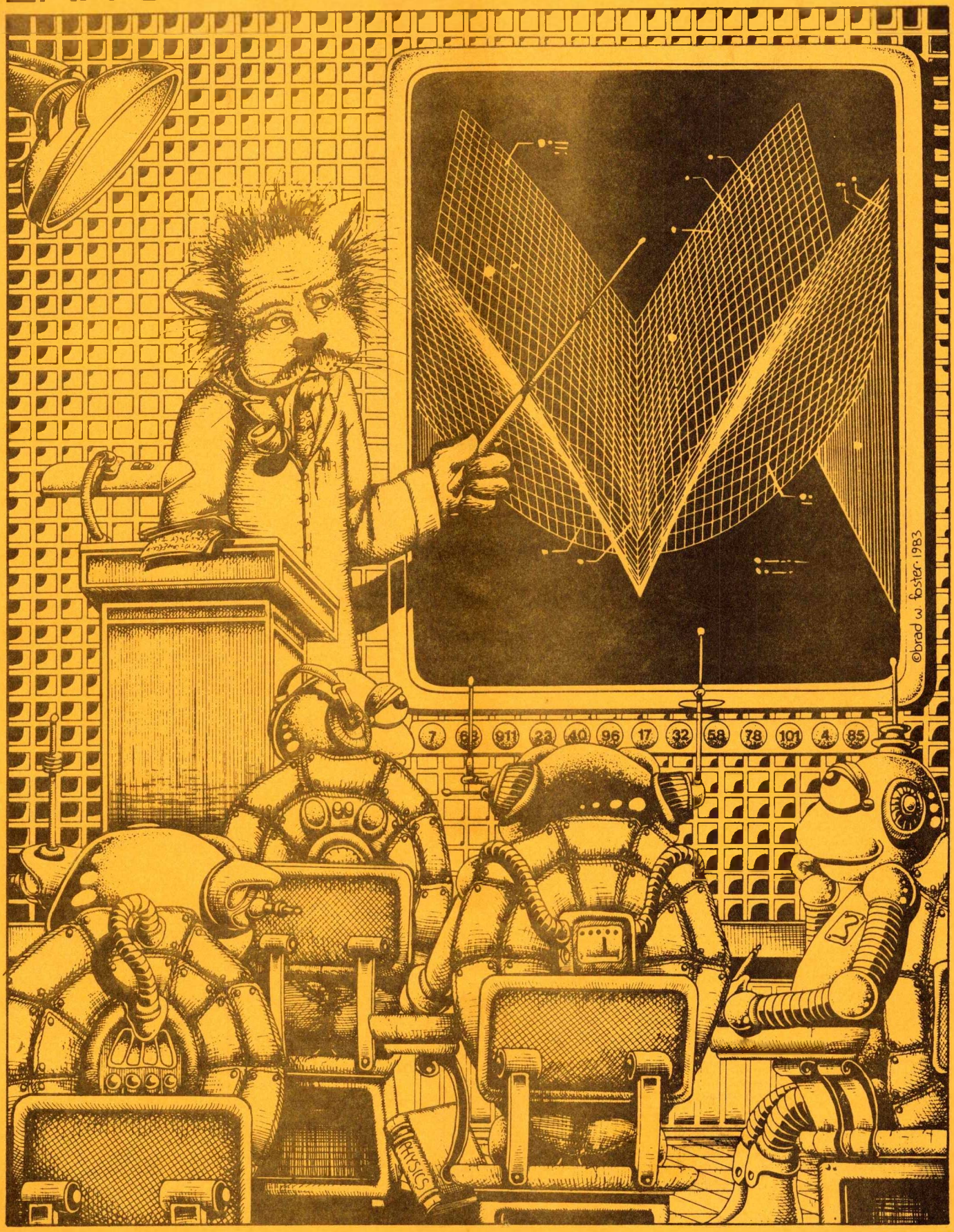
LAN'S LANTERN



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Public Statements and Apologies

From Lan:

In LAN'S LANTERN #20 I published a report on BALTICON by David M. Shea. In it were comments about filksongs, "cutesy songs about Spock's love life or Gordon Dickson's taste in recreational chemicals." In my correspondance with David, his use of the term "recreational chemicals" has always referred to alcohol, and not illegal substances, so I didn't give it a second thought when I published those lines. The more common meaning of that phrase did not occur to me until I was approached by some fans who pointed this out to me. I hereby apologize both to Gordy Dickson, a long-time friend who I know does not use illegal drugs, and no longer consumes alcohol (which he says for himself below), and to David Shea, for the spot I put him on for not exercising my editorial control as I should have. David, too, apologizes to Gordy for the unintentional implication of his phrasing (see his comments below).

From David M. Shea:

In my article about BALTICON, published in LAN'S LANTERN #20, I made a passing reference to certain types of filk songs which I characterized as being about "Gordon Dickson's taste in recreational chemicals and Spock's love life". In response to this I received a letter from a friend and colleague of Mr. Dickson. This individual felt that I had "maligned" him by suggesting that he used illicit drugs. This was not my intention. While I do not know Mr. Dickson personally, I have never heard anything objectionable about him. I am reliably informed that he does not in fact use such substances and very rarely use alcohol. To anyone who drew a conclusion to the contrary from my admittedly thoughtless turn of phrase, I apologize; and I apologize to Mr. Dickson also for any disrespect which I may have unwittingly brought upon him.

It is a fact that there are certain anecdotes circulating in fandom about this gentleman having, in his younger days, enjoyed a drink or two with friends. It was my assumption that anyone who read the article would recognize that these were, in fact, only jokes. I do recall having heard a song on the subject, which seemed to me to be typical of what I perceived as boring one-joke filk songs and topics about which certain fen are overly concerned. While such types of songs are not to my taste, those who wish to perform and/or listen to them may certainly do so to their hearts' content.

From Gordon R. Dickson:

Anyone who is in the public eye quickly learns that at times things will be said about him or her -- things that may be untrue but can't effectively be corrected. That's been the case with me for some time, and mostly I've remained silent. But in this instance I think I've got no choice but to speak up.

I particularly dislike having to write letters like this when something appears in a fanzine, since I value the amatuer press so highly. But right now I'm looking at something that threatens to damage my professional reputation, and therefore my livelihood; and the way I see it, I have to at least try to squelch this particular snake as soon as possible.

