But there may be more on Garth than anyone expects, and the Gubru, a hostile avian race, are out to get it --and more.

The Uplift War is the story of this conflict, but it is also a coming-of-age story. Athaclena, the daughter of the Tymbrimi ambassador, and Robert Oneagle, son of the Planetary Coordinator, are forced to stand on their own and lead the underground against the invading Gubru. Of course, they have help from the neo-chimps, who are well portrayed as intelligent beings without being carbon copies of humans. While they may occasionally seem less advanced than we, Brin does manage to show their differences as differences rather than deficiencies. Any rough edges may be attributed to the neo-chimps' short history --and the human have their rough edges, too.

My only complaint is with the Gubru, whom I found totally uninteresting and unconvincing. All the other major races Brin portrays are human-like (even the neo-dolphins, who appear in the other two novels, but remain off-stage in this one), which is probably not likely, but makes it easier to have characters the (human) reader can empathize with.

Brin gives a glossary, and a fair amount of background material is written into the story, so the reader who hasn't read the other two novels shouldn't have any problem starting with this one. In many ways it's the best of the three, having more of an action story to move it along. Those who have read the other novels will know whether they want to read this one; readers new to the "Uplift" universe will find this a good start.

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#### PROJECT X

A film review by Terry L. Bohman

Terri McDonald is a psychology graduate student who theses project involves teaching sign language to a chimpanzee. Virgil, her student, is cute, affable, quick to learn,

and is fascinated with birds and flying, but alas, the grant supporting the research is not renewed and Virgil is shipped off to a children's zoo in Houston. Virgil never arrives in Houston, however, and ends up instead in a top secret research facility at an Air Force base in Florida. This, presumably, is "Project X," although the project is never called that in the film.

Jimmy Garrett is the son of a famous fighter pilot. Jimmy is bounced out of the academy for running a betting racket and his penchant for ignoring orders gets him bounced from one assignment to another. He ends up at a secret test project in Florida taking care of chimpanzees whose reactions are being studied in flight simulators. This time, however, Jimmy does well. His natural empathy with the chimps, especially when he discovers Virgil's ability with sign language, moves him to the forefront of the project animal trainers. Dr. Carroll, the project director, is so impressed he promotes Jimmy to head trainer. With the promotion comes a security clearance and Jimmy discovers the nature of the project. Once the chimps become adept at the simulators, they are "tested to destruction" to determine how dying bomber pilots might perform during the terminal stages of their mission. Jimmy, of course, is horrified. He's grown fond of Virgil, and can't imagine him being sacrificed in such a dubious test. He finds Terri's name in the procurement files and calls her up.

That, in a nutshell, is Project X. Does it sound obvious? Predictable? Unoriginal? Well, yes, it does. There are some cute bits in this film. Okay, so Matthew Broderick is totally unconvincing as an adult, even if they do let him light up a cigarette. Helen Hunt is convincing as a psychology student, so what if she turns to paper mache for the last nine-tenths of the film? And Virgil and company are really cute, even if they solve problems faster than any of the other characters, and a lot faster than those members of the audience who stayed to the end of the film. Big deal! There are still some cute scenes in the film. The animal gags are pretty good, and the computer flight simulation sequences are nicely done. The scenes of the chimpanzees dying in their simulators are deeply touching. And there are some good lines in the dialog, or at least I think there are. The problem with Project X -- well, besides the plot, which is even less imaginative than the title -- is not that anything is glaringly bad, but that everything is so tediously undistinguished. Project X is a kind, well-intentioned, morally correct, and totally undistinguished film. Not bad. If Short Circuit was a cutesy E.T. with robots, the Project X is a cutesy Short Circuit with chimps. Look at it this way: of the six people who remained when the closing credits hit the screen, two were four-year-olds and all the rest of us claimed to be writing reviews. Not a bad film at all.

Hey, the four-year-olds loved it!

On the Leeper Scale, I'd give Project X a score between -1 and -1.5.

A film review by Mark R. Leeper  
Copyright 1987 Mark R. Leeper

**CAPSULE REVIEW:** Very (very) familiar story about an Air Force experiment using chimpanzees and a young soldier who becomes attached to them. This film is more enjoyable than I expected it to be. Nothing great, but worth seeing.

The last time I watched John Badham's War Games at least I hope it was the last time!), I counted what I thought were technical errors in the film. I came up with an average of one every 120 seconds. When I read that the scripters of War Games had produced a new film, Project X, my excitement knew very strict bounds. In fact, I was not excited at all. When I heard that in this film Matthew Broderick was causing trouble at an Air Force base at which experimentation was being done on intelligent chimpanzees, I said to myself, "I even know that story. I have seen it done as a play on PBS and read it at least twice." It had to be almost the same story as Paul Zindel's "Let Me Hear You Whisper."

So I avoided seeing Project X until it came down to \$1.25. Then I decided it was worth that just to see a remake of the Zindel play. My reaction: If Paul Zindel were Harlan Ellison, he would now be the major stockholder of Twentieth Century Fox. Project X was not the close remake I was expecting, but the two stories are awfully parallel. In spite of that, I have to admit I really did like Project X.

The film follows one chimp, Virgil, from being trapped in the wild through being taught sign language by Teri (Helen Hunt) until Teri's grant is cancelled, to being taken to an Air Force base for experimentation. There, a ne'er-do-well Air Force brat, Jimmy (Broderick) is given the job of caring for the chimpanzee subjects and discovers Virgil can talk sign language. The relationship between the two grows and the story follows predictable routes.

Project X could have gone wrong in a dozen different ways, but it doesn't. The chimps are not entirely believable -- a little too human -- but are likable without being cutesy. The film manages to give them distinct personalities, no small feat. While the science of War Games seemed ridiculous, Project X is considerably more credible. The experiment being performed might not have been performed exactly as portrayed, but I suspect that similar experiments actually have been done, perhaps as early as the 50s. What is hardest to believe is that the Air Force would not already have all the data they need along the lines of the results of Project X.

Directory Jonathan Kaplan will be familiar to people who saw the documentary, "Roger Corman: Hollywood's Wild Angel." In a humorous interview, Kaplan tells how Corman gave him his first feature film to direct (Night Call Nurses) and his second (The Student Teachers). Kaplan slowly worked his way up with White Line Fever. His most recent films, such as Over the Edge and Heart Like a Wheel, have gained much better acceptance. He was chosen to direct here because of his

ability to "do spectacular action sequences on a low budget," according to produce Walter Parkes.

Though insufficiently original in plot, Project X tells a fairly good story well, gets good acting jobs out of a bunch of apes, and is surprisingly affecting. Rate it a +1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

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FOOL'S RUN

by Patricia A. McKillip  
1987, Warner, \$15.95

A book review by Maia Cowan

Fool's Run gives us the best in both style and substance. There are no holes in this story. The world and worldview both are painstakingly drawn. McKillip's attention to small details make places and people real. Although the ending seemed less dramatic than the events that caused it, the plot is consistent. Each small scene, memorable in itself, contributes to the whole.

The people are what I remember best. McKillip creates characters that range from eccentric to fantastic, and yet she makes them real: Terra Viridian, the hollow-eyed mass murderer who lives drowning in her visions; the Magician, a lonely musical genius existing as a pianist in a bar band; the Queen of Hearts, who hides behind a golden mask of makeup and talent; Jason Klyos, the cynical prison warden; Aaron Fisher, the patroller obsessed with finding Terra's twin sister. Lesser players, like the members of the Magician's band and the prison employees, are drawn with equal care.

The story turns on the meaning of Terra's visions, and the aftermath of her massacre of 1500 fellow soldiers. The other characters are swept up first in the search for her motivation, then in her claim that her visions are not madness, but reality. Her struggle for meaning and vindication becomes their own.

It's not often that a book can be both so deep and so readable, stylish and rock-solid, tragic yet full of hope and love. Fool's Run is superlative.

A book review by Ann Cecil

An oddly compelling book, with fascinating people and a complex plot very neatly worked through. The book is about compulsion, from the relatively simple musician's absorption in sound to an alien obsession that mimics or even perhaps produces insanity. All of the characters are compulsive, from the members of the band to the workaholic prison director, the bereaved patroller to the imprisoned mass-murderer.

The title is a gambler's term, appropriate since gambling is perhaps the most compulsive Human behavior. The plot deals with a minor incident: an imprisoned massmurderer escapes from Earth's "Dark Ring", a deadly fortress in space. She's freed, partly by her own efforts and partly by friends', and tracked by an impromptu posse of the patrol-

ler and the prison director. They, along with her friends, finally hear an explanation of her crime, the incident is logically concluded (the title again in yet another meaning) and the lives of everyone involved are changed.

The book is not completely successful-- I found the love affair/subplot a bit sticky, but all of the people are interesting enough to merit a much longer book. The imagery is especially vivid, and sticks with you -- the gold-faced Queen of Hearts, the musician playing Bach interwoven with rock, the gossamer alien rising to the stars. Definitely recommended for those who enjoy good writing and characters, even if the science is on the thin side.

Recommended as a Hugo nominee.

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LIVING DAYLIGHTS

A film review by Sally A. Syrjala

James Bond is indeed back and what an entertaining return he has made.

Roger Moore never could convince me he had the stuff to be 007. To me he was always the Saint and nothing deeper or more interesting. Sean Connery's Bond had layers Moore could never gauge, much less reflect out to an audience.

One of the things that originally attracted me to the Bond books were the facets of Bond's characters. He fully realized that his side sometimes erred and often the only thing separating one side from the other was the flight of political fancy.

Living Daylights is based on one of Ian Flemings short stories which I read some years ago and yet remember still. The film is much expanded and slightly altered from that brief vignette; the story ended at about the point the film begins. Bond meets his counterpart and realizes they are more alike than not in the jobs they perform, and this realization produces empathy between the two. These are the thoughts expressed by Bond in the short story. In it, he refuses to kill based on this self-recognition and respect.

In the film Bond is his own man, capable of deciding for himself what he will and will not do. He makes his decisions not solely on the matter of East versus West, but knows there may be more complicated factors at work and those are the ones to which the most credence should be granted.

When two opposing sides are blind in their opposition to each other, a third party can set them at each others' throats and pick up the resulting pieces as they wish. The film captures this holographic image and transcends the stereotypical two-dimensional projection so prevalent lately. Yet the action does not suffer.

In fact, the action reminded me of an Indiana Jones film. Actually, I thought it better handled than that in the Indiana Jones films. The traditional gimmicks worked well and the chase scenes were very well done and involved air, water and land. Even the romantic interest was better handled in this venture. It involved a person and not a doll brought along for play only.

To me, Timothy Dalton is the bone fide replacement for Sean Connery. He brings back the subtlety of character and the varying shades of grey which make Bond not just another screen gimmick himself, but a living reality. This Bond does indeed live. See it today!

A film review by Mark R. Leeper  
Copyright 1987 Mark R. Leeper

CAPSULE REVIEW: Bond is back --really back-- after a wait of twenty years.

Pretty close to a quarter of a century ago, the first James Bond film blazed (at time literally) across the screen. It presented a lithe young Bond played by Sean Connery. It was popular, so a second one was made to give the audiences more. As each successive film was a smash, the producers kept trying to give the audiences the same, only more: the same actors bigger and more powerful; more fanciful villains with bigger plans; more bizarre henchmen. There were, however, problems with this approach. The actors eventually got too old for their roles.

Audiences did not seem to like the next Bond, George Lazenby, so when Connery finally left the series they replace him with an already-popular Roger Moore, two years older than Connery. Moore started out almost too old to play Bond. The succeeding years made matters worse. On top of that, Moore was never right to play Bond. Ian Fleming's superspy is a thug who, when the occasion called for it, had nice manners. Moore was a fop who, when the occasion called for it, could dirty his hands. He simply did not work in the part. It was clear that the series was in trouble when he took the role in Live and Let Die. It had one of the weakest Bond plots. Also, perhaps in retaliation for a nasty comment Bond makes about the Beatles in Goldfinger, Paul McCartney wrote one of the worst of the Bond title songs.

Meanwhile, the ever-escalating villains started going in for total world destruction with henchmen that became impossible to kill. By Moonraker, the series had become a silly comic book that was turning audiences off. Something had to be done.

It was. For Your Eyes Only started as silly as any Bond film, but after the first third it straightened out and had a plausible villain. Octopussy, too, had a reasonable Cold War plot. The last Moore film, A View to a Kill, tried to capture some of the spirit of the more successful Bond films, apparently reframing the plot of Goldfinger. The film was not the complete mess it is usually considered to be by Bond fans, but it was well below average for the series.

The series has long been in need of an overhaul, and with the choice of a new Bond we also got a new M, a new Moneyppenny, and a new feel with a younger and more vital Bond. Through an unrecognized stroke of luck for the producers, Pierce Brosnan, their first choice, was unavailable. Instead, Timothy Dalton plays Bond in this film. Dalton has a hard, flinty look rather than being pretty. As such, he looks the part of Bond the most of any Bond in the series.

Other characters of interest include John Rhys-Davies, veteran of Shogun, Raiders of the Lost Ark, and Victor/Victoria. He has fun playing perennial friendly-foe Pushkin. Until now, the foe has been General Gogol, who shows up for only one quick shot at the end of this outing. His background has been given to Pushkin and Rhys-Davies will probably be the continuing character from this point on. Bond's new girl is Kara Milovy (played by Maryam d'Abo, who looks like a stretched version of Rosanna Arquette). She is a little less ditzy than most of the Bon women, though well below the standard set by Carole Bouquet as Melina in For Your Eyes Only. One wonders how the public would react if there wasn't a love interest ready to drop into bed with Bond in just one of the films.

The plot of The Living Daylights is more complex than previous Bond films. The long-dead organization that Fleming used to call SMERSH has apparently been revived. In the midst of attempts to bring detente between the British and the Soviets, suddenly SMERSH is murdering double-O agents. Why? It has something to do with a defecting Soviet dignitary, an American arms dealer,, and obscure goings-on in Czechoslovakia, Tangiers, and Afghanistan.

Oh, there are some of those irritating plugs for products, including a winery and an electronics firm to whom I will not give more publicity by naming them here. And the producers have not entirely abandoned the silliness of the Moore Bond films. There are a few silly weapons, one more to use in a car chase, and one silly ski chase using a non-standard toboggan. For the most part, though, they have been able to keep their tongues out of their cheeks. This is the Bond film the fans have been waiting for a very long time. The Living Daylights may be the best Bond film since From Russia with Love.

Rate it a +2 on the -4 to +4 scale.

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BIMBOS OF THE DEATH SUN

by Sharyn McCrumb  
Windwalker, 1987, \$2.95

A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper  
Copyright 1987 Evelyn C. Leeper

I'm not sure who Sharyn McCrumb is, but I'd bet you'd find her name on the membership lists of several science fiction conventions. Bimbos of the Death Sun is a novel set in a real fantasy world --that of a science fiction convention. (Lately, it may seem more horror than fantasy, but that's another story.) Appin Dungannon, the Guest of Honor of this particular convention, is the author of the incredibly successful series of Tratyn Runewind books. He is described as a "malignant midget," but McCrumb --in what must be a ploy to fend off a Harlan Ellison lawsuit-- makes sure to mention that he is NOT Harlan Ellison. Dungannon apparently has all the bad characteristics of Ellison without any of the literary talent, since Tratyn Runewind does not seem to be a character on the level of, say, Hamlet.

Therefore, it is not much of a surprise when Dungannon is found murdered in his hotel room. It's not even much of a loss so far as most of the people are concerned. But the police think it would be nice to find the killer.

But why Bimbos of the Death Sun? Well, the protagonist of the story is Dr. James Owen Mega, a.k.a. Jay Omega, author of the recent not-best-selling science fiction novel...Bimbos of the Death Sun. The book, he claims, is based on a new scientific theory he was working on; the title was dumped on him by the publisher. Mega is especially outraged at the cover, showing a "female bodybuilder in a fur bikini." Just as Bimbos of the Death Sun is the title of both this book and the book-within-thebook, the cover of this book is very similar to the one described. In the true tradition of cover art, though, the cover of this book differs in several details from that described for the book-within-the-book. Perhaps this is a meta-statement on how cover art is often inaccurate, but I doubt it.

Anyway, McCrumb has the characters, and I do mean characters, that one meets at a science fiction convention down cold. The costume fans, the gaming fans, the outsiders who have discovered that science fiction fandom will ignore many things the mundane world places great importance on --height, weight, the ability to "fit in"-- they're all here. McCrumb may seem at times cruel to those who she is portraying, but it is more a question of accuracy than of hostility. One brief example: when it is finally announced to the convention members that Dungannon has been murdered, the audience at first doesn't know what to make of it. Then,

Suddenly a clarion voice rang out like a battle cry above the babble. "The hucksters' room! While we still can!"

"The hucksters' room?" she echoed. "What does that have to do with Appin Dungannon's being murdered?"

"Not a thing," he replied. "But life goes on. And now autographed copies of Appin Dungannon's books are worth triple what they were five minutes ago."

While this is not a book from which a non-convention-goer could learn about conventions, it is a book that convention-goers will love. Highly recommended.

A book review by Lan

Appin Dungannon author of the Tratyn Runewind series is murdered at the SF convention RUBICON. On scene at the con are the usual assortment of fans and a new author, James Omega (the pseudonym of James Owen Mega), whose only novel gives its title to this mystery. Omega eventually figures out who the murderer is but lacks sufficient evidence to get the person arrested. He traps the person into playing in a role-playing game and into revealing the truth.

I enjoyed reading Bimbos of the Death Sun and found some very accurate characterizations of typical fans, including the fannish hoax. As a mystery, it was not very well

done. There was really only one possible person who would be the murderer; others had slight motivation, but nothing like some other mysteries I've read. Other fans who have read the book have been trying to figure out who this author really is; s/he must be a fan, but no one has admitted to it. I thought that McCrumb's "other books" were made up to add to the image of the author, but in recent months I have heard from other fans who actually own some of McCrumb's other novels. I'll have to be on the lookout for them now.

A book review by Maia Cowan

Several books have written with an SF con in the background. This, I think, is the first in which the setting is part of the plot. An obnoxious Guest of Honor (nominations for his real identity will be numerous) is murdered. Our Heroes, the con organizers, have to (a) help find the killer, and (b) figure out who's going to take his place on the panels, not necessarily in order of importance.

I enjoyed the book, but I wouldn't say the mystery was all that good. My first guess about who the murderer was turned out to be correct. There were no other plausible suspects and no convincing red herrings.

The con setting was fairly accurate. It grieved me, however, that except for the harassed yet gracious con organizers, there were no positive portrayals of fans; just all the geeks and nerds. What about the truly creative, sociable, fun people who are the majority at cons?

I particularly liked the police detective's reactions to fandom all through the investigation; and the fans' interactions with the Scottish folksinger. Read the book strictly for the in-jokes, if at all.

#### THE WITCHES OF EASTWICK

A film review by Mark R. Leeper  
Copyright 1987 Mark R. Leeper

CAPSULE REVIEW: Broadband supernatural comedy has insight, slapstick, violence, horror, special effects, sophisticated comedy, profanity, a monster, vomit scenes, Jack Nicholson, Michelle Pfeiffer, Susan Sarandon, and Cher. For fans of six or seven of the above only.

John Updike is a prize-winning writer of serious literature about people finding their identities and that sort of thing. His masterwork was his trilogy of novels, Rabbit Run, Rabbit Redux, and Rabbit Is Rich. There was something of a stir when he wrote The Witches of Eastwick, about three women in a provincial Connecticut village who have a brush with a warlock. People thought he was too good a writer to fall back on the fantasy market. My guess is that it was a calculated financial move. I have no figures but I'd be surprised if it was not his most profitable book.

Now The Witches of Eastwick has been adapted into a film by George Miller --you

know, the man who directed the "Mad Max" films. Add a musical score by John Williams, a cast like Jack Nicholson, Cher, Michelle Pfeiffer, and Susan Sarandon, and makeup by Rob Bottin (The Howling), and you have one heck of a motley crew contributing to a movie.

With a crew like this you might expect a film that is something of a hodge-podge. That's pretty good expecting on your part. This film is an incredible hodge-podge, in fact. It can't decide if it is light fantasy, horror, soul-searching, literature, comedy, Peyton Place, or what. I would use a cliché like "This film throws in everything but the kitchen sink," but it wouldn't be quite true. It throws in nearly everything including the kitchen sink. Warlock Jack Nicholson --I forget his character's name-- breezes into a provincial Connecticut town after he is wished up by three unattached women (Pfeiffer, Sarandon, Cher). He takes up residence in an old house where witches were once burned. (Pretty hard to find, actually. Only one person in North America was ever sentenced to be burned for witchcraft. He escaped. The Salem witches were executed by other means.) The three women have simultaneous affairs with Nicholson and all seem to be taking it amicably. Then things start to sour.

Nicholson glides through his part, sometimes impishly childlike, often ranting and bellowing like Ralph Kramden. The three women are believable in their parts and perhaps more realistic than most women in witchcraft films, but don't look for them at Oscar time. The film has some powerful scenes of evil --some seem inspired by Something Wicked This Way Comes-- but as good an actor as Nicholson is, he never rises to the malevolence of Jonathan Pryce in Something Wicked.

The Witches of Eastwick has its moments, but they do not add up to one whole movie of any kind. It has something for everyone but it does not have enough of any one thing.

Rate it a 0 on the -4 to +4 scale.

P.S. To save everyone sending me Nicholson's character's name, yes, I do remember it, but it's an inside joke.

A film review by Giles

The Witches of Eastwick reminds me of one composer's (I'm sorry, but I can't remember who!) opinion of Wagner: "beautiful moments, but awful quarter hours." The acting is good, but that was given since Cher, Susan Sarandon, Michelle Pfeiffer and Jack Nicholson are all very good. Even the idea is fairly good -- the three women, although not certifiable witches, have a habit of getting what they wish for, when all three of them wish for it at the same time. They are all divorced or separated, and predictably enough they all wish for a man. Not expecting anything, they didn't bother to order three, but they did want a good-looking one. They got Jack Nicholson. From there on the movie got steadily worse. It is difficult to believe that a man that ugly could seduce all three women and keep them, even with the power of the devil.

We then proceed to the serious witchery which is exceedingly grotesque. The movie seemed to have a problem deciding whether it is a comedy or horror movie. Not that I object to a movie which is both, but the movie should make up its mind at the beginning, and this one didn't. For those of you who have seen Something Wild, the mood swing is almost that drastic. Sadly, it is necessary to sit through nearly the entire movie so see its funniest moments: Jack Nicholson getting his just desserts.

Give it a miss. If you must see it, wait until it's cheap, but see it in a theatre. It would lose the rest of its interest on a TV screen.

ROBOCOP

A film review by Mark R. Leeper  
Copyright 1987 Mark R. Leeper

CAPSULE REVIEW: Featherweight and violent superhero comic book on film about a cyborg policeman protecting the streets of Detroit. Paul Verhoeven is one of the last directors I would expect to make this fun but unoriginal action film.

The place is Detroit. The time is some undefinable date in the future. Law enforcement is no longer done by government and is instead contracted out to the giant corporation, Omni Consumer Products. Two models of mechanized policemen have been developed by OCP. One is the ED-209, a kind of walking tank combined with the artificial intelligence to take over standard cop-on-the-beat responsibilities. The other model is "Robocop," a cyborg incorporating human and mechanical parts but requiring a human brain to run the device. Just as the ED-209s are about to be mobilized, the model proves to have difficulties and instead, a recently murdered policeman, Murphy (play by Peter "Buckaroo Banzai" Weller) is roboticized and resurrected as Robocop. Three guesses what crime Robocop wants to solve.

In fact, rarely does anyone need more than one guess about anything in Robocop. The plot is supremely clichéd. The resurrected-hero idea has been used many times before, from the "Six Million Dollar Man" to Remo Williams as the Lone Ranger. The "honest police under corrupt leadership" plot is done two or three times a year, it seems. Scenes of hoods shooting at Robocop to no effect are virtual dramatizations of scenes in "Superman" comics half a century old. The only place the script becomes at all creative is in extrapolations of society some (inconsistent) years into the future. By the look of cars and clothing styles, this film could be taking place tomorrow. But the technology and changes to society (like contracted police protection), could be thirty or forty years into the future.

And some things might not make much sense whenever they take place. The ED-209 is nearly useless as a surrogate policeman. It is too big and bulky to do anything but travel on flat terrain and blast away. Robocop has only a little more finesse. If I lived in the Detroit of this film the one thing that would scare me more than crime would be

the possibility that Robocop might come to my rescue. There is no better way to parlay a \$100 robbery into a \$100,000 damage-repair bill than to call on the "Flatfoot of Steel." And with what Robocop must cost OCP in police brutality suits, they could probably hire an army of old-fashioned humans.

But the biggest surprise about Robocop is that it is directed by Paul Verhoeven. This film is an entirely new style for the director of Soldier of Orange, Spetters, Flesh and Blood, and The Fourth Man. Although the last two films were in spots quite as violent as Robocop, all four of Verhoeven's previous films were aimed at a more mature audience. Robocop is his first film aimed at the audiences who make floors sticky. Where films like The Fourth Man had occasional touches of Kurt Russell, Robocop has more of a tendency to fade into Kentucky Fried Movie.

One final comment: Basil Poledouris, who has a nasty habit of giving films better musical scores than they deserve (e.g., Blue Lagoon, Conan the Barbarian, Red Dawn, and Amerika), has once again shown up his director by making his score the best thing in the film.

Rate this one a +1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

A film review by Dale Skran  
Copyright 1987 by Dale Skran, Jr.

Let us cross pens. Mark and I have a number of long-running debates, including one on the value of movies like Dreamscape, The Terminator, and Robocop. We have another on the adaptability of superhero comics to film. Mark tends to feel these films are unexceptional, while I feel they serve the special purpose of bringing standard SF ideas to a movie audience unfamiliar with them. Mark argues that superheroes makes poor, or at least silly, films that are not good SF or anything else.

As a long-time fan of the superhero genre, especially Marvel's merry mutants, I feel the superhero genre could be made into excellent films --if only Hollywood tried. At long last, in Robocop we may have such a film.

Although flawed, it's a pretty good action picture --better than Blue Thunder or Wanted: Dead or Alive. It has a nice score (by the gentleman who scored Conan the Barbarian, another really successful superhero adaptation). It has lots of good lines and funny jokes. It is 100% better than the scientifically silly Runaway (wherein Tom Selleck battles robots). Like The Terminator, which along with Back to the Future introduced recursive time travel stories to the modern audience on a sensible level, Robocop shows us a lot of wonderful stuff we've read a hundred times, but never seen before. The plot is old stuff, but who cares? Heinlein claimed there were only three basic plots anyway: boy meets girl, the little tailor, and the man who learned better. For those who care, Robocop combines elements from all three of Heinlein's basic plots.

Mercifully, the makers of Robocop take their premise seriously. They spare us cackling villains and silly sidekicks. This is

a clean, mean story that owes a lot to The Road Warrior's realistic violence and Brainstorm's greedy, militarized, hightech corporations. Mark complains about the inconsistencies in the future world. I think he's holding to an excessively high standard.

Robocop is not Blade Runner, but its future (a few Merlin phones aside) is far more completely thought out than the average SF movie. It is not up to written SF standards, but I suspect the producers wanted to make a few bucks and couldn't afford to re-do everything. It suspended by disbelief far better than 2010: Odyssey Two, which by contrast seemed to be taking place in the next five years (except for the spaceships). The makers of Robocop have at least made a serious (and sometimes not so serious) attempt to project current trends out 20-30 years.

The plot has several weaknesses that tend to make it easier for Robocop to bring in the bad guys. In particular, at one point the main henchman makes a speech to Robocop admitting he works for the main villain. This makes things easy for Robocop, but (1) the henchman is getting thrown through windows and such like, and (2) it is clearly established in the film that the henchman might suppose mentioning his boss' name would save him. At another point a bad guy puts down a perfectly good armor-piercing cannon to use a crane to drop a lot of metal parts on Robocop. This is stupid, but at least the movie has the main bad guy yelling at him to "Stop messing around and shoot." Mark also complains that the ED-209 (a robot the cyborg Robocop edges out of a job) would not be very effective as a policeman, which is amply demonstrated in the movie, but it is also made clear that the corporation doesn't care if it actually works as a cop --their plan is to sell it to the Pentagon.

I do have one beef. Cops are being killed right and left. The crooks are armed like they just came out of the National Guard Armory. The cops... well, the cops carry what appear to be 9mm pea-shooters with nary a shotgun or automatic rifle in sight! Maybe these are supposed to be some kind of advanced handguns, but if I were on that future Detroit police force, I'd carry an AK47 or an Uzi!

Overall, though, these are just quibbles. Robocop is more realistic than many action movies, including most James Bonds and Remo Williams. The plot is not as tightly wound as that of The Conversation, but it exceeds Blue Thunder by a wide margin. To this it must be added that Robocop continues the line of "action" heroines started by Alien and Aliens. We see for the very first time without any special attention that sexual equality has reached the point that male and female cops share the same locker room. There is no gratuitous flesh, and the heroine is not model-pretty. However, she has a mean crescent kick.

Robocop straddles the edge between a realistic superhero comic and SF. If one guy is a cyborg or wears a powered suit like the comic hero Iron Man, we have a superhero story. If everyone has a powered suit, we have Heinlein's Starship Troopers. It is clearly implied in the movie that fairly

soon there are going to be other cyborg cops, marking the beginning of the transition to a still more fantastic future..

Robocop also marks a new level in audience acceptance of technology and human transformation. It may well point the way toward our own "cyber-punk" future. Murphy, as Robocop, eventually overcomes his programming and recovers his sense of self. Having done so, he accepts his new role as cyborg-cop, realizing that his previous life is over. Although technology not under human control is dangerous (e.g. the ED-209 run amok), technology backed by human integrity works for the betterment of all. I was amazed at how favorable the audience reaction seems as the movie ended.

In some non-trivial sense we are all Murphy. We went to sleep and a lot of technology insinuated itself into our lives. Now, as before, it is up to us to use it for good or ill. Each time we wake, however, there is still more technology. Like Murphy, we know there is no going back. Who knows? If you get very lucky, someday you may wake to see the planets forming around that star you want to visit. But if you do, you will find that, like Murphy, you have said more good-byes than it is healthy to contemplate.

A film counter-counter-review  
by Mark R. Leeper  
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I was unaware I was having these long-running debates that Dale claims I have been having with him. We have disagreed on specific films, but I usually try to judge each film on its own merits. As a result I have not been pleased with a lot of superhero films, but I am very fond of Conan the Barbarian and Dr. Strange. I am even reasonably fond of Conan the Destroyer and much of Superman I. I thought Dale knew that. There are probably others, but they do not come readily to mind.

I agree with Dale that it is good that much of the story in Robocop is not done tongue in cheek, but certainly the television ads were, in particular the thermo-nuclear war game. Dale says simply that he is not bothered by inconsistencies in the future word. Fine. I would still claim that there are inconsistencies. I would still contend that the film makers were not really sure how far in the future they were setting the film. They have some aspects of their future only about five years ahead, and others far more.

Dale is not too much worried about plot weaknesses, so there is not much point in discussing them. His defense of why the corporation is unconcerned about the quality of the ED-209 does not quite work. It would if OCP was making the ED-209 for a tradition police force. But as we see, even with corrected software it would be physically useless for the job it was mainly designed for -- police work. And who are the main users of the ED-209? OCP themselves! They own the police force. Presumably Grumman would not have been so cavalier about their flexible buses if they were so obviously faulty and if Grumman was going to be the main users.

Dale correctly assess that Robocop is not as good a film as The Conversation and is better than Blue Thunder. I am sorry he missed the gratuitous bare breast scene in the locker room. It was certainly there if I remember correctly.

I still contend the plot was thin and familiar. And it was much too predictable.

#### THE RAGGED ASTRONAUTS

by Bob Shaw  
Baen Books, 1986, 310 pp., \$15.95

A book review by Dean R. Lambe

Shaw's creativity and humanistic characterizations have long marked him as one of the very best Anglo-American SF writers. With this, the first of a projected trilogy, Shaw begins his most ambitious project to date, and begins it well.

In an alternate universe where men have twelve fingers and pi equals exactly three, two planets--Land and Overland--share such a close, tide-locked orbit that their atmospheres are continuous. Only Land appears to be inhabited, and there in the kingdom of Kolcorron the story focuses on the lives of two brothers, Lain and Toller Maraquine, and two princes, Leddravohr and Chakkell. The Maraquines serve the hereditary Philosophers, the emerging scientists in this pseudo-medieval society on the verge of an Age of Reason, while Leddravohr and Chakkell lead the military and industrial production, respectively, for their father, King Prad.

A dual crisis looms, as the brakka tree, with its superhard wood and explosive mechanism of pollination, becomes increasingly scarce. At the same time, the ptertha, beachball-sized gasbag organisms, become even more deadly carriers of toxins, and decimate the people of Land. The brakka, source of material and energy on metals-poor land, remains plentiful in the distant country of Chamteth, and Prince Leddravohr's plans for invasion are finally accepted. The war, which ironically fulfills Toller's wish to join the military even though he has insulted Leddravohr, ends abruptly when the contagious plague from the pterthas destroys the ill-prepared people of Chamteth. Suddenly the Kolcorronians have both won and lost all of their planet. Daily, the threat of ptertha poisoning becomes more intense, until finally the king approves the chief Philosopher's mad plan -- wholesale migration to Overland, the sister planet, via hot gas balloon. As the migration plans proceed, the lives of Toller and Leddravohr become further entwined to the point where only one will survive their final confrontation.

While it lacks the blazing originality of previous Shaw works, The Ragged Astronauts is a solid work by an inventive writer. Although anticipated, the ending of the first volume more than adequately whets the reader's appetite for more.

A book review by Ann Cecil

This book feels like a fantasy written by someone who really can't take it seriously. Perhaps it's the comic-opera names (Lord

Glo, Leddravohr, Fera and Gesalla), or the fancy dress uniforms, or the moats and castles in which the people live (the Rainbow Hall calls out for a musical number). It doesn't help that most of the characters are cliches, stereotypes black-hearted villains, lusty wenches, loyal heroes, manipulating women with hearts of gold.

The setting is Land, a small planet incredibly close (something like 5000 miles) to another planet called Overland. When a native predator suddenly mutates into a fatal plague of genocidal proportions, the Kolcorronians (members of the dominant nation on Land) are shocked into building gas balloons and flying up to Overland.

A great deal of the novel concerns Kolcorronian politics, and the revolutionary

effect of the shock on their rigid caste system. As Kolcorronian society changes, a misplaced young man named Toller Maraquine matures with it, finding freedom to use his true talents and the understanding to use them wisely.

There aren't any new insights here, and the characters are too predictable to make the leisurely set-up interesting. This is the first of a series, which presumably explains the slow pace. There are hints that something unexpected waits in the wings, a revelation that will explain some of the odder things in this odd universe. I'm not intrigued enough to wade through more, and The Ragged Astronauts is not particularly recommended, unless you are into books with echoes of "The Chocolate Soldier".

## Fanzines

by Lan

Since I last put a similar column together about fanzines for the Lantern, nine months have passed. I have collected a stack of fanzines about 18 inches tall during that time--and I don't think that all that did come in are in the pile. I will be listing those that I did get, and MAYBE making a comment or two, but don't expect much. I'll do what I can. All are available for the usual unless mentioned otherwise.

Abattoir #2 & #3. Bryan Barrett (PO Box 6202, Hayward, CA 94540 USA) and Lucy Huntzinger (2215-R Market Street, San Francisco, CA 94114 USA). Funny and witty personal observations on life and fandom. Delightful reading.

After the Flood #25. David Griffin, Mulbarsstigen 7, 196 31 Kungsängen, SWEDEN. With a beautiful color-xerox cover, this zine is difficult for me to read -- anyone know Swedish? Well done, but I wish I could read it. (I don't mean to knock David and the zine, I just wish I could read a language other than English.)

Andruschak-zines. Harry Andruschak, 946 W. 220th Street #106, Torrance, CA 90502 USA. For lack of a better grouping for these zines from LASFAPA/APA-L, I'll call them by the writer. Harry sends these in lieu of writing comprehensive locs; they give an account of things personal in his life.

Ansible 50. Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AU, UNITED KINGDOM. David's Hugo Award winning fanzine. Fun to read.

Anvil #44 & 45. Charlotte Proctor, 8325 7th Ave. South, Birmingham, AL 35206, USA. A pleasantly laid out, readable, interesting, fun zine. Recommended.

Australian SF News #45. Mervyn R. Binns, PO Box 491, Elsternwick 3185, Victoria AUSTRALIA. A\$6/4 issues, no rates yet for overseas. The voice of Australian publishing and markets. It contains reviews, articles, and information about F & SF. Very nicely done.

Bangweulu #3 & #4. John A. Purcell, 4552 Cinnamon Ridge Trail, Eagan, MN 55122 USA.

John's personalzine, which finally has a stable address. In his moves from the Minneapolis, Minnesota, area to California and back, he had several different mail drops. He says he's stable now; I'll have to ask Lori about that.

Black Hole #23 & 24. LUU SF Society (Leeds University Union Science Fiction Society), Leeds University Union, PO Box 157, Leeds, LS1 1UH. Some well-written articles.

Bruzzfuzzel News #47-52. Baton Rouge Science Fiction League, PO Box 14238, Baton Rouge, LA 70898-4238, USA. Typical clubzine with occasionally exceptional reviews, locs, etc. In November, BRSFL also published an index to their first 50 issues.

Buf-O, Vol. 3 #2. Klaus Haisch, 1729 E. Tabor Street, Indianapolis, IN 46203 USA. "The newsletter for Sci-Fi, Horror Movies, Wrestling and Humor..." it says in the colophon. There are also comic reviews and strips.

Chris Drumm, Books, Catalogues #16-20. PO Box 445, Polk City, IA 50226, USA. Catalogues, obviously; Chris also puts out his own line of little books which are well worth looking at.

Chundar, March - June issues. John Foyster, PO Box 483, Norwood, SA 5067, AUSTRALIA. Although stated as an irregular publication, these monthly issues appeared in my mailbox together. Each has something a little different -- a conreport via humorous illustrations, regular con report, an article on Rock 'n' Roll, and some reviews.

Circular Janus, The, Vol 7, #4-9. Don Eamon, 7331 Hearthstone Way, Indianapolis, IN

46227, USA. The Circle of Janus Newsletter, with the usual for a clubzine, and some perceptive reviews by Don Eamon and others.

Convention Log #46-49. R Laurraine Tutihasi, Katnip Manor, 5876 Bowcroft Street #4, Los Angeles, CA 90016, USA. Whim. Laurraine's diary/personalzine; has some reviews and conreports, locs; summarizes her life and feelings.

Crystal Ship #12. John D. Owen, 4 Highfield Close, Newport Pagnell, Bucks, MK16 9AZ, UNITED KINGDOM. The theme seems to be music, though there is a long article about fan art in fanzines by Dave Collins. And lotsa locs.

Dave's Secular Lens #1-7. Dave D'Amassa, 323 Dodge St., East Providence, RI 02914, USA. \$1.50/issue. Dave's personalzine which is very interesting and fascinating. Reading about his feelings and activities gives me more insight into the workings of the minds of some of my brighter students.

De Profundis #185-192. Los Angeles Science Fiction Society, 11513 Burbank Blvd., North Hollywood, CA 91601. The official newsletter of LASFS, filled with con and fan information, reviews, minutes, etc.

Desert Sun #2 & #3. Craig Chrissinger, 915 Idlewilde Lane SE, Albuquerque, NM 87108, USA. A zinee filled with poetry, art (some excellent), articles, reviews, cartoons, etc. Even I have something in #3. Pleasant read.

Dropbear Digest #1. Lucy Huntzinger, 2215-R Market St., San Francisco, CA 94114 USA. The DUFF newsletter, edited by the 1987 DUFF Winner.

Duprass #3. Linda E. Bushyager (24 Leopard Road, PaoLi, PA 19301 USA) and Leslie H. Smith. A wonderfully written mimeozine. \$5/3 issues. Leslie has moved, apparently to the Midwest (I see her at a lot of the local cons), but I'm not sure where.

Eat That Duck #1. Ron Gemmell, 79 Mansfield Close, Birchwood, Warrington, Cheshire, WA3 6RN UNITED KINGDOM. A genzine with personal notes.

8&1/2X11Zine #3. David Thayer, 7209 DeVille Drive, North Richland Hills, TX 76180 USA. Editorial Whim only. A wonderfully written and illustrated personalzine. An added bonus is "The Wingnuts at MINICON 22" by Teddy Harvia.

Eldritch Science #1. George Phillies, 87-6 Park Avenue, Worcester, MA 01605 USA. \$10/4 issues. A genzine looking for fiction of all aspects of SF subgenre, though recognizable characters are not welcome (i.e., Holmes & Watson, Kirk, Spock, etc.).

Entropion #6-7. Nick Shears, 27 Chiltern Road, Wendover, Aylesbury, Bucks., HP22 6DA, UNITED KINGDOM. One of the more interesting personalzines from the UK. I read each one that comes in, but have yet to reply via loc. I do appreciate trading for the copies.

Erg Quarterly, #97-101. Terry Jeeves, 56 Redscar Drive, Scarborough YO12 5RQ, E. Yorkshire UNITED KINGDOM. LOC, \$5/6 issues in US bills (not check -- costs too much to process). Terry is in his 29th year of publishing, and has put out 100 issues of Erg. THAT is an accomplishment few faneds (if any) can claim. CONGRATULATIONS, Terry. And the zine is wonderfully interesting. Highly recommended

Fanzine Fanatigue #66-67. Keith & Rosemary Walker, 6 Vine St., Greaves, Lancaster LA1 4UF, UNITED KINGDOM. Probably the most complete listing of fanzines.

FILE:770. Mike Glycer, 5828 Woodman Ave., #2, Van Nuys, CA 91401, USA. 5/\$5 The premiere fannish newsletter.

Flick the Bogey. Harry Bond, 6 Elizabeth Avenue, Bagshot, Surrey, ENGLAND GU19 5NX. A short one-shot by Harry to hand out at CONSPIRACY.

Fosfax #114-123. Fosfa, PO Box 37281, Louisville, KY 40233-7281, USA. A fairly large, consistently produced monthly clubzine filled with reviews, commentary and locs. Recommended.

Galactic Dispatch #81-87. Joe Sokola, 5333 Cracker Barrel Circle, Colorado Springs, CO 80917-1803, USA. This booklet-sized fanzine has some perceptive reviews and articles, and a very active following in the letter column.

GASBAG #158 & 159. c/o Jean Lynn Barnard, 1810 Charlton Ave, Ann Arbor, MI 48103. The title is an acronym for "Gilbert and Sullivan Boys and Girls, which is published by FUMGASS, the Friends of the University of Michigan Gilbert and Sullivan Society. A fanzine dedicated to, who else, Gilbert and Sullivan!

Gegenschein #52. Eric Lindsey, 6 Hillcrest Avenue, Faulconbridge, NSW 2776, AUSTRALIA. Eric's diary, some book reviews, and a few letters. Eric's always interesting to read.

Girabbit #3 & #4. David Bratman, PO Box 662, Los Altos, CA 94023, USA. David's personalzine which he puts out irregularly, and uses to keep in touch with fans.

Great Wall #387, #587, #787. George Inzer, 582 Ashville Rd., Montevallo, AL 35115, USA. Whim, I assume, since this is George's SFPA-zine. He has some good essay(s), as well as the usual mailing comments for an apa.

Hard Hat Fanzine #1. Chuq Von Rospach, 35111-F Newark Blvd., Suite 255, Newark, CA 94560, USA. An occasional supplement to OtheRealms; this contains Chuq's CONSPIRACY report.

Hardwired Hinterland #3. Richard Jervis, PO Box 743, Notre Dame, IN 46556, USA. Some good articles about C.J. Cherryh and Alan Dean Foster. Lots of comments via electronic medium.

Harpings #9-12. The Filk Foundation, 34 Barbara Drive, Little Rock AR 72204. USA. Available to Filk Foundation members, contribution of news, and editorial whim. Contains news of interest to filkers and those who enjoy filking.

Hi-Tech Terror #23-29. Craig Ledbetter, Box 5367, Kingwood, TX 77325, USA. Craig continues his excellent coverage of Grade-B horror films and home videos.

Holier Than Thou #25 & 26. Marty Cantor, 11565 Archwood St., N. Hollywood, CA 91606-1703 USA. Good articles, long loccol. Interesting, especially to fannish fans. #26 is a Terry Carr memorial tribute.

I-94. Spike Parsons (PO Box 535, Madison, WI 53701 USA) and Luke McGuff (PO Box 3680, Minneapolis, MN 55403 USA). A personalzine about traveling the interstate highways.

I'm Not Boring You, Am I #5 & #6. Robert Runte, PO Box 4655, Postal Station South Edmonton, Edmonton, Alberta, T6E 5G5. CANADA. Robert's FAPA zine wich is very good reading, and a more than adequate trade.

Illyria #4. Peter Smith, 16 Tresta Walk, Woking, Surrey, GU21 4XF, ENGLAND. Interesting, well done, clean repro and nice layout.

It Goes on the Shelf #4. Ned Brooks, 713 Paul St., Newport News, VA 23605 USA. Reviews, locs, and an article by Arthur Macher.

Leftovers From Sheppard's Past. Ricky Sheppard, PO Box 125, Rockfield, KY 42274-0125, USA. Ricky's KAPAZine.