Let me start by saying that I'm assured--and I believe--that no malice was intended by the passage I refer to. I hope I'm right about that; but this letter is still necessary, it being my experience that a published denial has a little better chance of being remembered that a simple self-correction.

I'm referring to an article which appeared in LL #20, as a BALTICON report--and specifically to a mention of "cutesy songs about Spock's love life or Gordon Dickson's taste in recreational chemicals..."

Leaving Spock out of this, let me state categorically that there aren't any such songs about me. To my knowledge, there are no such songs about any sf authors.

To be sure, in my case, there is one song, a spoof written by my old friend Ben Bova nearly twenty years ago, which talks about how he and I put in an evening drinking a "tun of wine." The deliberate comic intent of this could hardly fail to be obvious to anyone who has any idea just how much wine a holds--no two people, or even twenty, could hope to drink such an amount in a single evening, even if they were in fact to lay down their lives to alcohol poisoning for the supposed honor of the achievement...

Of course, wine could be considered a "recreational chemical." So could ice cream, popcorn, tea, coffee, and just about anything else the human body can ingest. So, what is my problem?

I think we all know very well that "recreational chemicals" are a euphemism for illegal drugs. And I can hardly say nothing and allow a rumor like that to circulate.

A writer has to make his or her living dealing with publishers, editors, booksellers, librarians and the general public--people who on hearing that term won't automatically assume it refers to popcorn, tea, or even wine. And their reaction can very much affect their business dealings with the writer about whom they hear such a thing, whether or not they buy the product of that author.

You see, one of the things that publishers, in particular, are sensitive about in the case of an author in whom they have an investment of some tens of thousands of dollars or more--is his or her reliability--which they are likely to suspect might be less than good if the author is using illegal drugs.

This suspicion could result in the writer's subsequent loss of food and roof.

No, not all people react that way. But let me tell you this: I let the drinking legend about me pass unchecked when it first cropped up long ago, because I sincerely believed that no sensible person would believe such a silly thing about me. I forgot that many of the people who passed it on as merely an interesting bit of gossip did not know me, or anything of me; and consequently had no reason not to assume they were hearing the truth.

((Continued on inside back cover))

Lan's Lantern 21

A HUGO Award Winning Fanzine

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___ Your book/zine is reviewed
___✓ I would like you to contribute art, articles, etc.
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___ This is your last issue unless you do something

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DEDICATION

To Maia, as always (who also did some typing)

And to all my contributors Thank You!

A LOAD OF CRYSTAL BALLS

GREAT FAILURES OF PREDICTION: AD 2000-3000

NOVACON* GoH talk by David Langford

November, 1985

Twelve years ago I attended my first convention, which was of course a NOVACON, and of course I went to every programme item -- especially the Guest of Honor speech by Ken Bulmer. You know how it is when for the first time you...go the whole way. A thrill of religious ecstasy came as I sat in the con hall, and Ken Bulmer uttered his titanic words of wisdom, and with a sudden searing insight I knew that I couldn't hear a word. It was then that the seeds of ambition were sown: "In twelve years," I thought, "if I struggle with all my might to get on in fandom, perhaps at NOVACON 15 I could be the person who fetches Ken Bulmer's beer -- and I could get up close and find out what he's saying."

That was my first attempt at serious futurological speculation, and it was almost as successful as later ones. What I hadn't realized was that in twelve years of economic decline, NOVACON would go so far downhill that I'd be here while Ken lurked in the bar --and, what's more, a bar in Tunbridge Wells -- so I still can't hear what he's saying. This is the great problem of prediction: In 1973 no one could conceive of anything so starkly terrible as Margaret Thatcher becoming Prime Minister, L. Ron Hubbard returning as a best-seller, or Dave Langford on the NOVACON stage. All the same, many thanks.

Newer fans may believe I've titled this talk "A Load of Crystal Balls" with a view to discussing the awesome sweep of SF prediction past, present, and future. (Mainly future, because even I'm not too bad at predicting the past.) Jaded and disillusioned sufferers of past Langford speeches will have guessed that, instead, you're getting hideous revelations about The Third Millenium (A History of the World: AD 2000-3000) -- that whopping thing I wrote with Brian Stableford, which surveys a full thousand years of future human history in hope of finding something to say to your bank managers. It's one of those impressive coffee-table books of which people ask Brian, "Which area of the market is it aiming for? and Brian says, "Remainder."

Of course, it wasn't so much that Brian and I had a dizzyingly detailed joint vision of the shape of things to come, which we felt we must communicate at any cost to an expectant world. The book was first misconceived in the offices of Shuckburgh Reynolds Ltd, a packaging firm. The idea of packaging is very simple: a packager commissions manscripts, inserts carefully hand crafted distortions and typos, adds inappropriate artwork with misleading captions, gets the results whimsically laid out and lovingly misprinted, and indeed does everything you might expect a publisher to do except stick his name on the jacket. Packagers know the virtues of low profile. Publishers are meanwhile spared the effort of doing any work beyond languidly handing a cheque to the packager, and in addition can remain untainted by contact with low life-forms such as authors.

To help keep authors even more firmly in their place, the actual royalties are now passed through four separate sets of sticky fingers -- bookseller, distributor, publisher and packager. The result is a bit like one of those old party games in which each person whispers to the next: the message starts off as "A hundred thousand pounds", and by the time it's relayed to the end of the line it comes out as "Half a dozen peanuts". I fondly remember the royalty statements for The Science in Science Fiction, demonstrating the the packager had raked in quite a bit more than L100,000 without any royalties at all being owed the authors. Peter Nicholls even took legal advice, and learnt that our foes were perfectly entitled to do this, under the ancient British judicial precedent "You can't afford to take us to court, ha ha."

Of course Brian and I are convinced that this time our packager is legal, decent,

*NOVACON is the second largest annual UK SFcon -- held yearly in Coventry.

honest and truthful. We have the same touching faith as those who travel to Monte Carlo knowing that this time they have a winning system, or attend NOVACON in the happy belief that medical science has at last conquered the hangover. We signed our contracts, trying not to notice the way the red ink tended to clot, and it was agreed that Brian would tackle the sociology, biology, politics, economics and philosophy of the next millennium, while I dealt with the difficult subjects like physics and science fiction conventions.