Light in the Bushel #4 & #5. Richard Brandt, 4740 N. Mesa #111, El Paso, TX 79912, USA. Richard's personalzine is very interesting. His editing of the lettercol is probably the best among faneds today.

Low Orbit #37-39. R'ykandar Korra'ti, Transylvania University, Lexington, KY 40508 USA. Full of the usual, including ads. #37 is photocopied, the other two are commercially produced. The dot-matrix portions (kept to a minimum) can be hard on the eyes.

Mad Engineer #6, The. Mary Hagan, 3333 East Rhorer Road, Bloomington, IN 47401, USA. A little booklet with one story, some articles, particularly reprinted articles from various sources about engineering, and some fair art.

Matalan Rave, The, #11, 13. Michael Hailstone, PO Box 258, Manuka, A.C.T. 2603, AUSTRALIA. Some articles, some personal stuff, locs, etc. Interesting.

Mentor, The, #60, 61. Ron Clarke, 6 Bellevue Road, Faulconbridge, NSW 2776, AUSTRALIA. A mixture of articles, locs and fiction. Good, pleasant reading, but unfortunately #60 was the last of its size -- due to cost and time. #61 was about half the size of #60 (25 pages, with a "sideways" format.



### WHEN FANZINE FANS GO WRONG...

Metaphysical Review #10. Bruce Gillespie, GPO Box 5195AA, Melbourne, Victoria 3001, AUSTRALIA. Excellent articles.

Mimosa #3. Dick & Nicki Lynch, 4207 Davis Lane, Chattanooga, TN 37416 USA. An excellent genzine. Highlights include Bob Snaw's GoH speech from RIVERCON XII.

Move to Melbourne Newsletter, The, #1. Michelle Muijsert, Amelia Underwood, Lucinda Lewis, and Aunty Emily Birdsfoot, Box 428, Richmond, Victoria 3121, AUSTRALIA.

Munich Round Up #155. Waldemar Kumming, Herzogspitalstr. 5, 8000 Munchen 2, West Germany. (US agent: Andrew Porter, PO Box 4175, New York, NY 10163, USA -- \$1.75/issue; \$5/3 issues). Waldemar gave me a copy of this zine at CONSPIRACY. There is a summary of the issue in English for those of us who do not read German. David Langford's EUROCON GoH speech is both in English and German, and remains hysterically funny.

NASFA Shuttle (Vol 7, #4-12, Vol 8, #1). NASFA, PO Box 4857, Huntsville, AL 35815-4857, USA. Current Editor: Nelda Kathleen Kennedy, 7907 Charlotte Drive SW, Huntsville, AL 35802, USA. The newsletter of the North Alabama Science Fiction Association. Locs, reviews, meeting & club news, etc.

National Fantasy Fan, The (TNFF), Vol 47, #1-5. David Heath Jr., PO Box 862, South Gate, CA 90044, USA. Comes with membership in N3F. The official newsletter of the National Fantasy Fan Federation (N3F).

Neology Vol. 12 #1/2 A & B, 3, 4, 5 & 6. Kathleen Moore-Freeman, ESFACAS Box 4071 PSSE, Edmonton, Alberta T6E 4S8. The Edmonton Science Fiction And Comic Arts Society clubzine. Some good articles and reviews, active loccol, and club news.

Niekas #35. Ed Meskys, RFD #1 Box 63, Center Harbor, NH 03226-9729, USA. \$3/1 issue, \$10/4 issues, \$19/8 issues; Foreign, add \$.75 per issue. 56 pages of reviews and articles about SF & F. Recommended.

Nightworld Compendium, Vol 2, #1. A personalzine of Richard Jervis, PO Box 743, Notre Dame, IN 46556, USA.

Notes From Oblivion. Jay Harber, 626 Paddock Lane, Libertyville, IL 60048 USA. A personalzine, sometimes difficult to read because it is hand-printed and photocopied. Also contains some newspaper articles that

are of interest to Jay, or just contain some funny headlines.

Novoid #5. Colin Hinz, 1118 College Drive, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7N 0W2 CANADA. Superbly produced, with some excellent articles. Colin has come a long way since the first issue.

Nowhere Fast #1. Harry Bond, 6 Elizabeth Avenue, Bagshot, Surrey, GU19 5NX, ENGLAND. An obvious first fanzine effort, but not bad. I met Harry at CONSPIRACY and he is a very pleasant person. He has lots of potential.

OtheRealms #15-19. Chuq Von Rospach, 35111-F Newark Blvd., Suite 255, Newark, CA 94560, USA. An excellent reviewzine, with an active lettercol. Highly recommended.

Outworlds #49-53. Bill Bowers, 1874 Sunset Ave, Apt. 56, Cincinnati, OH 45238-3142. Whim, \$2.50/issue, \$10/5 issues. A very personal personalzine. #51 dealt with the tenth fannish anniversary of several fans.

Pablo Lennis #15. John Thiel, 30 N. 19th St., Lafayette, IN 47904, USA.

Paperback Parade #3 & 4. Gary Lovisi, Box 209, Brooklyn, NY 11228 USA. \$3/issue. Articles, ads, etc., about different genres of paperbacks. #3 is about Mysteries, #4 about Westerns. Interesting, and good for collectors.

Penguin Dip #3, #6. Stephen H. Dorneman, 95 Federal St. #2, Lynn, MA 01905, USA. \$10/10 issues (1 year). A gaming fanzine. I met Steve at the first PgHLANGE (a con now defunct) I went to. He dropped out of fandom a couple of years later. He resurfaced early in 1987 with Penguin Dip. It's a good place for gamers to communicate.

Pulsar #5-7. A.E. Ubelhor, 2425 Highway 41 North, Suite 134, Evansville, IN 47711, USA. \$9/year (6 issues). A clubzine, booklet size, filled with reviews, locs, articles, and club news.

Quintessential Space Debris #1. Kathleen Gallagher, PO Box 561, Athens, OH 45701 USA. A first effort by a relative neo. Some interesting things, but needs work on layout.

Rats on Fire #61. Brian Earl Brown, 11675 Beaconsfield, Detroit, MI 48224 USA. \$1/4 issues. A gossip/newsletter type zine about Detroit fandom and its environs.

Robots and RoadRunners #3 and #4. Alexander R. Slate, 5502 Timber Jack, San Antonio, TX 78250 USA. The clubzine/newszine of the San Antonio SF Association. All I have of #4 is the cover -- the rest was lost in the mail.

Rune #76. Jeanne Mealy and David Romm, MNSTff, PO Box 8297 Lake Street Station, Minneapolis, MN 55408 USA. Rune under new editorship. Let's see what they do with it!

Salarius #4. J & R Publishing, PO Box 500043, Houston TX 77250-0043, USA. \$18/12 issues, \$9/6 issues. Jon and Ruth Colley

are putting out a decent semiprozine. It has fiction, poetry, articles, reviews, puzzles, and beautiful art by Nick Smith and Darla Tagrin.

Samizdat #5/6, 7, 9. Philippe Gauthier, 197 Du Bearn, Saint-Lambert, Quebec J4S 1L2 CANADA, and Claude J. Pelletier, 20 Cnemin du Mistral, Iles Laval, Laval, Quebec H7Y 1S1. \$2/issue. A genzine for French-Canadian fans, written in French. It has cartoons, pro and fan reviews, locs, etc.

Secant #1 & 2. Greg Hills, GPO 972 G, Melbourne 3001, AUSTRALIA. A personalzine, mainly dealing with Greg's life since 1983. Has some letters and articles as well. #2 has an extremely good article about Asimov's Foundation series, "The Future of Seldon's Plan."

Serendipity #5. Joseph Dickerson, 4295 Silver Lake Road, Pinson, AL 35126, USA. Of interest to Star Trek, Man From U.N.C.L.E., and other media fans. Some humorous pieces.

Sikander 14. Irwin Hirsh, 2/416 Dandenong Rd., Caulfield North, Victoria 3161, AUSTRALIA. Irwin handed this to me at CONSPIRACY. Some personal stuff, reviews, locs, and generally a good read.

Six-Shooter. A one-shot (joke intended) zine concocted to raise money for TAFF at CONSPIRACY. It contains 6 essays (thus the title). A second printing was done 9/87 by Jeanne to continue to raise money. Contact: Jeanne Gomoll, PO Box 1443, Madison, WI 53701-1443 USA; Linda Pickersgill, 7A Lawrence Road, South Ealing, London W5 4XJ UNITED KINGDOM; Pam Wells, 24A Beech Road, Bowes Park, London N11 2DA UNITED KINGDOM.

Solaris #74, 75, 76. Luc Pomerleau, Case Postale 25, Succursale A, Hull, Quebec, J8Y 6M7 CANADA. \$3.50/issue. This is the semiprozine of French-speaking Canada. I met Elisabeth Vonarberg, the literary editor, at AD ASTRA in June 87, and through the summer set up a trade of Solaris for LL. This is a nicely produced zine with reviews, stories, interviews, and lavish illustrations. Since it is written in French, I have trouble reading it, but Maia can make some of it out and says it's nicely done.

Some Like It Chilled #1 & 2. Dennis K. Fischer, 366 N Spaulding Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90036, USA. \$10/4 issues. Dennis returns to the zine-publishing field after a couple of years off with these nicely produced collections of articles about horror films. Welcome back!

Space Wastrel, The, Vol. 2, #6-8. Michelle Muijsert, Mark Loney, and Julian Warner. PO Box 428, Richmond, Victoria 3121, AUSTRALIA. Wonderful, off-the-wall humor. #8 has an attractive, erotic Joan Hanke-Woods cover.

Spectra After the Kipple. David Griffin, Mulbarsstigen 7, 196 31 Kungsängen, SWEDEN. John Annes, Box 39, 280 40 Skanes-Fagerhult. Lars-Arne Karlson, Ekas Gallared, 310 60 Ullared. A reviewzine from Sweden.

Spung #1. Ted White, 1014 N. Tuckahoe St., Falls Church, VA 22046 USA. Ted's personalzine which contains his description of his arrest in 1986, letters from prison, and some tributes to Terry Carr.

Sticky Quarters #17. Brian Earl Brown, 11675 Beaconsfield, Detroit, MI 48224. Some fine articles by Eric Mayer, Roger Sims, and Greg Benford.

T.D.S. #1 & #2. Danilo Santoni, Via Marzabotto 30, 05100 Terni, ITALY. A nicely produced fanzine from Italy. Again, I cannot read Italian, but the arrangement is nice, and Danilo seems to hit the major things a genzine cover: reviews, interviews, articles, the fan scene, fiction, etc.

TAFFiles #1. Jeanne Gomoll, Box 1443, Madison, WI 53701-1443 USA. Jeanne's zine for reports about TAFF, since she was the Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund winner for 1987. Donate \$\$, and get copies.

Taffluvia #10. Patrick & Teresa Nielsen Hayden, 75 Fairview #2D, New York, NY 10040 USA. The last of the Taff reports from Patrick and Teresa.

Ten Grand. Graham Daniels and Phil Petty, 49 Rugby Road, Brighton, Sussex BN1 6EB, UNITED KINGDOM. A strange little fanzine put out for CONSPIRACY. I was approached by a group of fans in the halls of the Metropole and presented with the option of buying or not buying this issue. I bought -- it was only 40p. It does have some interesting articles.

Texas SF Inquirer, The, #21 & 22. Pat Mueller, 618 Westridge, Duncanville, TX 75116, USA. A Hugo nominee last year, this zine continues to print news about Texas fandom. Some very good articles about Texas authors.

Tigger #22-26. Mark Ortlieb, PO Box 215, Forest Hill, Victoria 3131 AUSTRALIA. This genzine is listed as the official organ of the Australian National Science Fiction Association. With #26, the editor is N. D. Adams, who has made it more ANSFA than Marc did, and it now publishes fanfiction and articles. And both are pretty good.

Tigger Songbook, The Official. Marc Ortlieb and Eccles the Microbee, PO Box 215, Forest Hill, Victoria 3131, AUSTRALIA. \$2.00 + postage. All profits go to FFANZ.

Tightbeam #148, 149, 150/51. Current editor is Sally A Syrjala, PO Box 149, Centerville, MA 02632. The letter-zine of the National Fantasy Fan Federation (N3F), and it also contains some reviews.

Timbre #4. Tim Jones, 20 Gillespie St., Dunedin, Aotearoa, NEW ZEALAND.

Torch #37 & 38. Dwight Decker, PO Box 2217, Northlake, IL 60164 USA. Apazines for CAPA-Alpha, with some interesting articles.

Torus #2. Lloyd Penney, Keith Soltys, Michael Dennis Skeet & Michael Wallis. PO

Box 186, Sataion M, Toronto, Ontario M6S 4T3 CANADA. A good second issue; highlights include a C.J. Cherryh interview, and Heather Ashby's "Hunting the Wild Woods Lobster."

Trapdoor #6, #7. Robert Lichtman, PO Box 30, Glen Allen, CA 95442, USA. A nominee for Best Fanzine Hugo last year, this one continues to publish some of the best articles around. I am slightly envious. #7 has some tributes to Terry Carr.

Twilight Zine #39. Janice M. Eisen, Editor, MIT Science Fiction Society, Room W20-473, 84 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02139 USA. A clubzine with the usual. Some exceptional artwork.

Undulant Fever #11. Bruce D. Arthurs, 5316 W. Port au Prince, Glendale, AZ 85306 USA. Whim, influenced by trades, locs, etc. An interesting personalzine.

Urbane Gorilla, The, #2. Wendy Council, 267 Arizona-1A, Rochester Hills, MI 48309 USA. Wendy's personalzine, much improved over her first one. She seems more relaxed in print this time.

WAHF-FULL #19. Jack R. Herman, Box 272, Wentworth Building, University of Sydney, Sydney, 2006 AUSTRALIA. A genzine, irregularly produced, about Australian fandom. This has many comments about the US and US fandom -- many of his concerns and complaints are legitimate. Recommended.

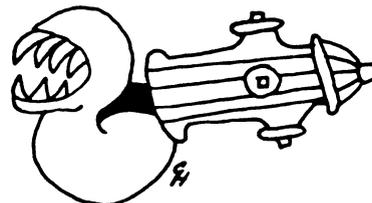
Weber Woman's Wrevenge, Vol 5, #3, 4, 5. Jean Weber, 6 Hillcrest Avenue, Faulconbridge, NSW 2776, Australia. Wonderfully written, feminist oriented (though not exclusively) fanzine. I enjoy it immensely.

Wofan (The Whole Fanzine Catalogue) #27. Brian Earl Brown, 11675 Beaconsfield, Detroit, MI 48224 USA. Trade or \$.50/issue. A summary/review of fanzines.

Worlds of Wonder, Vol. 2, #2. c/o Robert Cooke, 414 Fifth Street West, Birmingham, AL 35204, USA. Clubzine of Magic City Fantasy Club. Articles, reviews, poetry, fiction, a mixture of the usual of a clubzine. Some good art.

Xamixdat. Neil Rest, 5309 N. Clark, Chicago, IL 60640 USA. Neil's personalzine -- summarizes a lot of things that have happened to him over the past year.

YHOS #39, 40, 41. Art Widner, 231 Courtney Lane, Orinda, CA 94563, USA. As Art's FAPA-zine, he does a remarkable fanzine. The articles are interesting and thoughtful, and not just by him. #39 was a special Terry Carr memorial issue.



HELP NEEDED FOR  
HANDICAPPED ETIQUETTE ARTICLE

I am doing research in order to write an article concerning handicapped fan etiquette, but I need help. I would like to hear from fen -- disabled or not -- who have dealt with handicaps at conventions.

I need to know: Have you been in an awkward situation due to a disability or disabling condition? Did you find a way to defuse it? Are there certain things people do that irritate/displease you? Is there something you wish people would or would not do to make life easier for you?

Please keep in mind that this article will be written for everyone. You don't have to be handicapped to help broaden the perspective, and your comments may be either positive or negative. People with "conditions" not normally termed "handicapped" -- epilepsy, hypoglycemia, diabetes -- are certainly welcome to write, as are those who have only dealt with other people who have handicaps.

Please write:

Paula Robinson  
2422 Clifton Ave, Flr. 1  
Cincinnati, OH 45219

Your name will be used in the article unless you specify otherwise.  
Thanks.

SHORT FICTION NEEDED

by Gary Lovisi

I'm planning on putting out a SF/Fantasy, SF/Horror, SF zine next year tentatively called Infinite Worlds. I am looking for short stories only, under 4,000 words. Contributions should be sent with a SASE. Payment is one copy of the issue in which your work appears. All material will be copyright by the contributors.

All manuscripts (with SASE) should be sent to:

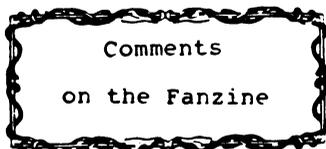
Infinite Worlds  
c/o Gryphon Publications  
Box 209  
Brooklyn, NY 11228.



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## Post Scriptings

[[ I have tried to put as much feedback into the lettercol without too much repetition -- in other words, to edit the locs to make this as small a column as possible. My comments are in these double square brackets.]]



Comments

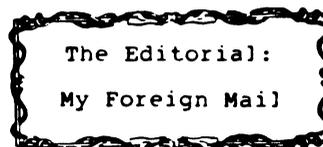
on the Fanzine

J. Owen: First impressions of all the issues of LL that I've seen so far have been of the "Jeez, how does he find time to put this together?" variety, closely followed by an escalating vision of dollar signs in abundance as I look at the number of pages, and the mailing cost. So it's true, there are millionaires in fandom, and not all of them live in Puerto Rico, either! Full marks for effort, Lan: turning an issue out in short order of that size deserves a Hugo just for the pain involved! To get it of such quality, and such variety, with such lively content as well stretches admiration beyond the bounds of reasonableness. C'mon, admit it, Lan, you're a millionaire with a hundred strong staff turning out LLs while you sit and sip champagne!

[[No, I'm not a millionaire, though I wish

I were so that I could produce the fanzine I'd really like!]]

Mike Glicksohn: Gee, you went from 122 pages to 140 pages and my loc increased by almost fifty percent. Must be one of those exponential thingees I read about in Lan's Lantern one time. But when you eventually hand me a 200 page issue I promise my response will be a handshake and "I liked parts of it" at a con somewhere!



The Editorial:

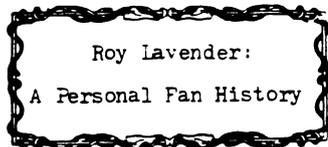
My Foreign Mail

Skel: Oh, I am no longer totally god-smacked upon opening a fanzine to discover an article or column by me that I never wrote, or to be more precise, that left here in the garb of a letter or even a part thereof. In truth I don't mind, providing the editors in question make plain their sleight-of-editorial-hand. In truth it's sometimes

vaguely flattering, even though I may have put every bit as much effort into what-I-wrote-as-a-letter as I would into a piece I'd write-as-an-article. At least when someone runs a letter as an article you know they are doing so because they thought the material worthy, whereas when they ask you for and run an article there is always the possibility that a sense of obligation might have weighed in on the side of iffy material. Anyway, be that as it may, I have to admit that Lan's Lantern #23 is most definitely the first time I've ever discovered I've unwittingly co-written somebody's editorial.

Wipeout!

Mike Glicksohn: Probably nobody else in fandom today would take the time or have the ingenuity to explain in such humorous detail why he wasn't going to loc your fanzine that you'd be tempted to use the explanation as an editorial, and that's one reason I rate Paul Skelton among our top echelon writers right now. You've probably no way of knowing this but (and I find this as amusing as hell) without considering the coonskin cap that cartoon on page 82 looks a lot more like Paul Skelton than it does you.



Jeanne Mealy: Roy spins a good tale, drawing in all sorts of details to make fan-nish stories come to life in ways nearly all of us can relate to. What a bunch of characters -- rigging up their own telephone line with regulation equipment that wasn't taken down for years!!

Ben Schilling: I've been enjoying the Roy Lavender series and enjoyed talking to him a INCONJUNCTION. Just because something happened before I was born doesn't mean I'm not interested in it. My great-grandmother lived to be 93 and I had some very interesting talks with her about her early life which gave me a second-hand look at the 1890s. Extremely interesting.

Mike Glicksohn: My favorite part of the fanzine was once again Roy Lavender's personal fan history. I'm in awe of Roy's ability to remember such detail after such a long time, but then as you know, I'm in awe of anyone who can remember what they were doing last weekend. (Wait a minute! Last weekend I was talking to Roy Lavender about his personal fan history! Say, this isn't as hard as I thought...)

Milt Stevens: Roy Lavender's fan memoirs continue to be extremely interesting. He certainly should be given every encouragement to continue.

Paula Gold Franke: I believe I have a copy of that infamous volume Bawdy Songs and Backroom Ballads given to me many years ago by Lou Tabakow. I thoroughly enjoyed Roy's stories -- every word made me feel like I

was back at one of the old CFG meetings listening to the stories told by Lou, Dale Tarr, Bea Manaffey, and Margaret. I do sorely miss them -- the stories and the people.

Buck Coulson: Roy Lavender has shattered one of my fannish illusions; I always heard that the fans had to leave Beatleys -- generally known as Beastleys by the people I knew -- because Randy Garrett got in a fight with the owner's son, who was also the house dick who caught Randy with a woman not his wife. I was there when Tabakow got his award, which was a genuine special Hugo made up by the regular Hugo Committee, according to Howard DeVore. The story "Sven" did actually get published a year later, in an issue in which it wasn't featured on the cover.

Sheryl Birkhead: Roy Lavender's saga is great. It boggles my mind that someone actually knew Hannes Bok. I mean the only things I know about him are from the Gerry de la Ree artbook I have (kinda like someone knowing Asimov who has only read the Foundation Series). Please keep him working along and producing for your zine!

Joe Sanders: The cream of the contents was the latest installment of Roy Lavender's fan memoirs. Even if some of your readers don't recognize the people Roy's talking about (as Ted White fears), I can't imagine them not being charmed by the detailed, loving writing.



Andrew Offutt: Put it this way: had I been at MIDWESTCON and you had given LL #23 to me there, rather than to Jodie, and had I read the truly nasty letter from Ted White there, I'd have come looking for you, Lan/ I'm not sure what I'd have said after I hugged you, but...something. Something distinctly un-cruel, un-vicious, un-inhumane, unpoisonous; in other words something diametrically opposed to Ted's words. That long attack is far beyond the footballer's unnecessary roughness; it's gratuitous violence and toxic meanness.

Without realizing why, I rose and went outside. Saw some bushes and a few branches encroaching overmuch on our driveway, and went after them with the machete. This is the same obvious autotherapy I've engaged in for 20+ years, often without realizing at the time that I noticed a few things needed to be cut right after someone said something nasty, or I read a negative or stupid review or both, or received copy "edited" manuscript in which some dropout from a NYC special ed. class had been at my prose with a rusty hacksaw and rustier knowledge of English and style. In other words I go out and physically cut-slash-hack, forearm/backhand, in a way that would make Sigmund Freud smile and mutter "Ah, sat one does not need me; he has discovered the secret of healing himself; it is called From the System Outen-getting It."

Harmless expenditure of outrage or rage is also good for thinking, because while the mind is not necessary to slash and hack, physical activity does invigorate the mind. I thought about cruelty and insensitivity among people and of course particularly among us fans. You've heard me talk of this before, across 15 or so years: it's always hard for me to understand the viciousness and toxicity among people who have all been branded oddballs ("You read That Stuff?!"). I've received it (the true vicious cruelty to and about me in a letter to the previous Lantern was the most recent, fortunately); you've received it; Ted White has felt its bite; so has Jessica Salmonson and probably John Shirley too.

I'm not strong enough to pass it on, but I'll be damned if I'd have been as strong as you, Lan; you laboriously retyped and printed that plain dam' meanness. Lord, you even called it by the almost-honorable name "critique" rather than the barbaric attack it is. Oddly enough (because it has nothing to do with anything) I agree with absolutely nothing in that letter except that "Ask Dr. Science Fiction" is sophomoric.

That doesn't bother me (it did when I was a sophomore and heard that word used disparagingly!); hell, it's less than .9% of the whole 122 pages. Besides \*ulp!\* I keep reading it.

I love the way you laboriously separate comments from locs, by the way, and I read the letters first. (This time, fortunately, from back to front!). And isn't it nice that the best reviews are Maia's?

David D'Amassa: Ted White cheapened what was otherwise a good letter of criticism by, first of all, shifting his attention to the way you decorate yourself in public. The point I thought he was making was that Lan's Lantern did not deserve a Hugo, that your attitude toward winning was inappropriate. How does the coonskin cap enter into it? George Laskowski could wear a toilet seat around his neck and the Lantern wouldn't change. If it's a poorly edited fanzine, it's because Lan is a poor editor; what he wears in public is irrelevant. By calling you immature and boastful Ted risked putting you off his letter completely, in which case his valid criticism would have fallen on indifferent ears. Secondly, his statement "I have no doubt you will be ... obtuse about this letter" smacks of a challenge: I-dare-you-to-acknowledge-me.

Contrary to popular argument, your series of articles on fannish etiquette are pertinent. If everyone who read fanzines truly knew their manners, no one would have felt moved to write about them. The sad fact is, in the fannish as well as the mundane world, courtesy is rapidly becoming one of the forgotten humanities we teach our young. These brief reminders that we should be considerate of others, and hints as to how to go about it, are important. I'm glad you print them.

Another major criticism of the Lantern that I don't go for is that it is becoming too instructional. Frankly, I smell a bit of snobbery in the complaints that you are catering too much to inexperienced fen. LL



does a pretty good job of letting neos know what it's talking about without being patronizing; being something of a neo myself, I was pleased to observe this.

What I do go along with was his first remark: the fanzine Hugo ought to go. Is the coveted rocketship worth all of this nonsense? Hurt feelings, frustration, and greed are not what awards are for. At least, they shouldn't be.

Steve Fox: Ted White's opening opinion that the fan writer and fan artist Hugos should be abolished only says to me personally that he has some contempt for SF fans. If a large number of like-minded persons in SF fandom were ever to do this, it would create a climate where some fans who wish to work at writing and art would have no goal within fandom to aspire to--that is, no Hugo for themselves to show that they had done the work necessary to obtain one. And then move into professional circles. Besides, why should he care if a bunch of amateur artists and writers who may do excellent work, or fair work, get an award? It's not like they are taking money or earnings out of his pocket.

I'm somewhat puzzled. If he feels that fan writers and fan artists should not have a Hugo category, why does he bother reading fanzines? To me, his attitude seems to be that fans produce drek, and can't hope to do better! So why bother criticizing?

Let me ask the readers, mainly the fan writers and artists, how would you feel concerning the Hugos if you were told that you could not be included because you were a fan? Angry? Betrayed? Fans being left out of the Hugos would only separate and fragment fandom even more; maybe not a lot, but it would alienate quite a few.

Lloyd Penney: Fandom seems to be subject to its own version of the generation gap, i. e., things aren't like they were in my day. Time has a way of doing that. The definition of a fan and fanac has changed over the 50 years of fandom, and with our ever-expanding numbers, the definition changes with region, or even with individuals. To the BNFs of today, remember...the original fan of science-fiction not only had to publish his fanzine, but also keep a science lab in his basement. Time ... marches on!

Diana Stein: I have this theory about those "golden fanzines" that no one seems to be doing anymore....

Science Fiction is speculative fiction written about the future. It's purpose is to

help the people of today be aware of the tomorrows coming. It helps a person come to terms about where s/he is going, and what s/he wants to be in the world, through stimulating thought and discussion.

Fanzines are a reflection of Science Fiction in many ways. They too are there to help a person relate to the future.

Those people who tout the older days when fanzines really meant something have a point. At the time they were younger and probably unsure of themselves. Fanzines, like SF, helped them to define their values. At the time, they were quite meaningful to the readers and made deep lasting impressions on their minds.

Many of the younger fans, if they can find a copy of the older fanzines, cannot relate to them very well because the problems and morals the fanzines dealt with were in reference to the past. These younger fans may find that they don't understand why so much time was spent on particular topics because they seem old and already clearly defined.

I think those people who condemn today's fanzines should realize that they are put together in reference to today's viewpoints. These older fans have grown through the years and no longer need to do a lot of self-reflection. They don't see the impact anymore; they've already been through it.

Fanzines are just as good today as they were in yesteryears, but to different people for the same reasons. They still stimulate discussion and thought.

So there might continue to be a gap between what some people define as "Great Fanzines", but in 30 years I'll sit back and say, "Lan's Lantern. Boy, they don't make 'em as good anymore!"

Jerri Swinehart: I read Ted White's letter twice and still can't believe he actually mailed it. Anyone with a little common sense would've thrown it out. If he felt compelled to write you a letter of complaint, Ted White could have voiced things in a more diplomatic and constructive way. As it is, he comes off sounding like a snob, immature, and definitely nasty.

As to his criticisms, I personally feel Ted White speaks for himself. Addressing those criticisms, I'll give my own reaction.

First, there's the attack on Lan's Lantern winning the Hugo. So what if LL won on the second or third or fourth ballot. Does it cheapen the win? Karol Wojtyla (sp?) is no less Pope John Paul II because he didn't win on the first ballot. This is totally a moot point.

Second, Ted White attacks the name of your fanzine. Why doesn't he address the same complaint to Asimov's? Granted, Isaac Asimov doesn't personally edit and publish the magazine, but he does have a lot of input. Surely that doesn't lessen its reputation.

Third, some of the technical aspects of the fanzine are criticized. I know little of such things. I do know I have no trouble reading LL. I also know that to my eyes your layout seems to be well-balanced. I am turned off by slick, sophisticated magazines (like New Yorker) since there's an air of

artificiality to them. Lan's Lantern seems homier, and it's definitely not artificial.

Fourth, there's criticism of not just your excitement over winning the Hugo, but how much of yourself showed up in the LL which Ted White read. Would he, or does he, criticize Harlan Ellison for doing the same in his writing? Why should those of us who couldn't be at the Worldcon miss out on hearing the story of your winning the Hugo? I'm more inclined to believe sour grapes was at work. Did he support one of the other fanzines nominated?

[[I believe Ted White supported No Award.]]

Fifth, Ted White criticizes the content of LL. Would he criticize some of the odder fans (odd being a matter of opinion) in fandom who perhaps like some person or subject not strictly classed as science fiction or fantasy? could it not be that articles on bookmaking, photography, and costuming would be interesting, even helpful, to some fans? Helpful to me are the reviews. Being a student, I have little time for pleasure reading. When I do, I don't want to waste my time on crummy books. "Dr. Science Fiction" sophomoric? Oh come on! What about the puns in Asimov's? Or what about Wilson Tucker's cards? Whatever happened to having a sense of humor?

Lastly, Ted White complains LL is boring, and harkens back to "the good old days." He sound a lot like my senior citizen relatives. Even they will admit, in their more lucid moments, that the good old days maybe old, but not necessarily all that good. Perhaps Ted white should remember that!

Martin Morse Wooster: Ted White's blast was typical of him -- some sound insights mixed with a great deal of narrow-minded dogmatism. The problem with White is that his method of producing fanzines tends to result in exquisitely written tributes to the dear dead past which are uninteresting to anyone under the age of 40. I just wish that White and his pals, instead of whining about how horrible all fanzines (not produced either by themselves or their friends) are, would start to produce those zines which would blow everyone else's off the map.

One point of information: the reason you haven't heard very much about the "fact" that the Challenger was launched early so that Reagan could mention the Challenger in the State of the Union address is because it's a "fact" no one has been able to prove. It's a widely suspected rumor, and I believe it, but the "smoking gun" that proves White's case has never been found. (And the idea that McAulliffe was to talk to Reagan during the State of the Union speech is a "fact" that no one except White has ever mentioned.)

Clifton Amsbury: If you hadn't heard of Reagan wanting that shuttle up there!, it's because my voice can't be heard three-quarters of the way across the continent. It was so obvious. Ever since the first week when some report would come of "pressure" by NASA administrators pressuring flight officials

and the officials pressuring engineers, I'd be asking how come no one mentioned pressure on the administrators from the administration. After about three months there was one suggestion, but that's all I saw. As usual, anything against Reagan was being "voluntarily" suppressed by the media.

David Palter: There is a point which I think has been missed by those who say that the relatively high circulation fanzines such as yours have an unfair advantage in the Hugo voting over the smaller circulation fanzines. To take the trouble and go to the expense not only of putting together a good quality fanzine, but also of sending out copies of that fanzine to large numbers of interested fans, is quite authentically a greater service to fandom than it is to put together a good fanzine which is then sent to only a small number of readers.

Keith Soltys: Ted White does make some valid points about the overall quality of LL. I've no complaints about the variety of topics you try to cover but some of the material isn't very good. I find that the reviews, especially, are pretty uneven. And there are a lot of typos.

[[I am trying to be better at proofreading the zine before printing.]]

Frank Lyall: There are some things which could do with a blue pencil before they get into the Lantern, and there are some things which I would not have published, but in general the mix is interesting. Whether or not you have "started" any writers off I do not know, but it is a good thing for there to be some place where folk can make a point or two (or even sound off) in print. A heavy editorial hand would deter those who otherwise might start to write. Then, when some months later they see what they have said and now (badly/awkwardly) they have said it, they will cringe and (hopefully) learn.

Skel: You don't score many points by trying to refute Ted White's impression that you aren't heavily into the "fannish" side of fandom with your remark about "Peter Pickersgill" always being spirited away by other fans. This is known as shooting yourself in the foot. Why did you want to meet him in the first place? If it was a genuine desire to meet him, if it was important to you, wouldn't you have known his name? As it is, your response to Ted at that point makes you look vaguely ridiculous to anyone not predisposed to love you.

[[When I first got into producing fanzines about 12 years ago, I heard about this person named Pickersgill in England who was the quintessential fanzine fan. So I made it a point to remember his name. Unfortunately, the first name I attached to Pickersgill at the time was Peter (I think because I was corresponding somewhat with another major fanzine fan in England at the time -- Peter Roberts). It has been a conscious effort on my part to recall that his first name is Greg, not Peter. I did explain and apologize to Greg at CONSPIRACY about the

mistake. // Why did I want to meet him? I voted for him for TAFF, and I wanted to shake his hand and congratulate him on his TAFF win. // Yes, a major goof on my part.]]

You are trying to cover an immensely broad field, hitting almost everything. Ted is quite right. A lot of what you publish is substandard ... by his lights. You are not publishing the fanzine he would publish. You could for instance narrow your focus, publish less material, but material more polished. That's what Ted would do. That's what many of us would do. But it isn't what you want to do. You want to cover as much as you can. Given this, it isn't possible to publish that much, cover that much ground, with as polished a performance as Ted (and I, and many more of us including, I suspect, you) would like. There simply isn't the time to hold down a regular job and produce such a fanzine as a hobby activity, in any way other than the way you do it. This does of course lead to many of the faults that Ted cites, but as I see them as being inherent in what you've set out to do, I don't count them as such serious failings as Ted does.

Since there isn't the time to produce the zine you want the way we'd like you to do it ... that's up to us to come to terms with. You've made your choice. Because of that choice Lan's Lantern can never be one of my favourite fanzines, but there's always enough of the stuff I like to make me glad I get it.

Paula Gold Franke: Every field of endeavor has its own small group of old-timers insisting that the way things were done in the beginning is the best and the only way things should continue. They are rigid in their opinions and narrow in their scope of acceptance of any attempts to evolve. The saddest part is that their rigidity prevents any attempts at discussion. A discussion requires that the parties involved be open to the ideas of others, or at least there should be the presence of an agreement to disagree. Mr. White's comments do not allow for any of that sort of rational nonsense.

The proof that Mr. White and other of his ilk would be unresponsive to any sort of intelligent argument is the petty sniping and baiting that he employed throughout his letter. What's obvious to me is that had you not won the Hugo, Mr. White would not have condescended to use his valuable time to offer to offer you all the benefit of his fanzine editorial expertise.

There is only one point in his letter to which I would personally respond. To assume that the only "genuine coup" (Roy Lavender's autobiography) is wasted by appearing in LL because it would seem alien to most of your readers is nothing short of pompous posturing. I am by no means old enough to be a member of First Fandom. However, it has been my good fortune to have been friends with many of the people about whom Roy writes, many of them now dead but hardly forgotten by the "younger generation". I will admit that young people are generally uninterested in "ancient history", but for Mr. White to assume that the majority of your readership is incapable of appreciating Roy's offerings

shows me that he doesn't understand the demographics of your audience.

While Mr. White does make a few sound comments on some editorial matters, they were hard to spot, having been virtually buried under vitriolic opinion and insults. (To critique does not give license to indulge in childish name-calling.)

Don D'Amassa: Ted White did seem to have gotten up on the wrong side of your fanzine this time around. I have to admit I agree with a few of his specific criticisms, although I think in general that he overstated his case. And there's one comment I totally disagreed with, to wit, that you don't know what a fanzine really is. What, I wonder, is a fanzine really? I always thought it was as many different things as there were different faneditors.

Heather Ashby: If Ted White should be chastizing anyone, it's the readers of the fanzines he considers so much worthier of a Hugo. They are the dorks who didn't nominate. They are the lazy twits who didn't care enough to vote "No Award." It's certainly not your fault. And expecting you to walk nobly away from the chance of winning a Hugo is expecting you to be Uriah Heep incarnate. Slimy and sickening, which you're not, thank god. If peevish and unwarranted personal attacks are the hallmark of great fanwriting, then stuff great fanwriting, Ted White!

Joe Sanders: The points Ted White makes -- strong and weak -- are obscured by his tone; it's hard to apply his criticism to future issues when what he really seems to desire is that you renounce your Hugo, fold LL, burn the subscription list, shave your beard, and take a vow of silence at some monastery. Actually, looking at what Ted says rather than how he says it, I see we sometimes agree. I've been dissatisfied with LL's plethora of dinky little pieces that do more than pick up an interesting idea and then drop it. Ted's probably right that LL would be a more impressive zine, in one sense, if it were more tightly edited -- less bulk, more substantial pieces. Problem is, though, that there are more ways than one for a zine to be impressive. What you have appear to have chosen is to edit inclusively, welcoming almost anyone who can do publishable work. That's why I've recommended LL to students in my SF class who were curious about fandom and wanted to find a place where they could begin participating; they can write, but what they need is exposure to the exchange of ideas in print.

Rather than pushing your contributors hard, as Ted demands, you seem to accept and trust them for what they choose to deliver. Sometimes the results are inconsequential fluff; sometimes they're rough but genuinely startling insights -- or restatements of ideas that some of us have seen before and that ought to be "common sense," except that they aren't common and this need restatement -- or pieces that would be at home in the best, most tightly edited fanzines around. There's no telling exactly what the next item in LL will be; the only thing a reader



can be sure of is that in the zine's bulk there'll be a little of everything. That shows a real difference in editorial philosophies, rather than good vs. bad editing. And LL is a superior example of the kind of zine you've chosen to do.

Ben Schilling: Who, pray tell, died and left Ted White in charge of the fannish world? Since he obviously does not want to associate with us, why are we bothering to try. I really don't need anyone to tell me how to have fun or how to enjoy my hobby. If it doesn't meet with Ted White's approval, that's his problem, not mine.

Milt Stevens: Ted White's letter is the most intemperate piece of fan writing that I've seen in the last decade. He apparently has lost all sense of proportion. His personal tastes in fanzines has been elevated to the level of Divine Will and not conforming to them has become Moral Evil. Good Grief! With that sort of mindset, it's easy to understand why he progresses so rapidly from criticism to personal attack. Accusations of insecurity and immaturity are sucker attacks, because just about everybody is insecure or immature to some extent (Those who aren't are actively insane.) Attacking fanzine material for being unimportant is another sucker attack. After all, fanzines are a source of diversion, not of cosmic significance.

Joanne Bloom: Who (or what) is Ted White? Is he somebody whose opinion might conceivably matter? Or is he just a long-time fan who isn't even consistent in his writing, and looks down on anybody who is a neo? As to his inconsistency, on one paragraph he bitches about the "bloated nature" of issue #22, and then a little later about your Worldcon report being "interesting for what it omitted." Now really!

I am a neo (everybody is at one time or another), and I appreciate pieces like the etiquette articles and the conreports. Due to the state of my health, I'm not sure I will ever be able to attend a con, but I hope to. Meanwhile, I can read about them.

Robert Sabella: Ted White's complaint about my column, "Ten Years Ago in SF", like many of his other comments, was wrong. There was a big push for Star Wars at the 1976 Worldcon. Besides the small hotel room he

recalls, there was a main programming item in the large meeting room featuring lots of special effects and other pizzazz. Of course, since he missed that item, it did not exist, right?

I'm rather glad he did not like my article "Comments on the Cyberpunks and Humanists." Considering all the other stuff he disliked, I would have been offended had he thought otherwise of me.

Jean Weber: I cannot agree with Ted White about "boring": that's one of the most subjective words in the English language, I think.

One thing Ted is against, but I like, is breaking up letters into subjects. He says this "destroys any attempt on the part of the letter-writer to write a coherent letter." It's a rare LOC that I receive which is "coherent" in the sense that comments on a group of articles, or series of topics, are linked in any coherent fashion, so breaking up the letter destroys nothing I would assume that the rare "coherent" multi-topic letter would be run undivided by you, as it would be me (I'm also a person who cuts letters into topics, so my bias is showing).

Rob Chilson: Ted White's letter is hardly a sterling sample of itself of good fan writing; it reminds me of the worst of the breed, in fact, with its contentious tone. I do not have his length of fanaticism to draw on, but I began reading fanzines 17 years ago, half his fan-age. I do remember some good zines. Geis's old original Science Fiction Review was oriented toward pros and was mainly full of book reviews (damn good ones, for the most part, admittedly). Ted White's letters appeared there, just as ill-natured as this one, but that was not so noticeable as most writers sounded the same in SFR.

Another good zine was Energumen. It was full of good writing and a variety of kinds, and moreover full of thoughtful articles. It was also full of letters accusing it of being bland, superficial, too fannish, and too sercon.

My experience bears out your impression, Lan -- the good stuff in the past was little and far between. We forget how much chaff we had to wad through. I can think of only one zine that had no chaff: Donn Brazier's Title.

One final point: I don't remember any zine that didn't congratulate itself on winning a Hugo.

Ann Cecil: Was Mr. White perhaps attempting to compare Lan's Lantern with Analog? Or perhaps it was Amazing he was thinking of? It certainly isn't fanzines -- at least not some of the past Hugo winners. In 1969 the winner was Dick Geis's Science Fiction Review. I bought a year's subscription to it on the theory that a Hugo winner would give me a feel for fandom. It was ten years later before I got talked into going to my first con. Yes, it was that bad -- mimeographed on newsprint, full of typos, about ten pages long, mostly consisting of childish book reviews, and long conversations between the author and himself (as "Alter"). Oh yes, there were a few articles written in fannish

shorthand, with lots of references done so cryptically that any neo would know better than to bother with fandom. SFR won again in 1970, 1977 and 1979.

But I gather Mr. White was among those who feel Geis's is the right approach. I note his comment: "Danny Low's piece typifies what I dislike about your fanzine: it caters basically to non-fans." I agree with Mr. White about your orientation -- you do assume that there are non-fans out there who are worthy of attention. I do not see this as a major drawback.

I will argue most vehemently with his outright dismissal of the book and movie reviews. He goes into great detail to explain to you how professional critics do it. He seems to have forgotten that the Lantern is a fanzine. If I want pro criticisms, I read the prozines. What the Lantern provides is a different insight: other fans' reactions. An excellent example of this is the three-person review of George Martin's Wild Cards. None of the Pro reviews warned me, as Mala Cowan's review did, that the overall theme of the anthology is a "downer." This may not be literary quality, but it is useful information to know. Evelyn Leeper's review, in which she warns of the "familiarity" of the themes, and the triteness of the material, is equally valuable for saving time and money. I happen to think that Ted White is missing an obvious point. When he was young, there wasn't much science fiction in print. I can remember when I could buy everything that came out and still have money left over.

"The sign of a bad fanzine, since the late sixties, has been the publication of lots of book and movie reviews." Is he also damning Locus which won the Fanzine Hugo in 1971, 72, 76, 78, 80, 81, 82 and 83?

Ted White's blinders are painfully obvious.

Dave Lock: Wanted to say two things. One belated, one not, and both interrelated.

The '87 Best Fanzine Hugo went to a fanzine that was really about science fiction, and portions of fanzine fandom shit corn-cobs. I have always felt that the Hugo, which was supposed to denote what the readers felt to be the best in the skiffy micro-cosm in a given year, should be bestowed upon a fanzine which actually had something to do with science fiction. Much of fanzine fandom disagrees with that position, which I find amusing to an extreme. If the best fanzine in mystery fandom or western fandom or X fandom had as little to do with the field as often does the "best fanzine" in skiffy fandom, we could readily see the ridiculousness. Because it happens in our own field, we don't readily see it.

So the first thing I wanted to say was that the '87 Best Fanzine Hugo was the most relevant such Hugo in some time, and that comparison on a quality level to publications which had little or nothing to do with science fiction is ridiculous.

Personally, I prefer fannish fanzines to skiffy-related fanzines -- sercon or otherwise -- but I don't presume that my personal preference has any relevance to the issue. Fun and digression and ingroupishness and irrelevance and all that are fine and good

and interesting and there's nothing wrong with it, but when it comes to handing out Hugo awards for the best in the science fiction field, then Best Fanzine should have a strong relevance to the field of science fiction.