So how do you write a book of futurology? With an alarming sense of inferiority if you try to collaborate with Brian Stableford: he dashes off 5,000 word chapters the way other people do postcards, and was solving the ethical problems of the 30th century while I was still struggling with the Great Idea Famine of 2080.

It doesn't do to be too imaginative in this business -- not many people know about the Arthur C. Clarke article which in 1946 was rejected by Wireless World for its horrific and incredible vision of a future society with breakfast TV. Even if you ignore the future and carefully write in metaphorical terms about trends of the present day, as George Orwell did in 1984, some idiot will write an essay saying (I quote): "Orwell had no feeling for the future... Orwell imagines no new vices, for instance... Nor did he foresee any differences in the role of women." (One-track mind the fellow has.) The searing conclusion is that "1984... does not resemble the real world of the 1980s", and is therefore "very bad science fiction." Most SF people have gained some dim idea that Orwell was writing about 1948, but I suppose this particular critic must be out of touch with SF. He's a chap called Isaac Asimov.

Then there's the Wishful Thinking approach to futurology, as seen in The Third World War by General Sir John Hackett. Here the fiendish Commies nuke Birmingham (thus explaining the alarmed NOVACON committee's hasty move to Coventry), whereupon NATO conveys a diplomatic reproof by dropping four nasties on Minsk, and instantly the entire USSR falls apart from internal collywobbles. This has all the heart-stopping impact of the fabled horror-fiction climax which goes, "And then he woke up...."

Brian and I were actually accused by a Radio Oxford interviewer of wishful thinking. The boring answer is that if you're going to write you way to the year 3000 without a somewhat repetitious 950 years of eating bats and fighting general elections with pointed sticks, you have to summon up a little optimism about the immediate future. "But," I assured the interviewer, "we've tried to be ever so realistic. All sorts of short-term events were thrown out of the book because they seemed like wishful thinking."

"Such as?" he said incautiously.

"Such as the prediction that in Spring 1986, Margaret Thatcher would be hit by a meteorite."

After three minutes he stopped giggling enough to tell Oxford listeners that the opinions of low persons being interviewed were not necessarily....

Speaking of wishful thinking reminds me of the pal who pinned down Larry Niven's rosy vision of tomorrow in just six words: A future where we're all Californians. The worrying thing it that Niven thinks of this as Utopia.

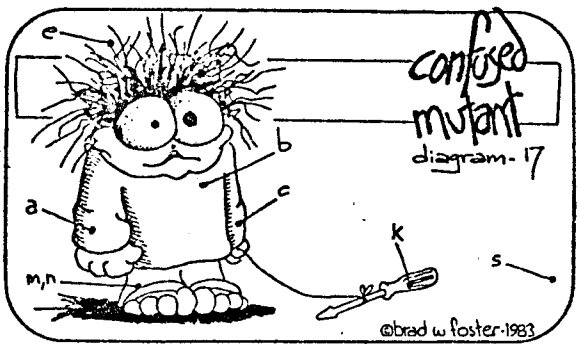
Another favourite form of futurology is called Spot the Trend -- very popular among people who haven't got far enough into How to Lie With Statistics to discover the warnings on page two. Thus in 1982, keen-eyed peerers into the future studied the market, drew their graphs, and discovered that by November 1985, every man, woman, child and goldfish in the United Kingdom would own 38.61 home computers. Buckminster Fuller had a similar and magnificently daft scenario in which we would all sooner or later be able to afford our own personal space shuttles, since the global economy will infallibly keep on expanding at a minimum 4% compound interest. It seems unfair to pour cold water on such a radiant vision by repulsively suggesting that inflation can occasionally run as high as 5%....

There's a bit about this kind of one-eyed extrapolation in that famous SF novel set in 1984, G. K. Chesterton's The Napoleon of Notting Hill:

> There was Mr. Edward Carpenter, who thought we should in a very short time return to Nature, and live simply and slowly as the animals do. And Edward Carpenter was followed by James Pickie, D. D. (of Pocahontas College), who said that men were immensely improved by grazing, or taking their food slowly and continuously, after the manner of cows. And he said that he had, with the most encouraging results, turned city men out on all fours in a field covered with veal cutlet. Then Tolstoy and the Humanitarians said that the world was growing more merciful, and therefore no one would ever desire to kill. And Mr. Mick not only became a vegetarian, but at length declared vegetarianism doomed ("shedding," he called it finely, "the green blood of the silent animals"), and predicted that men in a better age would live on nothing but salt. And then came the pamphlet from Oregon (where the thing was tried), and the pamphlet called "Why Should Salt Suffer?", and there was more trouble. [1904]

In the same book Chesterton invented the game of Cheat the Prophet. In this, the players listen very carefully and respectfully to all that the clever men have to say about what is to happen and about what is to happen in the next generation. The players then wait until all the clever men are dead, and bury them nicely. They then go out and do something else.

Brian and I thought the safest way to a-



void losing at this ancient game was not to play -- or at least, pretend not to play. For hours on end we shone lights into the packagers' eyes, repeating the mystical words: "This is a book of speculation -- not prediction, speculation, not prediction. Right?" We reckoned we'd covered ourselves, then, at least until the dustjacket of the American edition, whose blurb asked: "Can we predict what fate -- and man's own irrepressible inventiveness -- holds in store for us in the next 1,000 years? Brian Stableford and David Langford believe we can." For several nights after reading this we had an alarming tendency to wake up screaming.

Our second line of defense is the fifteen year breathing space before the third millennium actually stirs into a ghastly semblance of life (as H. P. Lovecraft would put it). General Sir John Hackett's little potboiler is now looking a trifle dodgy in its daring future speculation that, in retaliation for the beer at the Royal Angus Hotel (scene of past NOVACONs), Birmingham will be splattered on the 20th of August, 1985. Brian and I, on the other hand, needn't start shuffling evasively and making excuses until our Israeli nuke fails to hit Libya in 2011 -- by which time, modern production standards being what they are, every copy of the book will have crumbled to dust. If we were a bit late with the 2011 date, this may also apply to the authors. despite being nice, pacifistic people, we appealed to the public's baser instincts (This Means You) by letting off further doomsday weapons at intervals throughout the 21st century, the world being saved each time from nuclear holocaust by a contract specifying nine more centuries of global history. Finally I grew bored and declared that Brazil's attack on Argentina by way of New Year celebrations in 2079 was the final nuclear skirmish.