You should be proud to have copped a Hugo. And you deserve it. If one of my fanzines won, I would be ashamed -- not because my fanzines aren't good (they are, because I get good people to contribute good material to them), but because they don't have squat to do with science fiction. Time magazine had more material about skiffy in it last year than anything I've published in the last decade. I won't tell you that everyone in the world should feel this way about giving science fiction awards to material which has nothing to do with science fiction (or so little you need tweezers), but it has always been the way that I look at it. This does not diminish my view of fanzines or of any activity which loosely fits under the umbrella term "fandom" or "fanzine" as defined under the Hugo rules or by anybody reading this.

So the second thing I wanted to say was that I found Ted White's letter in #23 to be one of the biggest truckloads of horseshit ever to come off the farm, and I'm surprised that you bothered to publish it. It was boorish, condescending, insulting, and as personally offensive to the recipient (you) as anything could possibly be. I'd say this was a typical Ted White letter except that this goes beyond the pale even for him. You are not one of his friends, you are not aiming Lan's Lantern at any particular fannish circle let alone one which involves Ted White, and therefore in his mind this "provides proof positive that the Fanzine Hugo ... should be abolished." If he or his friends can't have it, no one should have it.

I hope you win the Hugo again. Not because Ted is so offensive or because there are people who generally agree with him without being willing to go off the deep end, but because you currently have the best science fiction fanzine going. The best science fiction oriented fanzine is the fanzine which deserves the best of the year reader award at the annual science fiction world convention. That some other publication is better in one or more ways, whether technically allowable under Worldcon rules or not, is totally academic to any Martian Test. As every skiffy fan presumably knows, it will be very difficult to convince the disinterested Martian that a non-skiffy fanzine has any relevancy at the Worldcon awards for the best of the year in the science fiction field.



## Filking and Filkers

Buck Coulson: Juanita remembers Bill Marchiello because she was the only filker at one of the early SPACECONS and had a fair-sized audience asking for more songs, when this little guy wandered in carrying a half-dozen instruments and she fell on him with glad cries. First con he'd ever been to. Following this, he was invited to another con on the spot and said he didn't have transportation, and Dan Caldwell said, "I'll drive you there. Where do you live?" And after that he was hooked. For one thing, the fans appreciated him. I now have two tapes of his professional gigs (and no right to reproduce either one, dammit) and the audience gives him the usual three or four polite handclaps. The fans clapped and cheered and stomped. I wish I'd been able to tape the material he did at Bruce and Lori's wedding and reception, but somehow it didn't seem quite the thing for a minister -- even one dressed entirely in black -- to whip a tape recorder out of his coat pocket. I can't say I ever knew him that well, because he was rather shy in person, but he was a good humorous conversationalist if you could get him started.

Filking note: Mitchell Clapp mentioned that he is being transferred to Edwards Air Force Base. If he's going to be that close to Off Centaur, I suspect it won't be long until he has a tape out.

Ed Chambers: Filksinging is one thing in fandom that has never really grabbed my interest (being from the East Coast, I guess). Your comments on Julia Ecklar has prompted me to seek out one of her tapes and give it a try. Who knows, I may end up moving to the Midwest!

## Ask

Dr. Science Fiction

Dave Yoder: Dr. Science Fiction was clear, concise and to the point with his replies to reader's questions. However, he did neglect to mention that a secondary purpose for metallic underwear was to shield the various female characters from the post-pubescent gaze of all those young male readers who were scoping them through x-ray glasses purchased from the back pages of super-hero comic books.

Clifton Amsbury: Dr. Science Fiction flubs again. The Doctor seems not to know two simple facts: first that "corn" anywhere but here means any grain, but especially wheat; and second that a long time ago a popular form of wheat was known as einkorn, or "one grain," i.e., unicorn. Obviously, this, and not maize is what was wiped out.

About alicorn I don't know. I never heard of it; neither has my unabridged.

Joyce Jensen: If Lan is so old, how come he's still having fun?

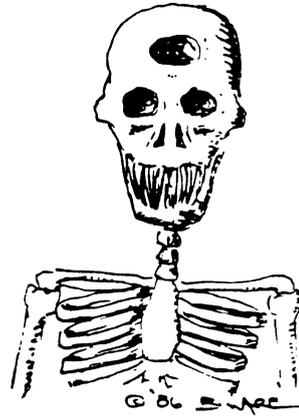
[[Dr. SF replies: Lan is still having fun because he's doing what he wants to do; teaching and fanac are two of his favorite pastimes, and he gets to do a lot of both.]]

Dave D'Ammassa:  
"Guide to Interactive  
Computer Games"

Mike Glicksohn: I read part of Dave D'Ammassa's article on interactive computer games just to see how his experiences compared with mine. I discovered (as I'd already guessed) that I lack the temperament for such things. I gave up on THHGTTG after spending too many fruitless hours trying to get something to happen. If I ever get all caught up on my book reading, my fanzine reading, my loccing, my jigsaw puzzling, and my TV watching I'll go back to the game, by which time I'll have forgotten the parts I was able to figure out and will have to start from scratch all over again and will end up getting frustrated and giving up and the whole cycle will begin again. (Where is Tom Disch when I really need him?)

P.L. Caruthers-Montgomery: I can sympathize with Dave D'Ammassa and family on initial set-up of their IBM-clone. I was fortunate in that my computer mentor was on hand to set up mine, and to prepare the initial working versions of my DOS and word-processor disks, suitably customized from the original program disks. (I have since learned to make my own customized alterations to the working disks.) Alas, with a mere 256K RAM to work with, I have not as yet been tempted to indulge in any interactive computer games. But it's still interesting to read about others' experiences with the games. (It's expensive enough keeping a supply of printer paper, much less splurging on frivolities. Our most complex excursion/interaction to date is a simple little game called Landing Party, based loosely on Star Trek.) Thanks to Dave for his helpful hints on what games to avoid because of complexity -- for that remote time when we do decide to give in to frivolity.

David Palter: It's interesting that Dave D'Ammassa has had the experience of immersing himself so deeply into computer games that at times he has had the sensation of treating life as a computer game, thinking commands before doing things. John Dalmás has written a lovely novel in collaboration with Rod Martin, called The Playmasters, in which he develops the theme that life really is a sort of computer game (and I certainly urge Dave to read it). I am also reminded of the fact that when I have immersed myself a bit too deeply in my own SF reading, I have, at times, the sensation that my own life is an SF novel, and I have gone as far as speaking the relevant lines of narration while engaging in my daily activities. (People think I'm talking to myself; the actual situation is a bit more complex.)



Joyce Jensen:  
"Hindsight"

Jerri Swinehart: "Hindsight" brought to mind some articles I had read about scientists who had isolated genetic evidence that there was a single woman ancestor common to us all. It also brought to mind some things I learned while researching a cultural geography paper. The Earth's history may be carefully divided into time periods, but the beginnings and endings of those time periods are not clear cut. Neither is the dying out of one species of "pre-human" and another. In fact, there have been bones found which suggest the various species interbred.

Clifton Amsbury: I'm sorry I can't fall into the romantic mood of Joyce K. Jensen. My interest in finds like NMK-WT 17000 is indeed based on the cliff-hangers "How far back can we push this?" What does this do to the biomolecular clock? Just how "human" and how "pongid" was the common ancestor of Homo, Pan, and Gorilla?

I know where the brow ridges went. When not needed anymore to anchor heavy jaw muscles, they were free to fade away. For some family lines they have faded more than for others.

I know about violence. It was not violence itself which was a survival trait. It was the capacity for violence and the capacity to choose which to use which enabled our ancestors to survive and become human.

And for those who wonder what all those letters and numbers mean, NMK-WT 17000 was the 17000th specimen catalogued by the West Turkhana projects of the National Museums of Kenya. Turkhana is a name now given to the lake formerly called Rudolph. The Turkhana are a cattle-raising people who live to the west of Lake Turkhana -- in West Turkhana.

James Wallace Harris:  
Science Fiction and  
The Skeptical Inquirer

David Palter: It is clear that the ability to differentiate between reality and fantasy, is a vitally important aspect of rational thought, in which the majority of the world's population is severely deficient. A possible remedy urged upon us by James Wallace Harris in his article, which is to carefully label books as SF or fantasy depending upon what they truly are, as well as carefully training children to read and believe such labels, is not going to be very useful. People have to actually understand

the difference between reality and fantasy, so that they could read a totally unlabelled book and determine what label would most accurately apply, in order for them to properly cope with the flood of information, misinformation, and fiction to which they will be exposed. If you have to depend on someone else to correctly label things for you, you don't have a chance. Severe delusion will be inevitable. No, you've got to learn how to think logically for yourself. It's the only way.

R'ykandar Korra'ti: I had a few problems with James Harris' article. While I agreed with many of Mr. Harris' points, he seemed to make the quite possibly incorrect assumption that most of our current scientific theories are, indeed, correct in every detail, and that anything which is not possible by current theory is "irrational." He indirectly refers to Newton's Laws, for example; well, while Newton's Laws did work on the "very large scale," -- i.e., atomic particles or bigger -- they fell apart when subatomic theory surfaced (massless particles with momentum, for example; that's impossible in Newton's world). The point is: we don't know everything. Our current mathematical models seem to fit the universal picture; that doesn't mean that they are the only models which describe the "immensity of the situation." After all, the pre-Copernicus, Earth-centered solar models worked just fine; they plotted the comings and goings of every planetary body. That's one of the reasons they were so hard to dislodge; they worked. They were a mathematical model which seemed to well-describe reality. They were also quite wrong. So don't be so quick to label as "fantasy" that which seems "impossible."

Arthur Hlavaty: James Wallace Harris may not be happy to hear this, but he is displaying all the classic signs of religious conversion. The fact that the religion he has been born again in (scientific materialism) is not a theistic one should not blind us to the similarities to traditional religious conversions.

He hasn't chosen a bad religion, either. As he point out, the scientific materialists do prize skepticism, honesty, and the replacement of blind faith by scientific investigation. He is also correct in most of what he classifies as "crap," and much of it should be opposed, particularly when its proponents, like the creationists, are trying to use the State to inflict it on all of us.

But there are drawbacks to scientific materialism; one of the most notable ones is the very dogmatism in his letter. It is the belief that science has settled certain things, when in fact it has not. Rational thinking does not necessarily demonstrate that "Our fragile consciousness will one day be snuffed out" unless we accept certain assumptions about the material basis of consciousness, ones which are by no means proven. Rational thinking does not, as many scientific materialists believe, demonstrate the impossibility of psi, though it can demonstrate that specific alleged examples of psi are incorrect or fraudulent. But James

Harris seems convinced that these things are proven, and that all that remains is to analyze what manner of pathology makes people believe otherwise.

The Skeptical Inquirer is by no means free of that sort of dogmatism. Its original editor, Marcello Truzzi, is no longer on the staff because he insisted on maintain a truly skeptical attitude toward psi, rather than following the party line that psi is scientifically impossible and that supposed examples of psi are to be discredited, rather than investigated. When a supposed disproof of astrology was shown to be statistically dubious, the response was to try to sweep the whole thing under the rug, rather than to reexamine the data. (These examples and others are discussed in Robert Anton Wilson's annoying, but valuable book, The New Inquisition.)

Like Hugo Gernsback, Harris believes that he can find those few books that deserve the honorific term Science Fiction (as opposed to mere fantasy), but he is merely choosing those books which conform to one particular group's dogma.

Buck Coulson: My own skepticism began long before The Skeptical Inquirer; in fact, I've never seen a copy of the magazine, though I get ads for it regularly in the mail, and would probably enjoy it. There are plenty of other sources of skepticism around. Consumer Reports regularly devotes a page or more showing that advertising is not only untruthful at times, but statements on the same package often contradict each other. Washington Monthly does the same for politicians of all political parties. People like Martin Gardner, L. Sprague de Camp, and Daniel Cohen have books out debunking popular ideas, quite frequently those ideas which are most common in fantasy novels. Where I part company with Harris is his comment that we should restrict the science fiction label to stories which are actually scientific, or which "prepare you for the future." In the first place, my skepticism extends to any idea that science fiction fandom, even if he could get consensus there, has any controlling interest in science fiction books. Labels are used to sell books, not to educate the public, and that's not going to be changed by any small percentage of the consumer population. In the second place, nobody can predict what the future is going to be like, anyway. We may be "dashing around the galaxy" in another thousand years; it's not likely, but it's more likely than the idea that slide rules would be replaced by electronic calculators was in 1930. All we know is that it's going to change. Newton's theories are as valid for Earth as they ever were, but they've been superseded as the explanation for everything. Einstein's may go the same way. One of the basic tenets of skepticism is that there are no unchanging certainties.

Lloyd Penney: We might have a rep or two from The Skeptical Inquirer at AD ASTRA 8 this year. Could be fun.... Certainly fiction with UFOs, telekinesis, and other little nifties that go with the paranormal, make for fun reading. However, fiction with actual, factual, believable science make the

superior read. It's the difference in the science involved that makes the real difference in SF past and SF present. We now demand believable science in our SF because we are more knowledgeable, and that demand has made the field better. At least, we demand that our speculation stay out of left field, and in (and around) the field of science.

Ruth Berman: James Wallace Harris's idea in his article that it's be nice to have SF labelled as to whether it's all-science-accurate-hard-SF or science-fantasy or fantasy -- it probably wouldn't really be possible, because the categories are not marked off sharply from one another but have many shadings in between. He suggests, for instance, that in "real" SF, space travel should always be limited to the speed of light. But some of the developments in theorizing a "tachyon" particle suggest that FTL speed might in some sense be possible...sort of. Does that make it hard? In Ursula K LeGuin's Hainish books, space travel is limited by the speed of light, but communication is not. Does that make it soft? As she pointed out in the interview Jim Kerr did with her, the concepts of "hard" and "soft" SF are not very useful ones.

It strikes me that JWH is fearing too much in thinking that SF may mislead many readers as to the reality of "occult" events, and hoping too much in thinking that SF could educate many readers about it. You can't really learn much science from SF, just as you can't really learn much about history from historical novels. It's possible to learn from both what areas you'd like to learn more about, and at that point it's a good idea to start reading science (history) books instead.

Milt Stevens: James Wallace Harris' suggested division of science fiction and fantasy isn't particularly productive and probably isn't even workable. Science is changing at such a rate that we would have to be constantly reclassifying books. For instance Mission of Gravity was a scientifically plausible view of an alien environment when it was written, but the science has become archaic since then.

Larry Niven had an interesting idea on levels of impossibility. His specific example was that you can't say that it is impossible to pass through the photosphere of the sun and survive. However, you can say that it is impossible to do it barefoot. In keeping with Niven's idea, you can't say that it is impossible for humans to develop a currently imaginable way of coercing nature. We've done it enough times before.

In some ways, it isn't important whether any particular technical gimcracky in a science fiction story will work or not. Much of the speculative value of SF involves the mechanism of change itself. For instance, mechanized roads (as in Heinlein's "The Roads Must Roll") do not currently seem like a probable line of development. As a representation of the impact of labor disruption on an interdependent high-tech society, the story still has a point. Considerations of the unlikely or the impossible can give us better insights into the mechanisms of the actual.

The continuing popularity of many pseudo-scientific ideas really doesn't surprise me. The development of science in the last 500 years has been one long assault against the common sense. Astrology is simply a much more "sensible" idea than relativity is. However, Harris dismisses a really mixed bag of things in his conception of the irrational. Astrology can definitely be disproved. Parapsychology is a much more doubtful area. I would accept that it is a field which requires further investigation. As to the irrationality of religion in general, he should try reading Jesuit material on logic. He may not believe it, but it is still eminently rational material.

Martin Morse Wooster: James Wallace Harris makes a false dichotomy between "rational" and "irrational" thinking. The Skeptical Inquirer makes many valuable points, but is just as dogmatic as the psychics. TSI says that psi phenomena almost never happens; the psychics say that it happens frequently; the truth is probably somewhere between the two.

Rather than "rational" and "irrational" poles in SF, why not use Brian Aldiss' analogy and compare the "thinking" and "dreaming" poles of SF? We want to be informed, knowledgeable, tough-minded about science and the future; we also want to dream about being heroic, or fighting dragons. Perhaps what SF needs in the future is fiction as rational as Harris would like which is also optimistic and can satisfy readers' needs to dream. I don't know which writers can satisfy the needs of both poles. Do you?

Joe Sanders: James Harris' essay had me nodding frequently, alternating with shudders and mutters of "bullshit!" He's right a good part of the time, and I also appreciate seeing what writers can accomplish within the constraints of science-as-we-know-it. On the other hand, I don't see the massive harm Harris does in people reading fantasy or science fantasy. Seriously: Is literature responsible for irrational thinking? And is such irrationality as much a threat as Harris thinks? He should, for example, check recent Skeptical Inquirers for debunking of some of Uri Geller's claims of being enthusiastically accepted and rewarded; people seem actually to be a good deal more skeptical than Uri's self promotion would indicate. If they wish to be even more skeptical like Harris, and avoid any contact with contaminated book clubs, etc., that's okay too, as long as they see this as a matter of personal choice rather than part of a crusade against The Enemy. That's a slightly different irrationality, but a far more dangerous one.

Taras Wolansky: James Wallace Harris is right: The Skeptical Inquirer is a great magazine. Not only is it the best (if not only) source of reliable information on pseudoscience, but what you learn from all the individual instances can be generalized into notions of how and why people believe things without evidence or contrary to the evidence. And it is very entertaining: For about the first eight years I received it (starting with vol. 1, no. 1) I read every issue from cover to cover the same day it

arrived. I still read them from cover to cover, but it sometimes takes a day or two. I have especially enjoyed James "The Amazing" Randi'd reports of his sleuthing.

One really valuable article from several years back was by Ray Hyman on cold reading -- the fortune teller's trick of telling you all about yourself. Hyman, a professional magician as well as a psychologist, worked his way through college doing palm readings. He was very conscientious; he read all the books and tried to apply them as well as he could. And to his surprise he customers constantly told him how accurate his readings were. Disturbed, he went to his psychology professor. This wise man advised him to go on working up his readings according to the rules he had learned -- but tell his customers the exact opposite. You can guess the result: it made no difference.

Later, when Hyman was a psychologist himself, he gave a large class a "computer-generated astrological personal profile." Something like 85% of the students agreed that their profile matched their personalities. There must have been considerable hilarity when Hyman revealed that every profile was the same! ("You like people, but sometimes you want to be alone"; etc., etc.)



Ben Schilling: The artwork was, as is usually the case, well done, especially the pair of "flashers" on pages 88 and 89. However, I don't think you look quite as sinister as Bill Nichols seemed to think (page 82).

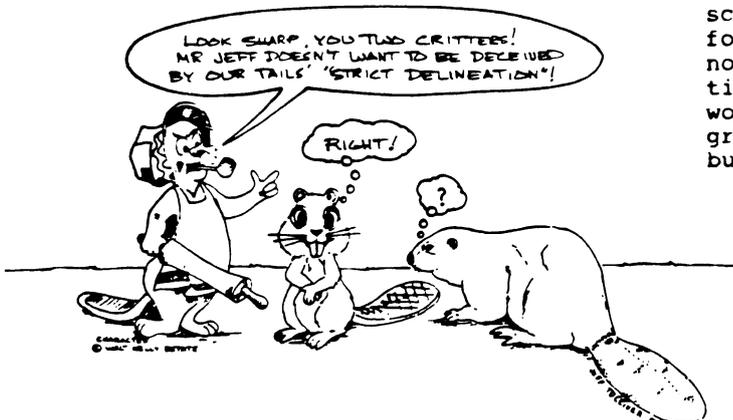
Jeff Tolliver: I'm still trying to figure out what "strict delineation" has to do with a beaver's tail, as John Thiel mentions in his loc.

No cartoonist draws every hair, every whisker, or every scale! Illustrator...maybe, but only if it is required for strict identification. Even the Peterson Field Guides simplify!

Sigh.

Well, here's that Belle of the Okefenokee addressing a pair of her distant kinfolk ... and even they don't know a damned thing about "strict delineation."

Or is that a "dammed thing?"



Of Triffids and Krakens

Vito Vitkauskas: David Shea's article seems to do a nice job of recapping John Wyndham's novels. I took two things away with me from the article. Firstly, if I found a Wyndham copyrighted '50s or '60s, I won't fear spending my time on it. Secondly, the place on my bookshelf that Shea says out to have Wyndhams, does have Triffids. Shea implies that it ought to be read. I will now.

P.L. Caruthers-Montgomery: David Shea's article on the writing of John Wyndham was of particular interest to me. I am a Triffid fan, and not only because the novel was first published the year of my birth. The first, albeit poor, cinematic rendition of the book left an indelible impression on my young mind and moved me to go on to read the book itself. The later British TV version was truer to the original story and very much enjoyed by the older me. The book itself is one which I still re-read on occasion with pleasure. Here's a good place to mention that Nickelodeon has lately been airing a good British TV adaptation of Chocky. My thanks to Mr. Shea for an in-depth and enlightening analysis of the writer's works!

Joyce Jensen: More feminism! I was especially intrigued by Shea's reference to "a rather biting diatribe of the wasteful role of women who have a vested interest in being social parasites." This is all well and good. And I do agree that the lives of many women have been spent pursuing dependent (often parasitic) roles of the sort that few men would accept. But what choices did women have in the 1950s and throughout most of western history? In the fifties many women were still sent to college (if they were encouraged to go at all) to get their MRS degrees. When I first went to college in 1963, it was assumed that, if you met the "right" man, he would finish college but you wouldn't have to.

Women certainly weren't welcome in large numbers into graduate or professional schools, either. There was no funding at all for women's sports teams (because only men, not women, were being taught to be competitive). And it's only been a short time since women could join groups like the Jaycees, groups which are in many cases essential to business networking. And those are just a

( IN RESPONSE TO JOHN THIEL'S COMMENTS IN LL#21 REGARDING THE BACK COVER OF LL#20.

( BY THE WAY, MR. THIEL... HAVEN'T YOU SEEN 'THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK'?)



few examples of how women have been disadvantaged in trying to support themselves and their children. No wonder that for much of history smart women were busy being the best little "social parasites" they could be! It was the only road to success for most of them.

It still works, too. Here's a little quiz to prove my point: (1) How many women are there in Congress? Name one. (2) Name the "model" who recently had an affair with Gary Hart. Which name came to your mind first?

Anyway, I'm glad to see that "on the whole, Wyndham approves of bright women"; that attitude, a bit unusual but not rare at the time, is one of the things that originally drew me to SF in the mid-60s; there were more female protagonists worth reading about in SF at the time than I could locate in mainstream fiction.

Jean Lamb: When discussing comet novels, Shea could have mentioned one of Poe's efforts (approximately novella length) which also had the Earth destroyed by the gaseous remnants of a passing comet, which antedated H.G. Wells by quite a few years. I did enjoy his discussion of Wyndham. One of his imitators (I think) was disaster-novelist John Christopher (whom I have occasionally confused with Mr. Wyndham) who was author of such precursors to Irwin Allen's movies as No Blade of Grass and The Tide Went Out.

Don D'Amassa: Some of my points of disagreement with Shea are matters of opinion, but some of the errors in his article are factual. First, I deny his contention that none of Wyndham's short fiction are notable. "Consider Her Ways," "Random Quest," "Jizze," and "The Wheel" come immediately to mind. Some of the others in Tales of Gooseflesh and Laughter were also excellent, and nowhere at all does he mention the four novelets, so-called, that made up the novel The Outward Urge.

He is correct in his supposition that the BBC version of Triffids is superior to the Howard Keel movie. I have both on tape, and there is no question in my mind as to which I'd rather watch. The BBC version is quite faithful to the book. There was some talk of film versions of both Re-Birth and Out of the Deeps and I think Trouble With Lichen, but none of these came to pass.

I disagree entirely that Wyndham was less political/philosophical than Wells, although Wells became almost boringly pedantic in his declining years. One problem may be that Shea has read only the US editions of Wyn-

dhams novels, which are substantially different (particularly Lichen and Out of the Deeps). The Penguin editions are available in this country if you look hard enough. I think only Chocky appeared identically. At last I couldn't find any differences when I compared them.

Re-Birth was not minor Wyndham; it was in fact his finest novel. This is a matter of opinion, of course. It was not, however, a cliché at the time it appeared. I have the advantage possibly in that I had been reading SF voraciously for several years before it appeared, but with the exception of Brackett's The Long Tomorrow, there was nothing similar of any stature that I can recall. Subsequently we had A Canticle for Leibowitz and Davy and others, of course.

Not true that Wyndham did not use female protagonists. This misperception results from not reading the short fiction. For all practical purposes, all the characters in "Consider Her Ways" are female. If I had time to pull out the thirty pages of notes I took on Wyndham a while back, I could cite more, but at the moment the story that comes most to mind is the nuclear war one in which the female protagonist chooses to let the race slide into extinction rather than engage in sex with someone she doesn't love.

Finally, Chocky. The ending was designed to be ambiguous rather than inconclusive. You're not supposed to know whether the creature was an alien, a devil, a ghost, or an hallucination. And it was not Wyndham's last novel. David has obviously never heard of Web, an interesting but not tremendously good novel about an island dominated by mutated spiders.

R'ykandar Korra'ti: I had read several of the Wyndham pieces mentioned and never connected them, for whatever reason. One question, though: I am certain that I read Re-Birth as part of a collection of short stories, not as a novel. Is my memory off? I read it several years ago. Or was it rewritten as a novel? If so, that could explain the occasional weakness Shea found; I've read very few short stories that could stylistically survive a transition to novel length.

[[I don't know myself. Perhaps David Shea or Don D'Amassa could help.]]

Lloyd Penney: American editors must have had some idea what a kraken was.... I recently read A. Merritt's Dwellers in the Mirage, and it features a kraken -- a huge 12-tentacled octopus (which, I guess, isn't far from the giant squids the kraken legend is supposed to be based on).

David Gorecki: A note of correction on the John Wyndham article. There was a sequel to Stowaway on Mars published in Great Britain in the 30s, titled Sleepers of Mars. I appreciated the coverage, however; since his death, John Beynon Harris has dropped out of sight on the bookstalls. This is unfortunately all too true of a number of talents; while my local Waldenbooks has at least 49 books on the shelves from the pen (or word processor) of Piers Anthony, there is absolutely nothing there by Fritz Leiber, Eric

Frank Russell), Ted Sturgeon, or the man who was once called the Dean of Science Fiction (in the pre-Heinlein days), Murray Leinster.

Buck Coulson: David Shea needs to read Willy Ley's Engineer's Dreams to find out why they were pumping ocean water into the Sahara in The Secret People. The idea was to alter the north-central African climate. If it had worked, it might have prevented what's happening in the Sahel right now, but it was never tried, and won't be as long as "Lake Chad" would cover up most of a more or less independent country. Incidentally, Wyndham may not have been a prolific contributor to the pulps in the 1930s, but he had stories, as "John Beynon," in three of the four issues of Tales of Wonder that I own, and he had 46 stories in the science fiction magazines in the 1950s and 1960s. He was no John Russell Fearn, but he was a fairly regular contributor.

#### Dangerous Visions: A Retrospective

David Langford: A footnote to the Dangerous Visions article: those nice people at Gollancz (i.e., Malcolm Edwards) agree to the extent that DV is to be the first non-novel in their very well chosen series of "SF Classics". Fourteen of these have appeared in trade paperback format here. Gollancz then threw in an opportunity for endless fannish argument by starting a conventional paperback line which runs in parallel and presumably comprises the nonclassics. The only author so far to get two titles into the prestige series is Arthur C. Clarke; the other series is dominated by what seem to the numbed mind to be thousands of titles by Andre Norton. Chris Priest, discovering himself to be a Classic (Inverted World), has been nervously keeping his back to a wall in case some bastard sneaks up and calls him a dean of science fiction. It's a common fate, y'know.

David Griffin: Is it really twenty years since Dangerous Visions first came out? (Here they've been reminding us that "It was twenty years ago today" since Sgt. Pepper.) Then I must have been 13, 14 years old. According to the generally accepted theory, that should have been my "golden age" for SF. How do I remember DV? I remember waiting for an eternity for it to reach England and then being so surprised that it wasn't at all as dangerous as I had expected. From that point of view Again, Dangerous Visions was much more successful. However, I was impressed with the quality of the stories. I should do exactly what David Shea did and reread the collection, but I don't seem to be able to find my copies (it came out in three volumes in England). I was in fact thinking of writing an article comparing DV with ADV, but now my namesake has beaten me to it. Perhaps he will take up ADV in the next issue (or do we have to wait 5 years for that?). Presumably others will also take up the point that "Ellison single-handedly invented the all-original anthology" by mentioning Fred Pohl's Star and the British New Writings in SF. Perhaps it would be better to say that Ellison's anthology was the one that opened the damgates.

[[If you are willing to write up a comparison of the two books, I'll be willing to consider it for publication.]]

J. Owen: David Shea's piece fascinated me. I can remember searching the bookshops in London for import copies when it first came out, and the thought that it was 20 years ago chills me even more than it being Sgt. Pepper's 20th anniversary. Dunno why: guess I was less affected by the Beatles at that time than I was by SF. Dangerous Visions came out at a time when I was commuting in to work in Fleet Street (Punch Magazine, actually, on the print/publishing side), and able to get into shops selling imported SF and fantasy for the first time. British SF publishing at the time seemed to solely consist of the Michael-Moorcock-one-man-publishing-empire, with Mike turning out books almost weekly. It was a great relief to gain access to an alternative supply, especially since it represented a vast increase in scope and availability over that available in mainstream British booksellers.

DV was one of the earliest purchases I made at the time, and still remains something worth turning back to for some of the stories, though many others are either dated or weren't all that good to start with. In a way, I think it foreshadowed much that came after it (either by being an influence, or simply by selecting those authors who were "coming men" in the field at the time), and in the late years of the Reagan/Thatcher right-wing era, some of the ideas seem almost to have been premonitions. Others, naturally, just seem like crap. Needless to say, Shea's article has made me dust off the old copy and put it in the "to be read" pile.

#### Cordwainer Smith: A Retrospective

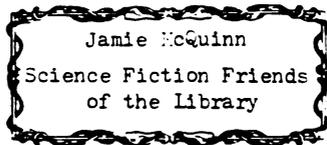
Jim Meadows: I see I made mucho goofs in talking about the Cordwainer Smith collection The Instrumentality of Mankind from memory. The book, published by delRey in 1979, does not contain all the Instrumentality stories. It contains 9 of them not then available in paperback, putting nearly all of them in print; it also contains 5 non-Instrumentality stories. The introduction is by Frederik Pohl, not J.J. Pierce; no editor, Pierce or otherwise, is listed. Pohl does give the goods on Paul Linebarger's pre-Cordwainer Smith fiction. Writing as Felix C. Forrest, he published two novels, Carola and Ria, which Pohl compares to Robert Briffault's novels of European politics, Europa and Europa in Limbo. Linebarger gave up the series after developing a block--having met some of his readers, he could no longer write for them. For this reason, he put off meeting Cordwainer Smith's readers for many years. The book also contains an Instrumentality timeline, listing all the stories in the order they take place.

Jack R. Herman: Commendable is the article on Cordwainer Smith. He is the neglected master of SF and his consistent and integrated future history is one of our greatest achievements. To me, his major achievement is the presentation of the Underpeople, tackling the ticklish but important question of

the definition of "humanity". And he did this while writing well-constructed and very readable entertainments. Unlike Shea, I have always found him accessible with no alienation from his assumption that you know his Universe. All his stories arise so naturally from what we know that I found them easy to get into.

Lloyd Penney: I know, Lan, that you have the ongoing project of retrospectives on various authors with 50th anniversaries coming up, but we could also use retros on authors that are popular, but seem to have been shoved onto the back burner wrongfully. Such are Cordwainer Smith (good to see that article), Edgar Pangorn, Raymond Z. Gallun (he must have an anniversary coming up soon), Claf Stapledon (his books are being re-released now), Colin Kapp, John Boyd, etc. I'd like to find more about the king of the other side of the Ace Double, Emil Petaja.

[[I would be willing to consider for publication articles on any of the people you mentioned. The arena is open to all concerned!]]



Mike Glicksohn: I suppose being a librarian gives Jamie McQuinn a perverted viewpoint on things. Books are to be read, yes. That's number one. But books are also to own, to look at, to smell, to pick up, to rearrange and to keep! I probably won't ever reread the vast majority of the books I own but I'll be damned if I'll give them to some library. Hell, some clown would probably get creases, eyetracks and fingerprints all over them if I did that!

Ed Chambers: I think public libraries are frequently ignored too much. I know I am an offender. I can't even remember the last time I entered the local library. I often considered going through my collection to get rid of some of the books I have accumulated. I had first thought of selling some, but I have also given thought to giving them to a library -- if I can find one that wants them, that is.

Jerri Swinehart: I actually went through my library's science fiction collection with the librarian. We got rid of the clunkers and sorted out the series so we knew which ones were missing. I also warned them about so-called "classic" books which were old, but not necessarily classics in the eyes of F & SF fans. The librarian was also warned about books which had "nominated for HUGO (or NEBULA)" on the cover, as a lot of times the books are good, but not necessarily the winner -- the cover notation being used, of course, as PR hype. Frankly, the collection has expanded in some wonderful directions, especially in the inclusion of more of the newer writers, and women writers. The library has, through its own diligent follow-up to the help I gave them, become known for its F & SF collection, just as it is already known for its Romances.

Joe Sanders: I appreciated Jamie McQuinn's piece on SF in libraries. It's something I'd thought of before, sure, but not lately. This kind of information deserves recirculation.

Paula Gold Franke: The idea of donating books to the library is particularly good when it is a small local library with an equally small acquisition budget. The points that McQuinn stresses are all important, but I would also have stressed the statement that the books should be in good condition. Slightly mildewed, water-stained or damaged cover books are not generally suitable. As to the tax benefits, I have not yet examined the new tax code but, from my past experience as a tax auditor, I can say there is a distinct weakness on the part of the donor to overvalue the contribution. I strongly suggest consultation with a tax advisor, before filing the tax return, if the donation involves a large amount.

Sheryl Birkhead: When I was in high school, the woman who reviewed SF for the public library system was a family friend. I found her tastes to be a bit more "new wavish" than mine, but they always had a decent number of new books. But, over the past few years, when I check -- they no longer get any of the prozines and the books themselves are at least several years behind time..and even then not at ALL according to my taste. I even thought of donating some of my books -- but when I approached the head librarian about it, I was told that before I could do that the books would have to be approved. At that point I felt it would be a heckuva lot easier to simply find someone and give them away. The library USED to be my source of Hugo nominations -- get the original list and go hunt through both prozines and novels. But the days of that (in this library system) are a thing of the past....

Joyce Jensen: Jamie made me stop and think -- I haven't checked fiction, including science fiction, out of the library in years. It's easier to buy a paperback. Our local libraries (Indianapolis-Marion County) are supposed to have a pretty good science fiction selection, but it's been my experience that there's never much on the shelves -- which must mean most of it's checked out, which in turn means libraries should naturally have lots of SF because people want it.

I think I read the entire selection of SF in the San Francisco library in the summer of 1969 -- all seven or so books (exaggerating, of course).

P. L. Caruthers-Montgomery: Jamie McQuinn's article hit very close to home and I've taken its advice to heart. I would also like to add that libraries are more than willing to order-in books they don't own via the miracle of Inter-Library Loan -- and at no cost to you!



Misha Sestak:  
"Eulogy and Promise"

Jeanne Mealy: The Challenger "Eulogy and Promise" article was an interesting behind-the-scenes (sort of) look at one person's connection with space technology. Being reminded of the Challenger explosion isn't fun, but death is part of life. Were they heroes? Or just people taking a risk that turned out to be fatal? It's a subject worth discussing.

J. Owen: Misha Sestak's article on the Challenger disaster highlighted two things for me. One was the fact that space exploration is now too big a project for one nation to fund alone. After all, the overwhelming cause of the disaster was the pressure to succeed, to keep the shuttle flying to schedule, even though there were serious design flaws, even though the conditions were not optimum. The reason for that was to forestall further cutbacks in funding, cutbacks which endangered the project by freezing development. The shuttle was flawed in conception, and sooner or later there was bound to be a disaster. Tight funding insured that steps that could have been taken to prevent it happening weren't implemented, and political expediency overcame technological manifestations of trouble.

Secondly, it showed that we need to keep pressing forward onto the next stage in the game, the building of a true re-usable Earth-orbit-Earth vehicles, ones that are as capable of doing regular flights into orbit as a 747 is of crossing the Atlantic. The development of new ideas in propulsion systems, so as to build shuttles capable of "normal" flight to high altitude, then switch to a rocket motor mode to power them into orbit, is already underway (the Brits seem to have a fair lead in this at the moment), but it need to become a priority development, with the money to match that priority. Sitting on a travelling bomb, with two more bombs strapped to either side, and no escape possible, is not my idea of the way to go!

Let us hope that the Challenger crew will not have died in vain, and that the disaster will enhance the prospects of further developments, rather than cause a cessation of space research in America.

Jim Kerr:  
Interview with  
Ursula K. LeGuin

Joyce Jensen: I liked LeGuin's renaming of "hard" and "soft" SF to "wiring diagram SF" as opposed to "social SF." I think fiction had two purposes: (1) to entertain, and (2) to throw some light on the human condition (hardly new or original thoughts). However, I enjoyed hard SF more 20 years ago when I had been exposed to fewer ideas and could more easily be entranced by them. But

a steady stream of reading and movies and plays and, for part of that time, TV, has taken the exciting edge off of most plot ideas (that is to say, I'm not into hard SF anymore, although there was a time when I really enjoyed it).

I still enjoy good fictional characterizations, though (more often a feature of soft SF), and I hope that that enjoyment never goes away. Sometimes I think that all of life is trying to figure out why other people do the strange things they do (but rarely thinking that about ourselves, of course, for our own opinions seem so natural and right). And trying to deduce why all those hard-headed dolts don't agree with my (obviously perfect and insightful) opinions!!! Hence the endless appeal of fictional characters -- getting inside those other heads and trying to figure out why we're all so different and still so alike. "Make me understand you," we seem to be saying.

Joel Rosenberg: I wasn't all that impressed with Jim Kerr's LeGuin interview, although it's hard for me to put my finger on a specific failing. I think it's just that I've recently been rereading Charles Platt's Dream Makers books, and find an interview by anyone less adept than Platt a bit, well, bland. Despite his vulnerability to criticism in other areas, it seems to me that Charles Platt is a diabolically gifted interviewer, certainly the best the field has ever had or is likely to have.

Craig Ledbetter: I enjoyed the LeGuin interview for a very specific reason: every time Kerr asked her a stereotypical question ("What is art?"), she gave him a down-to-earth, no bullshit answer. Too many times a question like that leads to a page and a half of verbal masturbation by the author.

Bob Sabella: The interview was very good. Ursula K. LeGuin has taken some critical flap lately by people who imagine she is drifting away from science fiction toward literary fiction for snobbish reasons. I hope this interview puts such supposed seers to shame. I know Ursula from the 1972 Clarion West and she was so down-to-earth and unaffected by her fame that I knew she could never have the motives some people imagine she has. Perhaps they're reading their own desires into her?

Jean Lamb: I think that what Larry Niven meant by "writing is easier than not writing" is not that writing is particularly easy for him, but that it's certainly preferable to the DTs, twitches, and other symptoms of withdrawal that come upon addicts like ourselves when not writing. I know I tend to become bad-tempered and start reading The National Enquirer when not actively engaged in a writing project. Locs are a nice, temporary substitute, but kind of like taking methadone in comparison to other types of writing that disrupt your life more but give a better rush.

I see that UKL is also a printaholic. It's sort of a natural progression from reading obsessively to writing obsessively.

I don't blame the reviewer in Locus for

not knowing how to handle Always Coming Home. It's the most non-linear work I've ever managed to make it through, and though I think myself experienced at reviewing, I would find it rather difficult to explain why I liked it. It requires different classifications and an expansion of the normal categories most reviewers are used to dealing with. I didn't get the version with the tape, and it seems I'm going to have to someday in order to experience it fully.

I must agree with UKL that the fanzines are a great farm club for budding would-be pros, as well as for wayfarers along for one hell of a ride. Even the mediazines (looked down on by some fanzine editors) provide training in the craft of fiction and nonfiction in a reasonably protected environment. This kind of thing does not exist in other genres (or if so, to an extremely limited extent -- I'm still looking for a Lord Peter Wimsey fanzine).

Mike Glicksohn: You'll probably be surprised to know I read the interview with LeGuin. Of course, I had ulterior motives. If I end up interviewing Joe Haldeman at CONFUSION, I want to have at least some idea of how it's done. I quite enjoyed the interview up to the point where Kerr started asking Ursula about fandom and fanzines, at which point it became obvious that she really doesn't know what that part of the subculture is all about. Damn fine writer, though.

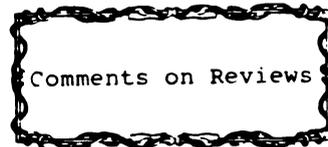
Milt Stevens: Jim Kerr certainly can't be accused of suppressing his personal opinions in his interview with Ursula LeGuin. Needless to say, I don't think his opinions of fans and fanzines have any merit. In regard to the comments on fanzines as a possible preparation for professional writing, there is one thing that wasn't considered. The talent for fiction writing and the talent for journalistic writing are not necessarily the same talent. The vast majority of people don't have either talent. Since writing ability of any sort is a relative rarity, it's possible to make money with either sort of writing. However, the major motivation for SF and fanzine writing is egoboo. The decision to pursue a professional writing career is based on a personal equation that involves factors of expected egoboo and income, and desired lifestyle.

Ursula LeGuin's statement that there was a major improvement in SF between twenty and forty years ago but no major improvement in the last twenty years seems at first glance to be accurate. On second thought, there isn't any event that occurred forty years ago that would separate the subsequent period from the developments that Campbell had started in the late thirties. I also suspect that the impression that there hasn't been much development in the last twenty years is mainly a matter of perspective. From a cosmic viewpoint, things have probably been developing all along.

Greg Benford: The LeGuin interview provides some new insights, but I must rise to the occasion and correct some blurred history. Ursula and I were on the same side in

the Lem vs SFWA matter, but she confuses some facts about that deplorable episode. He wasn't "kicked out because they thought he was a communist" at all. Lem wrote a piece attacking American SF, and the translation of it into English seriously misrepresented some of his ideas in a quite offensive manner. This bothered some SFWA members because Lem had been given a free, life-long membership in SFWA. Their pique made somebody look at the terms of such membership and they discovered that he'd been given it by fiat, and in fact wasn't qualified for such membership under SFWA's own rules. So the President then simply wrote Lem saying he was free to join as a regular member, and Lem refused.

The whole matter made SFWA look like an Indian-giver. But Lem also refused to disavow his sentiments, which were sweeping and dumb, and have caused much coolness between him and the American writers. The sad fact is that it further isolated Lem, who goes on about SF theory without knowing much that's happened in the field over the last 30 years. I must say his intellect greatly exceeds his character, and his vanity has led him into a posture of deliberate prideful ignorance, while later writers have gone far beyond the positions and ideas he still believes are quite the cat's meow....



GENERAL COMMENTS

Larry Nowinski: I do enjoy the reviews, but with the different reviewers all mixed together, it is difficult to get a sense of how each one views SF and Fantasy as a whole. The only one is Mark Leeper since his movie reviews are so numerous. I suggest that you group the reviews of each person together so we can get a better idea of the reviewer's style and how he/she sees this genre.

[[Thanks, Larry. I took your suggestion and did the review columns as you said. Now to wait for the feedback...]]

David Griffin: A good idea to have an index to the book reviews. It is useful because I can remember that I read a review of a book, but often cannot remember where. If I have an index to look up, then there is a much better chance that I can find the original review.

Yes, I am one of those people who take notice of reviews (I am always on the lookout for interesting new authors), even though I do not necessarily agree with a reviewer's opinion. One of the best criteria for deciding if a reviewer is good or not is to see if I can make up my mind about a book from what the reviewer wrote, and come to a totally different conclusion. It can mean that the reviewer has succeeded in bringing forth the important things about a book.

## BOOK AND FILM REVIEWS

Artifact

Incidentally, does Mark Leeper do anything else other than watch Films? How does he find time to write the reviews, one wonders.

Books, especially magazines, are sometimes very difficult to get hold of over here. Is there anyone in your circle of readers who could help me out on this? I will of course pay for everything, but buying one copy of a mag that costs \$2 costs around \$6 from this end, even if I am lucky enough to find one in stock. The problem is what I can offer in return? Presumably not that many American SF fans are all that interested in Swedish folk or rock music, and the chance that they will want to collect Swedish SF is quite remote. Perhaps just someone who would like a contact in a European country? I have quite a large flat here so if someone is considering a holiday in Europe and fancies visiting Stockholm....

Frank Lyall: It is sometimes a bit weird for older fans to see, for example, reviews of various stories reissued sometimes decades after first appearance. Some "modern" reviews contain astounding ignorance, and the vehemence of shallow opinion bodes ill. No. It is not a matter of youth. It just has to do with shallowness of thought and knowledge. The "cliched" comment which occasionally surfaces is a case in point. Often it is the later authors who are the "cliched" in their use/abuse of concepts and plot twists which were first explored by the earlier. Consider the Sword and Sorcery morass of today.