Brian, in a fit of pique, retaliated by sinking Japan.

The packager was quite worried by this. "Even if it's natural causes, don't you think it'll be bad for Japanese sales? I thought maybe you could have World War III fought between Finland, Albania, Puerto Rico and Liechtenstein---lots of excitement without prejudicing the big markets ..."

We patiently explained that all the best-selling Japanese SF which didn't involved me in rubber suits tripping over Tokyo was about mighty earthquakes pulling the plug on all Japan. "That's an idea," he said, "about a monster ravaging some vast doomed metropolis. That's what genetic engineering's all about, isn't it?"

To console him, we had some 26th century geneticists recreate Tyrannosaurus Rex, but in a sleek new vegetarian model. There was no particular economic justification for this -- even as a pet, T. Rex is never likely to replace the gerbil -- but the idea was fun and so we reckoned that people with the technology to do it would probably also think it fun. The lucky sods. Just imagine the 26th century remake of V... or rather, try not to. It's like John Sladek's theory that all those humanoid robots in SF represent a deep-seated science-fictional wish to create artificial people, a wish which present-day fans can only sublimate by having babies. The human shape is pretty inefficient for robots (sometimes it doesn't work too well for humans either -- my own inertial guidance system developed awkward bugs at three this morning*)...but the theory is that humanoid robots will still be built as soon as they're feasible, because it's a fun idea. The Third Millennium duly contains a depressed humanoid robot who reads a lot of Dostoevsky and gets suicidal: in a heroic bid for realism he is not called Marvin.

((Unfortunately, I couldn't sneak in the Langford version of the Three Laws of Robotics, as I predict they will eventually emerge.

[1] A robot will not harm authorized government personnel but will terminate intruders with extreme prejudice.
[2] A robot will obey the orders of authorized personnel except where such orders conflict with the Third Law.
[3] A robot will guard its own existence with lethal antipersonnel weaponry, because a robot is bloody expensive.))

Meanwhile, back in the plot....

The safe way to tackle prediction---ahem! speculation--- is unfortunately the boring way, the reliable way, the Herman Kahn way. Kahn was (and for all I know, still is) the famous fatso of the Hudson Institute, specializing in "surprise-free futures", with all the predictions heavily hedged: a typical Kahn peep into the beyond might assimilate the total political and economic picture of Earth today, process it with his fabled or fabulous IQ of 200, and in ringing tones give warning to the world that some time before the end of the century there could quite possibly be some trouble in South Africa, or not.

The basic Hudson Institute principle was ably stuffed into a nutshell by Clive James after Kahn's BBC appearance in 1974. All

* This previously scripted line was itself a wondrous feat of prediction: emerging from a room party at around that hour, I had indeed tripped over luscious, young fan Alison Haston and fallen on Dave Wood. If only it had been the other way around.

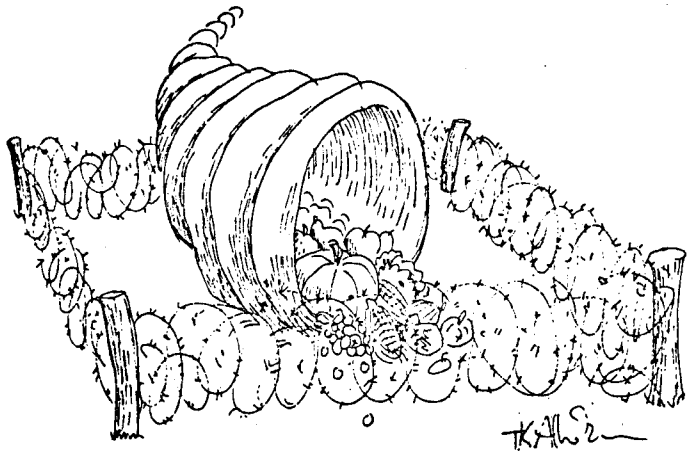
predictions are made in terms of the "auto-extruding temporal unit 'fivetenfifteentwennytwennyfiveyearsfromnow'", which James respectfully suggested should be christened Hermie:

> Kahn's First Law of Ecodynamics can then be simply stated. In the space of one Hermie, anything that is happening now will still be happening only more so, unless something stops it. (The Second Law states that the fee for being told the First Law will be very large.)

In the book we went for lots of safe options. None was safer than the infallible treatment of long range trends in climate: is it going to get hotter or colder, and will cloudbursts or permafrost be more typical of a British midsummer? Cleverly sitting on a thousand-year fence, we have the runaway greenhouse effect and melting icecaps near the beginning of the third millenium, and a new ice age at the end. (Sell your refrigerator shares now.) In between, we predict a period of scattered showers with cloudy and sunny intervals, and on the 1st of April, 2542, it will rain pork pies over western Coventry. That is the end of the forecast.

Other safe bets? Genetic engineering will obviously be big business unless present-day research runs into a brick wall or gets banned by the Moral Majority (because you can use micro-organisms to synthesize alcohol, and of course the MM disapproves of tight genes). I can reveal in confidence that one heavily funded American research team is working on genetic alteration of the digestive systems of cattle, in hope of producing a super bull which will excrete endless sequels to Battlefield Earth. My other favourite speculation on this front is a tailor-made bacillus which escapes from the laboratory and devastates the country with huge unstoppable floods of antibiotics and interferon...but we decided The Third Millennium was a worthy and serious book, so Brian wrote all this educational stuff about artificial photosynthesis and synthetic food stuffs, which the packagers promptly illustrated with a picture captioned The Jack Spratt Grass Chop, complete with protruding blades of grass and a little paper frill around the narrow end.

One of the wonderful points about the packaging system, you see, is that authors aren't troubled with minor things like the pictures and captions -- at least not until the final layout is already being printed by a cut-rate outfit handily located in Italy. (You can imagine these black-suited mafiosi types eyeing the page proofs suspiciously and saying, "Mother of God, Luigi, what is-a this ectogenetic pregnancy?") I had to sit on our friendly packager's head and make him telex a correction to Milan when I finally saw his photo of Computer Storage Media Through The Ages. The caption referred to tape cassettes, disks and bubble memory. I hadn't realized that bubble memory looked



like a large ball bearing, but what actually reduced me to gibbering hysteria was that the disk was a 45 single.

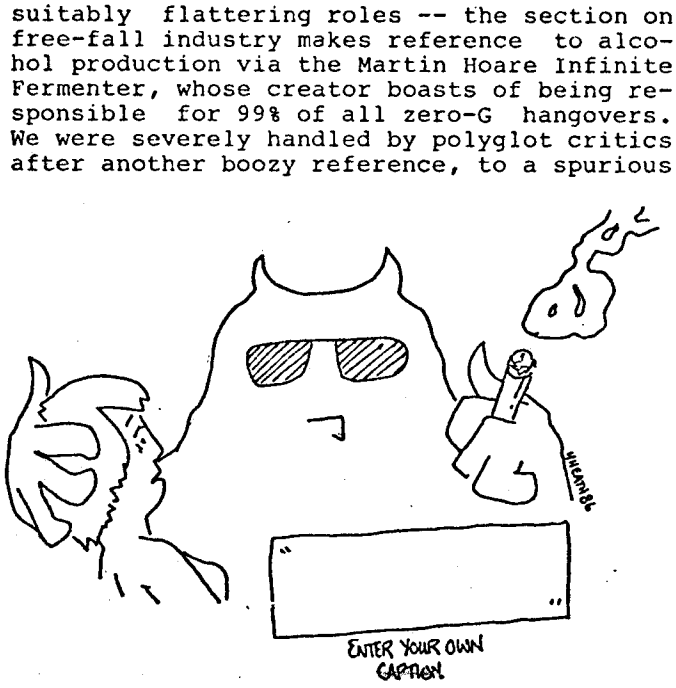
The least convincing rewrite of a caption involved a bit in the text about the failure of a nuclear fusion reactor -- this failure being very feeble and undramatic, a sort of .003 Mile Island. To illustrate this damp squib, the demon artist couldn't resist airbrushing a gigantic, devastating fireball that looked like one of Ronald Reagan's wet dreams. I had about three minutes to write my way out of this one before they cabled the final changes to Italy. Resisting the urge to alter the caption to "With one bound Jack was free", I gritted my teeth and dictated down the phone: "Propaganda picture circulated by anti-nuclear group in 2091..."

Another good bet was the possibility of a genetically engineered plague: to be on the safe side, we put in three (one of which would have been a remarkable prediction of AIDS had the book appeared some time before we wrote it), and again the art department did us proud. The picture, captioned with something about the struggle to contain the spread of a deadly virus, showed a surgical team up to the elbows in their patient--presumably looking for the virus and extracting it with tweezers. This time, the hasty replacement was something about how the disease caused huge disfiguring warts whose spread had to be contained by crack surgeons. "Are you pulling my leg?" the packager asked, as he made it more socially acceptable by altering "warts" to "cancer". Sadistic people you meet in the publishing business.

Besides being unfairly prejudiced against the harmless, everyday wart, this fellow was full of morbid worries about elongated legs. With one cerebral hemisphere he'd ask me to write a bit of relief into Brian's 3000-word chapter on the philosophy and economics of 27th century kumquat-growing in the reclaimed Antarctic wastes. With the other half of the his brain he nervously queried the names of the imaginary posthistorical characters: he didn't object to Tom Disch becoming a 21st century US President, but was convinced that most names other than Smith, Jones and Brown were full of hidden meaning, part of a vile authorship plot to

get him sued for libel. Little did he know that the Oriental surnames were all pinched from Reading's Chinese restautant owners.... He even cut a quite harmless line referring to "Thatcherville (formerly Sellafield)".

This became a challenge. Gully Foyle of Tiger! Tiger! makes a guest appearance as a chauvinist exploiter of asteroids, but something happened at the copyediting stage to his line, "Packager, I kill you deadly!" Several fans were smeaked into the book in suitably flattering roles -- the section on free-fall industry makes reference to alcohol production via the Martin Hoare Infinite Fermenter, whose creator boasts of being responsible for 99% of all zero-G hangovers. We were severely handled by polyglot critics after another boozy reference, to a spurious



German plonk manufacturer called Misttafelwein GmbH. I was of course shocked and amazed when it was explained to me that in German, the Mist bit conveys the same impression as that American beer which tastes like it sounds: Schlitz.

Our packager had his revenge, though, by slipping in a final picture of two chaps silhouetted against a sky packed with unlikely numbers of stars, planets, galaxies, quasars, and Carl Sagan. I'll give you his caption verbatim.

> The authors gaze into the universe and contemplate "the end of progress". In fact they are at home in Langford's recreation area, examining a holo-projection of the sky as viewed from Epsilon Eridani, to which they will begin to journey shortly after publication of this history.

Now that last bit is really wishful thinking .... The true caption should be the words of the taller of the two figures as he points dramatically at an airbrushed blob: "The universe, or the remainder shelf? Which shall it be, Stableford? Which shall it be?"

I shall not record Mr. Stableford's reply.

Brian had actually been jaundiced about Pictures of the Author ever since we'd visited Shuckburgh Reynolds Ltd for an editorial conference about the literary merit of my excuses for late delivery, and mighty packager David Reynolds had said: "Dave, I'm just pasting up The Science Fiction Sourcebook and I want your photo!" He rushed me outside for a lightning snapshot, with Brian trailing plaintively behind saying "What about me? I've written more books than him." The reply was, "Ah, it's not what you write, it's the name you write under." In the paste-up there was a big white space among the L's, but the corresponding slot in the S's was already full of Olaf Stapledon. The message for aspiring SF authors is clear. If you want your photo in the reference books, aim for an unoccupied page. Avoid such pennames as Asinine, Heineken, or Clap.

The final futuristic joy of The Third Millenium was to be a holographic cover...or rather, a little square holographic bit in the middle of the jacket. The idea is that in the sort of lighting you get in bookshops, the wondrous 3-D image can't actually be seen, and people will buy the book so they can take it outside. What really happens, of course, is that they peer into what looks like a wrinkled scrap of aluminium foil, see their own reflections, and think "I'm not buying this. It's full of appalling distortions about me."