Craig Ledbetter: I continue to be impressed with the hefty review section. Each issue introduces some new names under the reviewers position and overall each does a commendable job. I always read Mark Leeper's reviews first, not because we agree, but because Mark's perceptions are his own and not necessarily retreats from others. He makes original comments and basically entertains while he informs.

[[You should like this issue's review section, all 72 pages of it. And most of Mark's reviews should be easy to spot, since I have done some rearranging with them, in accordance with Larry Nowinski's suggestion.]]



Don D'Amassa: I laughed at the review of Artifact, I'm afraid. I thought it was excellent, the best Benford has done since Timescape, chiefly because it did in fact have good characters along with a scientific puzzle. Different strokes, I guess.

Evil Dead II

Don D'Amassa: The review of Evil Dead II is in error, I believe. I don't think the book in question was the Necronomicon. I only saw the film once, but I've seen part one several times, and the book is not identified as such there.

Highway of Eternity

Frank Lyall: Your review of Clifford Simak's Highway of Eternity pleased me. You will remember that it was Cliff who gave me a copy of your Special Issue about him, and hence we got in touch. [[Yes, I remember.]] Could I say for other Simak fans that last year here in the UK I was able to put together a collection The Marathon Photograph, hb by Severn House, pb by Methuen. It contains "The Marathon Photograph," "The Birch Clump Cylinder," "The Whistling Well," and "Grotto of the Dancing Deer." Another collection, Brother, came hb from Severn and pb by Methuen. It contains "Brother," "Over the River and Through the Woods," "Auk House," and "Kindergarten." A third collection to be called Simak Off-Planet has been contracted for with Methuen, and its title indicates its content. I'll notify you of it later on. As yet none of these has a US contract, but perhaps someone amongst your readership will note that.

[[I picked up The Marathon Photograph while in England for CONSPIRACY. I was quite excited to find it. I was hoping that you would show up at the Worldcon so you could autograph it as editor. Maybe I'll see you in Holland in 1990.]]

Hitcher

Don D'Amassa: Hitcher wasn't that bad, exactly. The string of coincidences began to irritate me until I came over to the idea that he was not a real person after all, but a supernatural force. But then the ending is so ambiguous that I don't know if that's valid. It definitely has some big problems drawing all its ends together.

Hitler Victorious

Greg Benford: Evelyn Leeper's review of Hitler Victorious was most welcome; as the first anthology I've edited, it's been gratifying to see it get such wide distribution. I understand her objection that my own story in the book reeks of revenge, but I don't buy the argument that you can parallel a personal sense of revenge with the Versailles treaty. Surely individual reactions to Hitler need their own emotional weight,

without necessarily implying diplomatic postures!

Also, she's not right that all stories in the book view the post-victory world as worse than ours. Sheila Finch's story is clearly better in some ways than ours. For example, there's no threat of nuclear war.

Joel Rosenberg: While I try to avoid putting down other writers' work -- is my own work so above criticism? -- I'm going to make an exception here, prefaced by the comment that I've admires other work by most of the writers whose work I find so lacking in Hitler Victorious.

Disclaimer aside, I was dissatisfied with Evelyn C. Leeper's review for reasons that are easy to pin down: with the sole exception of Kornbluth's masterful "Two Dooms"--a story from the 50s!--I was terribly disappointed by Hitler Victorious.

Dealing with a victorious Hitler requires dealing with the Holocaust without trivializing it. None of the other stories deals with that acceptably, any more than Spider Robinson's Hitler-as-alien Callahan's Bar story of a number of years ago did. Handling the Holocaust even peripherally is difficult; it's at the heart of David Brin's "Thor Meets Captain America" and his explanation for it, simple-minded rather than simple, is why the story fails. And that's the best of the newer stories in the anthology.

I'm not putting myself above criticism, either; while I think that my own "The Emigrant" (from Perpetual Light) handles the Holocaust acceptably, it's only barely so. It's a tough subject to deal with.

Taras Wolansky: I've seen the paperback of Hitler Victorious, but I've kind of shied away from it (too depressing a topic). Curious thing: there's been so much written about an Axis victory, yet nothing written about the (more probable) outcome of a negotiated settlement. After all, by the time the U.S. got into it, the war was pretty much a stalemate. Then, imagine that the U.S. did not get into it, perhaps because FDR was caught violating the Neutrality Acts. If Churchill refused to deal, the English would eventually get someone who would; and if not, a long stalemate would give the Nazis

time to develop nuclear weapons, creating a balance of terror with the U.S. In any case, the result is that we come out of World War II with another "evil empire," instead of or in addition to the one we know.

What would the last forty-odd years have looked like if the Cold War had been with the Nazis instead of the Soviets? In his Axis-victory novel, The Man in the High Castle, Philip K. Dick puts Nazis on Mars in the early sixties. If we had been competing with technologically advanced Germany, what would the history of space exploration look like? How much would we know about the Jewish Holocaust? And what politician, having to carry on diplomatic relations with Nazi Germany, would talk about it? No doubt, any politician who dared call Nazi Germany an "evil empire" would be pilloried by the media.

#### The Private School Series

Don D'Amassa: You might be amused to know that Stephen Charles, author of the alien Private School novels, is actually Charles Grant lurking under a pseudonym. He is also Geoffrey Marsh.

[[He is also Lionel Fenn. Thank you for confirming my suspicions about Stephen Charles. The style was so close to Charlie Grant's....]]

#### The Secret of NIMH

Mick Hamblen: It states in Jane Leslie Conly's review that The Secret of NIMH was done by the Disney Studios. This was instead done by Don Bluth Studios, which also did animated video games. Bluth quit Disney when they wouldn't allow him to do NIHM.

#### Trillion Year Spree

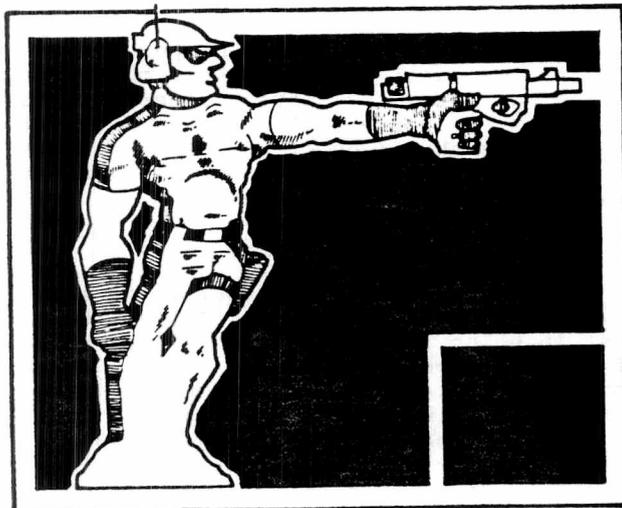
Martin Morse Wooster: I'm surprised both reviews of Trillion Year Spree neglected to mention that the book was a collaboration between Aldiss and David Wingrove. There's been a lot of speculation as to which parts are Wingrove's (I think he did about a third, based on textual evidence) but his sections are certainly important.

#### Wanted: Dead or Alive

Joel Rosenberg: Dale Skran's review of Wanted: Dead or Alive is exceptional. Now I liked the movie somewhat less than he did -- for me it fell into the Just-Too-Bad-They-Didn't-Have-A-Decent-Script category; there was a lot that could have been good in it, but it just didn't hang together. They clearly had some fun with the Rutger Hauer character being descended from Steve McQueen's Josh Randall, for instance; that would have been a neat bit of business if the movie had worked.

Where I disagree with Skran is in some of the inferences behind his sociological conclusions. "Arabs are the new slime. The head slime, Malik, tortures CIA agents, kills his own girlfriend, and plots to turn LA into Bopha."

<sup>As</sup> Well, lessee... we had the PLO "freedom fighter" a while back, who put a bomb into



the suitcase his girlfriend -- pregnant by him at the time! -- was to carry on an El Al flight. While Persians aren't Arabs, they are Middle Eastern Muslims, and we did have a whole bunch of them torturing then killing a CIA agent who had been kidnapped in Lebanon -- from the reports I've read, it was rather a lot worse than what was done to the CIA agent in the movie. Then there's the fellow who shot Leon Klinghoffer, and the West Bank "freedom fighter" who threw a molotov cocktail into a passing passenger car, killing a pregnant woman in front of her husband and children. And the Hamadi clown who worked over Robert Stethem and then shot him. Hell, Khadaffi has promised a place to live and a cheering crowd to welcome that little bastard Sirhan Sirhan, in the thankfully unlikely event that the scum who cold-bloodedly murdered Bobby Kennedy is turned loose....

All of which is not to suggest that only Arabs are capable of violent evil. Hardly. There are murderers among very nation--hell, a few years back, Isreal put a bunch of Jews in jail for blowing up some Arab mayors.

What is distressing is the scant extent that the intelligentsia draw the obvious conclusion from the undeniable fact that these kinds of behavior are generally cheered in the Arab world.

It's enough to make one gag.

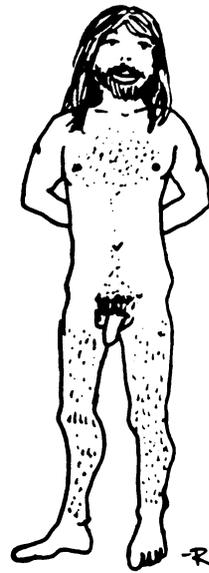
I think, though, that for once the low-brow audience that Skran looks down upon has taken the lesson: if despicable behavior is generally cheered in the Arab world, then the Arab world is generally despicable. I know that's not the fashionable view, but sometimes one's nose gets rubbed in it. Back when I was studying anthropology and sociology, every once in a while it got driven home that while there's a real variety in legitimate mores, there are some cultures -- the Yanamamo, for example --that just plain suck.

In any case, it's not necessary to bite the bullet all at once to accept that an entertainment that portrays the deaths of those Arabs engaged in, or engaged in supporting, despicable behavior, is entertainment precisely on a par with that which portrays the same thing happening to Nazis engaged in, or engaged in supporting, despicable behavior. The deaths of the Arab terrorists in Wanted: Dead or Alive is on all fours with the good ol' Nazi fry that ends Raiders of the Lost Ark.

Actually, my only quibble with such entertainments are that they all too often are sublimation. Wanted: Dead or Alive may leave the viewer with the feeling that we've done something about Arab terror. A while back, for a few seconds over Tripoli, some F-111s manifestly did quite a lot; neither Wanted: Dead or Alive or Death Before Dishonor did a damn.

#### The Warrior and the Sorceress

Laura Todd: I laughed aloud at the review of the film The Warrior and the Sorceress, where the reviewer says, "in a surprising concession to good taste as few of the many women in the film are dressed so their breasts are covered." Is he kidding or what?



HI! I'M A  
NAKED  
MAN, AND  
I'M HERE  
THANKS  
TO  
AFFIRMA-  
TIVE  
ACTION  
IN THE  
ART  
WORLD!

To cite this film for good taste in its portrayal of women is like saying, "Hitler was kind to leave a few Jews left alive in the world."

For me the one thing that made this film stand out from a hundred other barbarian-clone movies was its degrading portrayal of women. The so-called sorceress in this movie does nothing much except stand around naked. (Maybe she had a microscopic G-string; I can't recall, but the effect was the same.) This nudity is not artful, beautiful, or sexy. It's not in the context of a love scene or even a rape scene, or any scene involving drama or character. She just stands there, the only naked person in a roomful of clothed men. She's not acting seductive, or ashamed. Another viewer thought she was supposed to be a prisoner of the evil king who makes her appear naked as a form of punishment or whatever. But she doesn't act the part of a brave heroine maintaining her dignity in evil circumstances. She doesn't act at all. Does she have a sorceress' powers? You could have fooled me. She's just a non-character -- faceless, emotionless. One gets the impression that the directors were saying, "Oh, let's throw in some T&A to titillate the guys; we don't have to put clothes on this piece of meat; it's not a real person or anything, it's just a female."

I don't care about Kurosawa, or his rip-offs, and you can have all the barbarian-clone movies you want, and the degradation of women in movies is so routine I should be inured to it by now. But this movie represented a new low -- even the trashy 3 AM movie genre shouldn't sink this far.

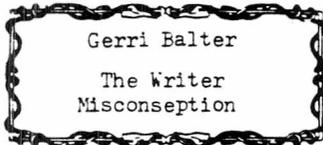
#### Fanzine Reviews

Lucy Huntzinger: Sorry you thought Adat-toir "strange" -- it's chock full of gossip and irony. Guess you missed the references. Must be another fandom from the one you inhabit.

[[I meant strange in the good sense. But, yes, our fandoms are a little different, though they do overlap.]]

J. Owen: Thanks very much for the review of Crystal Ship. Incidentally, my whims are always stimulated by begging letters from prospective readers, so if anyone wants to get on the CS mailing list, they only have to ask.

Joyce Jensen: I look forward to the Fanzine listings because I never even heard of fanzines until a few years ago, and still am amazed at the energy and dedication it must take to produce many of them, especially large and varied publications like LL. It was such fun when Lynn Hickman first sent some old fanzines of his, the first I'd ever seen.



Joyce Jensen: I eagerly read Gerri's insights into trying to become a writer, because it's such a struggle, as I too know firsthand, and a struggle with no guarantee of success.

Like her, I've also cut back on my social life when I started to write seriously, in part because I went back to college to improve my writing (one of many routes open to novices).

She wrote, "I learned to go to my friends when I need support, not criticism." But that requires building a network of supportive friends. And it is awfully hard to find good, honest critics, but it is essential to a writer's development.

Unlike Gerri's friends (at least the way they were in the beginning), mine weren't very understanding when I started to write. A couple of them thought my mind had snapped but that I'd come to my senses in a little while. Funny thing: more than four years later I'm still writing. But I no longer call those "friends."

Jean Lamb: I see that Gerri Balter shares a common addiction to writing. It's interesting to note the progression of the syndrome ... from just writing every once in a while to needing to write, to giving up other things to write, to the realization that now you can't quit, even if you kind of want to sometimes. I do hope to see something by her some time, so I can give my evaluation. However, I do recommend that Gerri Balter keep on writing exactly what she wants to write, because otherwise it's like being hooked on ice cream and trying to make do with Mellorine -- not a satisfactory solution. Now if she can be happy doing a few things that also happen to be commercial, that's fine (or if she can make a few minor changes that she is happy with to make something commercial). But it shows up in one's writing if you're not writing what you want to.

Tom Sadler: I agree with everything Gerri Balter said because I've gone through almost all the things she has. About the only word of encouragement I can give her is to persevere despite the disappointments and let-downs. It is indeed fatal to a writer's suc-

cess to pay attention to what friends and relatives say about her/his work. Ultimately, she will get to the point where she can trust her own judgment more and more as to what is good for her stories. Of course, finding the right editor is also as important as luck, talent, and perseverance. So keep at it.

Mike Glicksohn: It sounds to me as if Gerri Balter just joined the wrong writers' groups. There are certainly groups out there a new would-be writer (if their skins are thick enough) can get the sort of critical reactions Gerri was seeking. Some, like Milford, are pretty hard to get into but I'd have thought there were enough others out there to fulfill Gerri's needs. Since I've never wanted to be a writer, my impressions may be 'way off base on such matters.

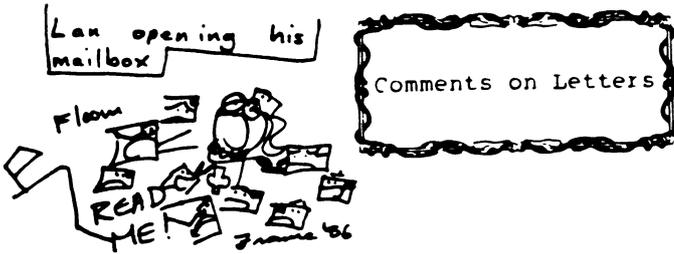
P.L. Caruthers-Montgomery: Gerri Balter's article hits all too close to home. Being a writer -- of science fiction or anything -- is harder than it seems!

Buck Coulson: I think Marion Bradley had the most apt comment on the idea of criticism for beginning writers: "Never take the word of anyone who can't write you a check." Friends and fan critics alike are not to be trusted. Also, I personally feel that the idea of choosing character names to fit their personalities should have gone out with Dante and/or Milton, or if not then, at least with Bat Durston. It hasn't, but at least it's no longer a necessity. Names of real people don't necessarily fit their personalities; unless you're deliberately writing an allegory, there's no need for your character's name to fit.

Sometimes selling a specific story takes a lot of time. Juanita had a fantasy outline accepted, and then the publisher changed editors and the new editor rejected the novel. It took 13 years to get the book in print, and then it sold to a publisher that had rejected it several years previously. There's a term called "publisher's roulette," which means that the staffs of magazines and book publishers don't stay put; if you wait a while, you can submit a story to the same magazine which rejected it, because it will have a new editor. Meanwhile, try all the others. And keep hoping. Gene DeWeese and I collected rejection slips for years, both quit sending out stories, and then a few years later started collaborating and sold the first two book manuscripts we sent out.

It helps if you pick an editor who isn't getting very good stories; the pay may not be as much -- or it may -- but your chances are better.





To: Sam Long

Mike Glicksohn: I've always liked ol' Sam Long and enjoyed his barrage of often-atrocious puns and his astonishingly varied compendium of obscure knowledge but he does sometimes have a tendency to pnotificate and it was hilarious to read him blathering on about yet another piece of arcane information only to see you pull the rug out completely from beneath him by admitting that you'd doctored the Jeeve's illo Sam was so knowledgeably "explaining" to us.

The whole thing did remind me, though, of a hidden British joke I thought hilarious recently. In one of the first episodes of Max Hedroom the head of the TV station gets a call from the head of the oriental syndicate which is one of their major sponsors and the caller identifies himself as Ped Xing, then continues right on talking. After I'd pick myself up off the floor and found Doris staring at me blankly I explained to her that throughout Britain are many thousands of places known as Zebra crossings (from the black and white stripes painted on the road) where pedestrians may cross the flow of traffic, supposedly with some degree of safety. Each one is marked by one of more signs announcing the imminent arrival of a pedestrian crossing. But naturally this is rather too long for a road sign so they all read PED X ING! Just another small example of why I thought Max was one of the best shows to come down the pike in a long time.

To: Paula Lieberman

Vito Vitkauskas: Paula Lieberman is a treasure. Please remind her that her long, personal comments were the best part. She may need to hear it so she'll write again.

Taras Wolansky: I'm not sure I like your system of dismembering letters according to subject. I'm thinking this as I look at an interesting fragment of Paula Lieberman's letter, and wonder if I've found all of them. Maybe you'd be better off leaving the letters alone and providing some kind of index to their contents.

[[That's a thought, but I like doing it this way.]]

Terry L. Bohman: Eaaahghhh! I've been found out! I wither under Paula Lieberman's ultraviolet light.

No, Ms Lieberman, I'm not (\*sniff\*) a transplanted (or any other kind of) New Yorker. I do know that maple syrup is, well, just syrup in Vermont. What makes it a big deal is that we put it in cute little touristy jugs and sell it to flatlanders from Massachusetts.

But you're right ... (pardon me while I get another handkerchief) ... I'm (\*sob\*) not (\*sniff\*) an autnentic, native Vermont-ER, and won't be for (\*snurff\*) at least two more generations.

Bless you, Ms Lieberman, and pray for me.

Mike Glicksohn: Paula's question about the number of women who slobber over newly-met males at cons compared to the number of men who do so is a bit of a red herring since males still outnumber females to a fairly large degree at most SF gatherings, so on a statistical basis alone you'd expect more men to do something than women. What Paula was getting at was the rltative percentage of women versus men who slobber at the sight of "new meat" (to refine the situation somewhat) but even that's misleading since the prponderance of men means most women will be too busy being slobbered over to do much slobbering of their own, regardless of their natural inclinations.

To: Cy Chauvin:

Laura Todd: "Why do we like watching/reading about our civilization destroyed?"

I've always enjoyed reading novels in the post-holocaust genre, and I think the main reason is that frankly I despise the 20th century civilization that has gobbled up my favorite wild places and threatens to fill up the Earth with condos, shopping malls and highways. In spite of all the creature comforts it offers me, there's a part of me that would love to see the whole thing scrapped so we could "start over." Yes, I know I'm a hypocrite; I benefit from electronic typewriters and antibiotics as much as anyone else.

I don't enjoy reading the more nitty-gritty details of people starving, dying of radiation sickness, or carving each other up. The current spate of material about bizarrely-costumed post-nuclear punks on motorcycles is both unrealistic and boring. What really interests me is the question of what sort of culture would develop if humanity were thrown back to its primitive resources while surrounded by ruins of the high-tech past. Paradoxically, I find a kind of hope in this literature: the thought that even if the unthinkable were to occur, some sort of human life would emerge to carry on.

Besides -- I love ruins and abandoned houses and such; I find such a milieu more romantic than the usual medieval scenario.

This doesn't mean I really want to see the Big Nuke drop. Come on: I have three children and am deeply concerned for their future on this Earth. Yes, I realize the difference between reality and fiction. In reality, I'll just have to live with the 20th century.

Taras Wolansky: Anybody interested in the nuclear winter hypothesis should look at the cover article in the May, 1987 Scientific American: "Climate Modeling" by Stephen H. Schneider. The trouble was that the original "TTAPS" model of the Earth had no winds, no oceans, and no seasons. Improved models show: 1) no significant effect if the war occurs in the fall or winter; 2) one-tenth.

the predicted fall in temperature in coastal areas; 3) one-half the predicted fall in inland areas.

The way nuclear winter was publicized puts me in mind of the old Outer Limits episode in which a scientist allows himself to be made into a fake alien invader, to scare the world into making peace. Not that nuclear winter was ever a hoax; nor is it likely to end up a fiasco like "Limits to Growth." But the fact remains that the scientists involved traded on their reputations to present a preliminary study to the public as though it were the firmly established conclusion of years of study by the entire scientific community. I believe there is an article on the sociology of the whole affair in a recent issue of Jim Baen's paperback magazine, whatever it was called at the time. [New Destinies??] Many scientists knew the hypothesis was not wellfounded, but remained silent rather than be branded warmongers.

To: Mary Kay Jackson

Laura Todd: About her comment that "women are more ruthless/merciless than men," and "less idealistic and sentimental." An interesting view; I wish you would elaborate. I don't see how you can say this, given the male-dominated history of this Earth with its conquests, atrocities, rape, torture, slavery, etc. If women were as ruthless as you say, why have they let males keep them subjugated for so long? I couldn't see ever behaving as you describe, with one exception: if someone was harming my children, I'd get pretty ruthless. Was this what you were referring to?

To: Kees Van Toorn

Milt Stevens: Kees' proposal for truly international Hugo Awards has been discussed at various times in the past. The problems of a multilingual popular vote award are major. There just aren't that many people who can read English, French, German Russian and Japanese. That in addition to the fact that there is more material already being published in English than could be read by any three people. Even with a panel of experts, the problems of comparing the literary merit of this Japanese novel versus that Russian novel are mind-boggling.