This amazing hologram was supposed to show a 2001-ish space scene, and what went wrong is still shrouded in mystery. Did the strings show? Did they discover too late that The Blue Danube doesn't photograph well? Did the plasticene spaceship look too much like something from a Playgirl centerfold? There are some things, as the packagers were swift to tell us, which authors were not meant to know. Instead they substituted an off-the-peg hologram that they thought was just wonderful. Brian and I stared blankly at it: "What the hell has a nautilus shell got to do with the book?" The answer, according to the dustjacket proof, was that it symbolized world unity. I suppose a dead shellfish that's been sawn in half is as representative a symbol as any.

Anyway, the publishers went wild about this cover, perhaps because the mere idea of holograms reminded them happily of credit cards. They danced in the streets. Their reps visited all the bookshops with advance copies, proudly saying "Wonderful, isn't it?" And the bookshop people warmly replied: "Yes, it's a triffic hologram. Rilly...triffic. I thought just the same when I saw it on one of Jonathan Cape's books last week."

Blackout.

The replacement replacement hologram is even more baffling in its symbolism. All over the country on publication day, people scratched their heads and thought, "How is the essence of the third millennium conveyed by a picture of two bloody acorns?" Only the authors could decode the packager's secret, subliminal message that this book had been written by a pair of nuts.

Newspaper reporters who came to interview us were clearly of much the same opinion. The science reporter from the Telegraph

wrote us up as typical mad scientists, probably in revenge for my chortle when he mentioned his complete ignorance of esoterica like nuclear fusion, or indeed nuclei. (Brian managed to switch to interview to future sociology before I could demonstrate the principles of fusion power using two sugar-lumps and a spot of senseless violence.)

The Reading papers all wanted to know what we, as local authors, had predicted about the future of Reading. Unfortunately the book's only mention of the town is on the back flap, where it's confidently predicted that Brian will teach sociology at Reading University in 1985.... Fortunately the local reporters aren't too bright and were easily fobbed off with a passage about how, in the 28th century, Reading still survives despite the rival attractions of information acquisition by direct brain transfer.

The newspapers also sent photographers, who just like us had different views about the way the future was going to be. The Reading gutter press always thinks authors should have an insane gleam in their eyes, and the camera men spend their time trying to arrange eldritch reflections from a candle, thus producing snapshots of a future in which authors are all drunk, blind, unable to afford electric lighting, and very badly photographed.

A lady from the Telegraph felt the third millennium should look surreal, futuristic and stark, and frogmarched us off to hunt for a suitable backgrounds in Reading University. Having posed us by a strakly surreal fire escape, she instructed us to stare into the bright sky and point out nearby supernovae to each other: my glasses immediately turned black like Zaphod Beeblebrox's, and Brian displayed his reaction to the future by bursting into tears. As a punishment we were made to fumble our way down a steep wet slope covered in nettles, to be photographed at the bottom wondering how we'd even get up again and contemplating the future of ointment; next we had to peer precognitively round a wall, with me balancing on a lethally insecure beer-crate (that was the photot that got used): we finally drew the line when invited to pose in a particularly futuristic-looking tree.

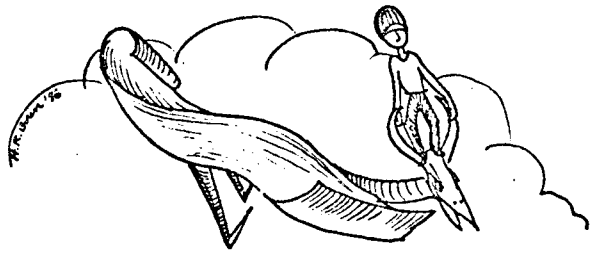
By contrast, a visiting American camera artist reckoned the future would be ever so egalitarian. In his utopian vision, elitist differences between human beings would be firmly ironed out. As a result, all of his snaps of the two of us show me hunched up with hideous grimaces of pain -- trying not to be heightist and look taller than my fellow man. Brian is about five-foot-six. On the whole, the nettles were more comfy.

You'll have noticed that I've talked more about the book's hidden infrastructure than the actual contents. We need to keep a few of our secrets: Rog Peyton of Andromeda Book Co. Ltd, has pictured to me in his vision of a possible future in which I reveal so many high spots of The Third Millennium that nobody feels they need spend £12.95 to read the rest, and as a result the Andromeda bookstall has a huge pile of unsold copies which fall on a certain author and break both his legs.

So I'll just finish with extracts from the long list of people the book is going to annoy -- quite apart from those who only just found out its price. Many Americans, including Greg Benford and Jerry Pournelle will be peeved by the rude remarks on their nice Star Wars defense project, which is unfavorably compared to the Maginot Line. Conversely the Guardian got very shirty at what they thought was a slighting reference to solar power; there are some things about which man must not make jokes.... The Soviets should be hugely miffed at the commonplace skiffy suggestion that their version of Marxism is the last of the world's great, doomed religions. It is of course impossible to write an honets book which won't outrage the government of South Africa, so they hardly count. Moral Majority fellow-travellers will go into fits at the notion of an interstellar drive being invented by a team whose leaders are two happily married chaps. Conservationists and astronomers will resent the casual way we blow up the asteroid Ceres in order to promote a Bob Shaw novel. If anyone from Birmingham ever reads the book (unlikely though it seems), they may not be too happy to find a bit about their city going bankrupt owing to investment in a maglev subway system. The Channel Ferry people will, as always, boil with rage at a fortuitous mention of the opening of the Channel Tunnel (complete with an electronic Times headline: CONTINENT NO LONGER CUT OFF. And finally, the authors will definitely suffer severe emotional shock should they ever again open the book and inadvertently read the picture captions.

I won't ask for questions from the floor -- owing to my hearing trouble -- I've never been able to understand what floors say. Instead, let's conclude with a genuine, daring prediction about the short-term future now confronting us. This is a hot tip, so get your bets on now: In one minute or less the bar is going to be packed full.

Thank you.



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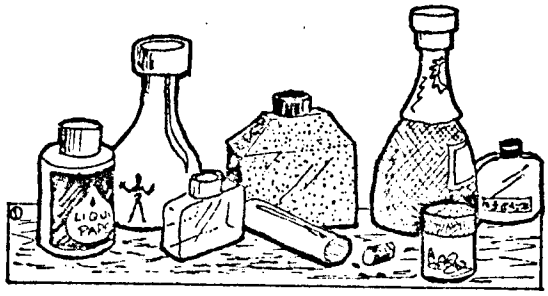


Strange Sciene Fiction

I Have Known

An article by Buck Coulson

Thirty years of collecting science fiction and rummaging in used book stores, library sales, and flea markets can turn up some very odd items. Of course, I don't hold the record for bookstore browsing; Bob Gaines probably does that. At least, he can wear me out. And, of course, most of the little-known science fiction novels are little known for quite good reason. But there are occasionally some items of interest among the rubbish; not gems, but readable books. (And of course, some of the rubbish is bad enough to be funny, which is a plus.) Anyway, the following are a few science fiction books that you won't see on the average dealer's table.

For Want of a Nail, by Robert Sobel, is subtitled "If Burgoyne Had Won At Saratoga" and was published in 1973 for a then-hefty $12.95. I first saw a copy in Gene DeWeese's living room, and later on actually did find one on a dealer's table; Dean McLaughlin had one marked down to $1.98, which is more my price. Basically, this is a 400-page economic history of the Confederation of North America and the United States of Mexico. The CNA composes essentially the US as it was after the Louisiana Purchase, and most of Canada. Quebec, comprising both Quebec and Ontario, is an "associated territory". However, the CNA territory stops at the Rocky Mountains instead of extending to the Pacific. The remainder of the North American continent, down to about Panama, is part of the USM.

The turning point in history, as the title indicates, is the battle of Saratoga. In this world, Clinton did move up the Hudson, arriving in the rear of the Colonial army in time to finish it off. As Benedict Arnold failed to take charge in the field and lead the rebel assault, as he did in our world, the Colonial army was already in a bad way. This, coupled with the loss of Philadelphia, led to massive desertions in the Colonial army (which also happened in our history) and, more importantly, the loss of interest by France. Peace was negotiated, and Burgoyne named Governor-General of British North America. However, a large number of "unreconstructed rebels" refused to surrender and moved into Spanish territory, in Mexico and Texas, eventually expelling the Spanish and forming a nation. As the population of the two countries increased, the CNA expanded westward and the USM northward, until they met in the Rockies. All this early history, which makes for quite a fascinating alternate world, takes place in the first 130 pages of the book. Following this, the history of the two countries is covered with the same economic emphasis that bored me in high school history class. There are border disputes, foreign alliances and the like, but the emphasis is on economics and party politics, complete with tables of election returns and gross national products. I'm sure it was fun to work out, but it doesn't make thrilling reading. Then there's a "Selected Bibliography", with items such as "Towards a New Jerusalem" by Benedict Arnold, and Joan Kahn's "Secret History of the Kincaid Assassination". It's one of the most thoroughly worked out alternate worlds I've ever encountered, and the first part is fascinating reading, though the last half of the book is a bit dry.

Prince Charlie's Bluff, by Donald Thomas, is subtitled "A Novel of the Kingdom of Virginia", and was published in 1974 and remaindered shortly afterward. As I recall, I picked it out of a bin of remaindered books at K-Mart in the late 1970s. The alternate history of this one begins at the battle of Quebec, in 1759; the British fail to outmaneuver Bougainville, and are caught between two French forces on the Plains of Abraham. The French launch attacks on the rest of the British colonies, while the Highland regiments captured at Quebec are induced to enter the service of James III; at the time, James and his son, "Bonny Prince Charlie",

are in exile in France. The Highlanders are slipped into Virginia to seize a kingdom for James, and do, though he never sees it. Prince Charlie becomes Charles III, King of Virginia. The book is organized in the form of a journal, written by one of the Highland officers, and much of it is devoted to political strategy and military tactics. The major flaw is that the plot and idea are everything; none of the characters are made very real, or very interesting. The campaigns and historical variations were enough to keep me reading, though they might not be for everyone.

Half-Gods, by Murray Sheehan, was someone's review copy; a sticker on the fly-leaf gives a publication date as April 8, 1927. I got it a long time ago at a second-hand book store; picked it up for the title and was hooked by the picture of the centaur on the cover. It's easily the most literate book of the bunch, part of the "southern school" of writing that was popular at the time. It opens with a centaur being born to a mare belonging to an uneducated horse-trader, and the focus of the novel is on the gradual maturing of the centaur and one of the horse-trader's sons, who has ideas of education and conduct "above his station". Both, of course, are unable to fit in with their community of ignorant, provincial, self-righteous small-town dwellers. The author spends a lot of time on the local minister, and the reader gets a sharp view of the fundamentalist in the years before television; restricted in scope, but not in ambition. At the end, the boy Daniel has escaped to a wider world, while the centaur has ironically gained his major desire: acceptance by the loafers around the corner store. I thoroughly enjoyed the book when I first read it because it was a half-alien society to me; it's even more alien today, and probably less believable, but people really did think and act that way. Some of them still do, though they're more sophisticated about it. I've never seen or heard of a copy anywhere else.

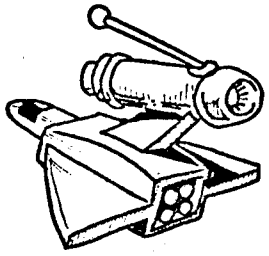
Prince Izon, by James Paul Kelly, is subtitled "A Romance of the Grand Canyon", and was published in 1910. I found it in a used book store around 1980. The rather improbably theme is that a large group of Aztecs migrated north from Mexico to the Grand Canyon, and rebuilt their civilization. A problem is that they have split into two groups, each with its own city. The good guys have become Christian under Spanish rule, and noble, civilized, kind-hearted, and altogether wonderful, with Prince Izon of the title as their ruler. The other city is under the sway of the evil high priest Topelztin, and his group of heathen, savage, brutal, vicious minions. Into this civil war wanders a group made up of an archaeologist, his daughter, his niece, and one Black Eagle, his Havasupai Indian blood brother. Incidentally, the Havasupai are descendents of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel. No proof of this is forthcoming; everyone is supposed to know it. (I bet you didn't, though.) This sets the stage for intrigue, warfare, kidnapping, and an eventual happy ending. Topelztin is squashed by a huge cross, Prince Izon weds the daughter, and Black Eagle gets the niece. One of the interesting things about the book is the conclusion: in that era, pure white American women never ended up with Indians, princes and reformed Jews or not. (They didn't end up with Jews, for that matter.) It was called miscegenation, there were laws against it in most states (Indiana's law continued into the 1950s and laws may still be on the books in some southern states), and it wasn't considered literarily romantic. So science fiction was leading the way, even then. (Of course, another point of interest is that the Grand Canyon was so little known in 1910 that a plot like this could have been set there.)