Sheryl Birkhead: The part about non-English awards -- openly it is an admission that the current Hugos are for the English speaking contingent only. That may be true in fact, but isn't supposed to be true in concept. I've suggested before -- and never had any takers -- why not National conventions every year, with the National equivalents to Hugos, perhaps having the mon the same day with some sort of satellite link to tie them all together, something along the lines of NASFiC, but every year and every country -- or those interested, at least. I would think that might take care of many of the problems (then again it might simply create a whole host of new ones).

Mike Glicksohn: I'd like to believe that the sort of attitude Kees Van Toorn com-

plains about are more a consequence of the sheer size and complexity of current Worldcons rather than an inherent part of the fannish make-up. While it's true that some fans (like you, George) do make a far greater effort to interact with newcomers than many of us, I'd also like to think that under the right circumstances we're all willing to give a stranger the opportunity to become a part of our world. It's just that it is practically impossible for those circumstances to take place at a crowded, fast-paced, frantic and frenetic Worldcon.

To: Vicky Webb

Mike Glicksohn: I was going to hold off on any additional comments on the Hugos but that paragraph by Vicky Webb (who is probably a really nice person) [[She is.]] is so mind-crogglingly stupid I can't refrain from a brief reply. Take a look at what she says: "I am not a fanzine fan", "not...seen those 'old masters' of the fanzine genre and "why should our opinions be penalized?" You want to paraphrase that, or shall I? Okay, if you insist: "When it comes to selecting a Best Fanzine I don't have a clue what I'm doing but I demand the right to vote anyway." Here's a person how comes right out and admits they lack the background to cast an educated vote and yet does not feel they should be penalized from voting. Isn't this striking you as just a little idiotic? Democracy may mean everyone has a right to participate but surely such a right carries with it the responsibility to participate in an informed manner if you choose to exercise that right? As for the absurd claim that "the way you vote No Award is not to vote", onw would have thought the essential wrong-headedness of such a claim would have been self-evident. If 599 people believe No Award describes the situation and so don't vote one one clown votes for My Crudzine, then My Crudzine wins and appears to represent a majority evaluation. Surely even Vicky Webb can see that the way to vote No Award is to vote No Award!

[[In Vicky's defense, if one reads a fanzine which, in a person's opinion, seems to have excellent writing and as good as some prozines, then voting it a Hugo seems logical. Hearing flack that all the nominees are "crap", but finding the one a person read not crap, can be justification for a positive vote. [[As for No Award, I would like to see a "No Preference" slot on the ballot; I think too often someone votes "No Award" when they mean they have "No Preference."]]



Frame 46

Criticism  
and  
Susan Shwartz's  
Critiquing the Critics

**Taras Wolansky:** It seems that science fiction criticism runs into some of the same problems as motion picture criticism. A lot of movie critics, even today, look at films as though they were plays; thus, the films that are most like plays (Woody Allen, Ingmar Bergman) get the critical accolades. Similarly, some critics look at science fiction as though it were mundane fiction; and the science fiction stories that most resemble mundane fiction are declared truly artistic.

In both cases the critics are looking at a compound art form, and evaluating only part of the compound. In fact, in both cases the critics are largely ignoring the part of the compound that defines the genre!

Some science fiction critics understand that science fiction is trying to do things in addition to the things mundane fiction does; but still demand that SF meet the standards of mundane literature on things they are both doing (style, characterization). Even assuming that there are objective standards by which to judge style and characterization, this is like demanding that motion picture screenplays match the best plays, or the movies made from them are no good. It's like demanding that a juggler on a tightrope match a juggler on the ground.

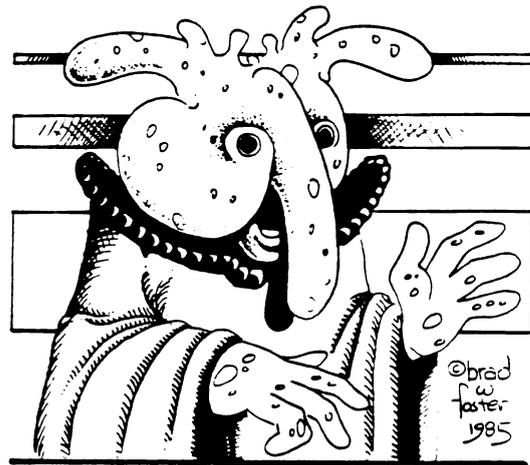
However, there are strong arguments that can be made in favor of science fiction not even trying to emulate mundane literary customs in terms of style and character. Taking the latter first, wasn't it C.S. Lewis who said that it was right that Alice be a "commonplace little girl", and Lemuel Gulliver, "a commonplace little man", because otherwise it would be "an oddity too much"? Clearly, where the point is to explore and interact with a strange environment, after a certain point characterization becomes irrelevant, at worst a distraction.

As for style, mundane literature is generally in the position of talking about things quite familiar to its reader. In effect, it must constantly look for new ways to tell old stories. Science fiction, on the other hand, has just the opposite aim. It is trying to tell the reader about things as unfamiliar as possible. Mundane fiction, then, can afford to adopt what might be called an elliptical style: if the picture is hazy or distorted, we can still recognize it; if pieces are missing, we can fill them in. But SF has to be as clear as possible, because the writer is attempting to communicate imaginary creations, not features of common knowledge.

This is almost precisely analogous to the contrast between modern art, and the "fantastic realism" of most science fiction artists. You could say that the modern artist tries to make the real fantastic, while the science fiction artist tries to make the fantastic real.

The next time you read something that you believe to be good science fiction, ask

"LOVE IS AS STRONG  
AS DEATH,  
BUT IT DOESN'T SMELL  
ANYWHERE  
NEAR AS AWFUL."  
— SOLOMON, JR.



yourself this question: Is this good science fiction because it's good fiction, or is it good science fiction because it is good science fiction.

**David Griffin:** "Critiquing the Critics" was an unusual article. Most articles in fanzines which mention critics tend to slam them, but Susan tried to give some positive suggestions. Not being an academic or a writer I shall restrict myself to comments on the "fan" part of the article. I think that one of the reasons that fans like to criticize is so they can get more out of a book. Also it is possible to prepare a defense of a favorite writer or book if one can come up with "objective" reasons as to why a book was good or bad. When you read your first SF book ever you say "Wow! That was fantastic!" But after a while, after having read many more books one begins to question why one thinks it is so good. At this point most people stop reading SF; they are told by the critics that it is not good and not having the ability to reason for themselves, they believe these critics. I don't know what is taught in American schools regarding literature, but in English schools we are not taught how to criticize until one studies literature at a somewhat higher level. For us scientific types there is no other way than to learn for ourselves of believe what other critics tell us. Perhaps there is scope here for someone to write an article (preferably several people to write articles from different viewpoints) on criticism per se. Damon Knight and James Blish helped somewhat during the fifties, but SF has progressed much since then (has literature in general?). The "Critical Methodology" that Susan mentions on page 6 would be a good start. Of course no two people would agree on exactly how a story should be criticized, but different perspectives would definitely be a help.

Jim Kerr: Literary criticism is grossly lacking in science fiction, and I found the responses to Ms. Shwartz's article a good sign, at least in terms of fannish interest in serious criticism.

I must disagree with Ted White. Such issues may be "old hat," but certainly that should not take away from their importance. The only way science fiction standards will improve is for serious critical analysis to happen.

However, the big question is whether science fiction fans want serious criticism. On the surface one would have to say "yes." But as Norman Spinrad said in his article on critical standards in IASFM, "We have met the mutual enemy. And it is us." One has only to read your letter column to see that many SF fans want criticism, but of their own bastardized form. Martin Morse Wooster thinks "critics should become more fannish." Robert Sabella thinks criticism is bad "because academics do not favor the same aspects of fiction that science fiction writers and fans do." Norman Spinrad is continually lambasted in the letter column of IASFM, in spite of the fact he is one of science fiction's most insightful critics. It seems fans will talk that talk but won't walk that walk.

Bill Unger raises the important point of where fans belong in this critical scheme. To wit: "There can't be many fans writing fannish criticism who possess an encyclopedic knowledge of the literature and insiders' knowledge of the chief issues on the science fiction field." While I think Mr. Unger is exaggerating a bit, his point is well taken. It takes more than the ability to read to write literary criticism.

"Short Fiction Jewels by Female Writers" is the perfect example of fannish musings presented as critical review. There is nothing wrong with an article reminiscing over memorable fiction in a person's life, but when one starts placing value judgments on the fiction, he or she is delving into definite critical territory. This is exactly what Jessica Salmonson does in her introductory paragraph. She calls the anthologies "extraordinarily fine" and believes the writers "never had the attention they deserve." Both statements beg the question "why?" ... a question one would expect to be answered in the article. Such is not the case.

"A brilliant and saddening ghost story." "The stories are romantic, surreal, and darkly pretty." "I love this crazy book." "Her stories are wonderful and baroque." "A really gut-wrenching creepy story." These statements do nothing to support Ms. Salmonson's opening paragraph statement that these stories are extraordinarily fine of that the writers belong in the first rank.

I do not mean to single out Ms. Salmonson, for such unabashed opinion is the critical standard of fandom. And this is another reason academic criticism is needed in SF, for certainly fan criticism will benefit by such a model. And then perhaps someday we won't be reading Ms. Salmonson in Lan's Lantern, but in the Paris Review.

Elisabeth Vonarberg: I was particularly interested by the Shwartz article on criti-

cism and critics -- as this is precisely one of the topics we have been debating until blue in the face in our own SF milieu; in Quebec, some of us (I for one) are writers, teachers/academics and fans at the same time, which makes for some lively auto-arguing... But on the whole, we have the same rift between fans and academia, with the same prejudices on both sides. Fortunately, those of us who are on all three sides at once (writers, academics and fans) do our best to bridge the gap and promote mutual knowledge and tolerance... a battle we have to win over and over with each new SF generation!

Actually, we might want to translate Susan Shwartz's essay and publish it. Would it be possible? With what conditions? Who must I ask for permission?

[[We talked about this at CONSPIRACY and you should by now have heard from Susan; she has no objection to you translating and publishing it. All she would like is credit (of course) and a copy of the magazine in which it is published. Susan said that she would like it circulated widely. But be sure that you use her correct address:

Susan Shwartz  
1 Station Square #306  
Forest Hills, NY 11375

[[I originally gave people the wrong address.]]

Susan Shwartz: Although I usually operate on the assumption that if a writer has to explain what she's said, then she hasn't said it properly, some of the responses to my article on criticism make me feel that I need to explain a few things:

Ted White's rambling and acidulous response to a number of things, among them my article: It's a perfect example of precisely the sort of fannish vituperation that I had in mind when I wrote the piece. But let's get our classifications right, please. After four years at Mt. Holyoke, two summers up at Oxford, five years at Harvard (M.A. and Ph.D.), a postdoctoral summer at Dartmouth, and three years of teaching, I think that I definitely rate as "academic" rather than "pseudo-academic." Not that Ted White appears to be familiar with the academic world outside his own prejudices, which seem to imply that if "academic" is bad, "pseudo-academic" is worse. Whether it is worse or not, it is inaccurate.

Martin Wooster's comment that "I also wish academics would learn how to write," may be accurate in many cases, but it appears to have the force of prejudice. Recall, please, the vivid critical prose of writers like Lewis and Tolkien, who were scholars as well as writers. Snobbish academics may be; but they usually are literate as well.

I'm sure Martin knows that Budrys isn't the only SF writer who writes criticism. Yes, I know; he's qualified his statement with the adverb "regularly." Let's add LeGuinn, Joanna Russ, Norman Spinrad, Buck Coulson, Jim Gunn, me, Tom Easton, Orson Scott Card, Michael Swanwick, Darrell Schweitzer, Jessica Amanda Salmonson, and -- how could you leave this one out? -- Samuel

Delany. To answer Martin's question, no, it doesn't get itchy hiding behind a pose day after day. At least not for me. I don't have to shave.

To Bill Unger: in response to your question, "there can't be that many fans writing fannish criticism who possess an encyclopedic knowledge of the literature and insiders' knowledge of the chief issues in the science fiction field, can there?" Oh yes, there can. Among my first contacts with fandom were Buck and Juanita Coulson, Sandra Miesel, and the Niekas contingent (including Ruth Berman and Anne Braude), plus some other fans-turned-writer. If you look at others of the zines, notably Yandro, Niekas, Mythlore, Fosfax (I could go on), you'll see what I mean. Those fen are good! I have been an academic, a fan, and a writer; and with any of those three fields there's no need to exaggerate any statement I make. Like you, I left academe more or less in a huff. I never thought that I'd find myself defending it...

Mary Piero Carey: I may volunteer you for something anyway. If you are a fan-academician, why not contact your local concommittees and volunteer to organize a panel or so. They let writers do that....

Paula Liberman: let's not get into that subjective versus objective wrangle again. I've never met an engineer who wasn't ego-involved with the idea that nothing can possibly be objective about the humanities. Remember Heisenberg and take it easier, OK? We're only arguing on what terms we wish to agree upon.

Mark Blackman: Either you've misread me, or I expressed myself poorly. When I cited LeGuin on the need for SF to be judged by its own standards, I wasn't saying that there is one standard for mainstream literature, and another (by implication, less rigorous) standard for fantasy and SF. I'm intrigued that you automatically jump to the conclusion that such a standard would ghettoize and diminish the field. As a matter of fact, judging SF by its own proper standards seems to me to involve more rigorous standards than I'd use for conventional fiction. For example, the following: How good is the scientific extrapolation? How logical is the development of alternative history? How detailed and convincing is the secondary world? Does the alien truly work? These are questions that one must ask of any work of fantasy or SF, but not of mainstream fiction. I firmly believe that you have to answer them as well as the questions of style, characterization, plotting, subtext, sources, ethics, etc. that apply both to SF and to mainstream fiction. Look, I write the stuff, and I'll be damned if I'm going to consider it as less "serious" than mainstream fiction. If I'd have wanted to write the "lit'ry" novel, I'd have done it by now...at least once. I personally consider my own commitment to the field a sign of my profound respect for it.

Nevertheless, while I apologize for the confusion that my writing created for you, please do examine your assumption that "different" in this case had to mean "inferior."

MISCELLANEOUS  
COMMENTS

Beautiful Books

David Griffin: What Wendy Council says about books can also apply to fanzines. When she told us to test the nearest book for register, I, of course, held LL up to the light. As fanzines go, it is quite impressive, but there is a little overlap of 2-3 letters on most pages. The article itself, as well as being interesting, is well laid out, though page 29 ends with the first word of a quote! Has anyone gone as far as publishing a bound fanzine? Perhaps as a limited deluxe edition? It sounds like the sort of thing that Dave Bridges (an English fan now living in Texas) would have done at the height of his activity.

Ed Chambers: I think every fan of science fiction and fantasy can appreciate high quality books. Wendy Council's article, "Searching for a Beautiful Book," was most informative. Owning a library of such high quality books has always been a dream of mine, but I too could hardly afford some of the limited editions of such books. It is articles like this that I would like to read more of.

Robert Sabella:  
Newer Waves

David Griffin: "Newer Waves" was a disappointment. On such a subject could be written much, much more than just one page of A4 print. Compacting those ideas means that important things get left out and vague generalizations get made. For example: "Michael Bishop's stories read like pure New Wave." What has Robert read by Bishop? None of his novels can rightly be described as New Wave; he is the best example I can think of, of an author who combines old and new waves. All of his novels are strong on plot, ideas, and excitement, yet the characters are neglected. Perhaps it is merely that Bishop is such a good writer that Robert has been fooled? Often it feels more like reality that Bishop is describing than fiction. No, Bishop is a Writer in the old tradition but who is an expert in using all the tools. It would be interesting to see a "cyberpunk" story from him.

Now a plea whilst I am on the subject of Michael Bishop. I am searching for his collection Catacomb Years. If anyone knows of a copy that I could purchase for a reasonable sum, I would be very interested.

Danny Low:  
Photo-Director's Guide

Lloyd Penney: Danny Low's article would be right at home in Bruce Farr's Con Games, a zine devoted to con-running and how best to do it. And at the end of it are some of Juane Michaud's critters...my wife may be

making stuffed versions of these characters next year. Good Lord, Ian, I wouldn't have recognized you in that illo without your cap...

Ed Chambers: I have never taken pictures at cons, but if I did I'm sure I'd be disappointed if the costume photo areas weren't set up as perfect as Danny Low thinks they should be done. I have dabbled in photography some and agree with most of what he says. If I were a costumer I would want my pictures taken in a most professional, coordinated, and comfortable (as possible) manner.

Joel Rosenberg: Danny Low's article on how to set up a masquerade photo session is one of those things that ought to be collected and published (perhaps by NESFA?) in a book to be entitled something like How to Run a Science Fiction Convention. I don't know of any plans for such a book, but we've all seen too many folks reinventing the wheel; while there's room for a lot of variety in well-run conventions, there are some things that ought to be committed to paper. I'd love to see, for example, the NESFA article on Pro Relations.

The convention etiquette articles would certainly fit into a companion volume, How to Enjoy a Science Fiction Convention. I've liked the three you've run....

[[The CONCLAVE committee, under Maia's hand, has been working on a sort of handbook for running cons, specifically CONCLAVE. And Lloyd Penney above mentions Bruce Farr's Con Games. What we need is someone to coordinate it all. I hear that some kind of handbook about running conventions might be coming from the organizers of SMOFCON.]]

Andy Offutt:

L. Sprague de Camp: The answer to Andy Offutt's puzzlement over the mispronunciation of "Genghis" (or misspelling of "Jenghis" if you like) is that the word probably first appeared in European writing in an Italian work, since that is how an Italian would spell "Jenghis." Nel italiano, the sound of "g" in "go" is spelled "g" before a, o, or u; "gh" before e or i. The sound "j" in "jam" is spelled "gi" before a, o, or u; "g" before e or i. Ben capete? Modern Turks spell the name "Cengis," since they use "c" for our "j" sound.

Kris Gilpin:  
The Razzies

Jack R. Herman: I appreciated the report on the Raspberries. We have had a few brief reports on the Razzies out here, usually a day or two after, in the general press, but over their six or so years they have identified and sent up many of the real stinkers of the screen. Kris' report lent credence to their satire.

[[I hope you like his report of last year's Razzies in this issue.]]

David Langford:  
A Load of Crystal Balls

Jack R. Herman: It is good to see another Dave Langford speech being pubbed for wider circulation. I pubbed an earlier speech and they are good things. It is a pity that we cannot all get over to the British cons to see Dave's and Bob Shaw's speeches, but as long as they are pubbed they are available in some form. Their humorous and irreverent approach is something I didn't see in thee US during my DUFF trip, and we don't seem to have an analogous consistently entertaining speaker out here either.

[[I do hope that you like Bob Shaw's speech from CONSPIRACY reprinted here. It is nysterically funny.]]

David Langford: Sorry to read that Robert Sabella found "Crystal Balls" annoying in content. Maybe I should have filled in the background.

ME: "On God, what shall I talk about help panic need drink etc."

NOVACON COMMITTEE: "Talk about The Third Millenium, you fool."

ME: "Really? You're sure?"

FOOLISHLY OPTIMISTIC COMMITTEE: "Of course."

With that brief it was dit difficult not to mention the book rather frequently, even if not in a wildly enthusisatic way...but at least no one in the NOVACON audience subsequently pinned me to the wall and shrieked, "That was an advertisement, you evil self-promoting bastard!" Perhaps they just secretly thought it and restrained their outbursts with true British politesse.

Martin Morse Wooster of course completely misinterprets the character name derived from Vonnegut's story "Harrison Bergeron" (with an admixture of Cesare Borgia). This is of coursee an attempted retaliation for the reference to the "Wooster" journalism software of 2066, which through radical new breakthroughs in metalogic manages to increase distortions and misinformation to levels hitherto only dreamt of by the Press. (Before the writs start arriving, let me reveal that thee inspiration is obviously P.G. Wodehouse's Bertie Wooster....)

Marion Skupski:  
Otters

Sheryl Birkhead: SF or not, pertinent or not -- I like the otter story and would enjoy reading anything else along that line -- otter or otherwise.

Ruth Berman: A friend of mine just had a fascinating, and extremely funny, fantasy novel published, The Daughter of the Bear King, by Eleanor Arnason. It's about this south Minneapolis middle-aged housewife who discovers that she is one of the children of the Bear King, predestined saviors of an alternate world beleaguered by the forces of ... well, not evil, say some of their philosophers. The forces of shoddiness and lack of integrity. Marion Skupski would be interested to know that it also has sea otters (telepathic, fairly intelligent -- and, of course, cute) in one chapter.

Lloyd Penney: I used to live in Victoria, British Columbia, and those of you familiar with the Pacific Northwest know of harbour seals, popping their heads up for a look in harbours. A fun sight, and some of them are curious enough to observe humans on land lucky enough to spot the seals.

Frank L. Coons  
"Hotter Than, Well..."

Jerri Swinehart: Is Frank Coons suggesting that Hotter Than Well, Arizona, is Hell? Being a former Michigander I must certainly correct him! Hell is on Michigan! And while I don't know if Hell, Mishigan, is responsible, the frigid winters and boiling summers seem to confirm it!

Lan:  
"Conreports and Ramblings"

Jerri Swinehart: At least Cranbrook took the bomb threats seriously. We who reside at Strong Hall (my dorm) never knew of a 10:30 PM bomb threat until we read about it in the school newspaper a week later. Having lived in Israel, the land where you don't even JOKE about such things, I was livid! Obviously George Washington University would rather risk your lives than to call the DC police and "look silly."

Sheryl Birkhead: It sounds as if things at school are at least changing. I'll bet you end up enjoying the swim job. I have been trying to find some place nearby with a pool, but with the way my hours are working out, it is just as well I haven't been able to locate such a place.

Your conreports are always touched with inside information, interesting, and at the same time giving information of the con in general -- a mix not easily come by and one which makes them easy and fun to read for



SILLY ME, IT SAYS 'PULL PIN AND COUNT SIX, NOT NINE'

those who were not in the multitudinous throngs.

Mike Glicksohn: It always amazes me how different your work as a teacher is from mine. Naturally we share the common bonds of lesson plans, test creation and marking and basics like that, but in just about every other detail of your daily activities at Cranbrook Kingswood we are as different as two people in two totally different professions. And it's a lot more fundamental than just the fact that I regularly leave the math office to go to the staff room because that's the only place I can find people to talk sports with. In all honesty, while I envy you your physical location I wouldn't want to trade places with you. I'm glad you got a hefty raise, considering all the crap you have to put up with from the administration!

As always, I enjoyed your "Ramblings" because I know you, know the places you're talking about and know how many of the people you're writing about. It isn't good writing and won't have much lasting value and probably won't interest too many people outside your immediate circle but when you have a memory like mine you understand the need to keep this sort of diary.

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