Sown in the Darkness, by William Richard Twiford, is a book of another color. (Pure white.) It was published in 1941 by F. Orlin Tremayne, who was the editor of Astounding just before Campbell. (His name is generally spelled "Tremaine", but it's "Tremayne" on the book; now someone can write in and tell me that they were two different people.) I picked it up in a library sale sometime in the 1970s. It's considered a rare book, and I've actually seen it in catalogs, though not often. Twiford wasn't much of a prophet. The "Preamble" to his novel, showing how the world got from 1941 to 2000 AD, involves "a sort of gentlemen's agreement" to stop bombing in 1941, followed by a quick conquest of Russia by Germany. Then, after a "brief war with Japan", when the US government is about to collapse with a ninety-four billion dollar debt, a new monetary theory (print whatever you need) sweeps the world, undermines Hitler and brings Germany to a democracy, and encourages the formation of the "United States of Europe", which includes the British Empire. China and Japan join forces to expel the whites, and take over Asiatic Russia. Somehow Communism endures all this and becomes a powerful religion called Cosmocracy. A new international

union to stop war is formed, a new calendar is adopted, a "sun engine" is developed to replace coal and oil, a "scientific alphabet" is adopted to aid rapid handwriting (were typewriters that scarce in 1940? I owned one then, and so did Juanita), airplanes are run on broadcast power, everything is built of plastic, immigration laws are abolished, thus "jamming the United States with hordes of mentally deficient black, brown and yellow people", while interracial marriage "was producing a mongrel, half-witted American citizenry", and a new whites-only separatist political party is formed to save the country.

That's all in the first 18 pages, before the story really starts. The plot of blatantly racist, as you might guess from the foregoing, with the hero being a noble Separatist presidential candidate who opposes the ruling Cosmocrat. The separatists are forced to form their own secret police organization -- called the Knight Riders; there's a nifty pun for you. Then the Separatists win the election, the Yellow Peril invades, and in the end is defeated. Lots of action in the book, plus a very soppy love affair. At the back of the book are 80 pages of appendices, explaining all the scientific and economic inventions in the story -- 22 of them. It's not exactly one of the great books of science fiction, but it's an interesting look into the mind of the author.

The Coming of the Amazons, by Owen Johnson, is subtitled (you notice that most of these books are subtitled) "A Satiristic Speculation on the Scientific Future of Civilization"; the author doesn't think small. It was published in 1931 and is an ex-library copy, though I got it at a flea market. It's somewhat of a cheat, since at the end



it turns out to be a dream, or rather a nightmare. But in the beginning, our hero goes into the future -- or thinks he does -- by means of a sort of hibernation technique, and finds the future ruled by seven-foot tall, Nordic type women. There are the usual future inventions: anti-gravity, broadcast power, weather control, light "generated like heat and radiated through the house", lengthened lifespans, population control, the end of warfare because of population control, 3-D television, and so on. Unlike Twiford, the author doesn't explain any of it. One bit of problem-solving that might not even occur to a modern author is the solving of the "servant problem" by having servants work under post-hypnotic suggestions, so they do perfect work. The women, of course, can't resist the first "real man" in generations, and our hero gets along fine until he begins espousing male rights and emotion rather than reasoned action. (That's accurate anyway; the author didn't fall for the old husband's tale that women are more emotional than men.) Some of the ideas are well thought out; the book isn't a typical 1929 male look at feminism. One neat idea that seems unique to the book is that, since New York has been destroyed and rebuilt several times, the surface of Manhattan Island is now some 150 to 200 feet above sea level; the book is interesting for this sort of thing.

Saturday Night LIGHT

An article by Danny Low

My first experience working in the photo area of a masquerade was at INGUNANACON, my first Worldcon. That photo session went perfectly which made me think that this was normal. Obviously, Fate was making a sucker play on me. I discovered that working in the photo area gave me a perfect view of the costumes under good lighting at close distances. I usually miss the presentations but considering how bad most of them are, this was not a major loss. Over the years, I have worked in the photo area at more cons than I can remember, but certain ones stick out in my mind.

The 1984 Portland WESTERCON was noteworthy as the most perfectly run photo session that I have ever worked. The hotel provided us with a power box that had enough outlets and power to meet all of our power needs. We had the photo area set up early and ran all the contestants through the photo areas before the masquerade started. As a result, I had a rare opportunity to see the presentations as well. It was a small masquerade and finished early, so we left the lights set up for an hour after the end for an informal photo session for anyone who wanted to take more pictures.

By contrast, everything went wrong at the CONSTELLATION photo session. First, Alan Frisbie's lights got sent to Atlanta and there was a last minute scramble to find some lights locally. The good news was that we were able to find some lights. The bad news was that they were 3200K lights instead of the daylight balance lights that everyone had been told would be used.

The company running the convention center insisted that only they could put up the backdrop, which they did.About two hours before the start of the photo session, one of the convention center employees got entangled in the backdrop and while freeing himself knocked down one of the supporting posts, which knocked down the next supporting post, which knocked down the next supporting post, until the entire backdrop had dropped to the ground. We called the convention center and told them about the problem. They said they would send someone over to fix the problem. Nobody ever came and we set up the backdrop ourselves.

An electrician was supposed to come and help us set up the lights. He never showed up (this turned out to be fairly common), and we had to find the power outlets ourselves. It turned out that they were on the floor and covered with screw-down plugs that require a special tool to uncap them. After much effort with improvised tools (such as knives) we got some of them unscrewed, only to discover that some of the plugs covered microphone outlets and not power outlets. We eventually got enough power outlets uncovered and completed the set-up.

We had risers for the photographers, but when they got on them, the risers started to separate. This time, the convention center responded to our call for help. Someone arrived with ropes to tie the riser together, but as he started to do this he noticed that the risers were set up improperly and had to be fixed before he could tie them together. We were lucky they had not collapsed.

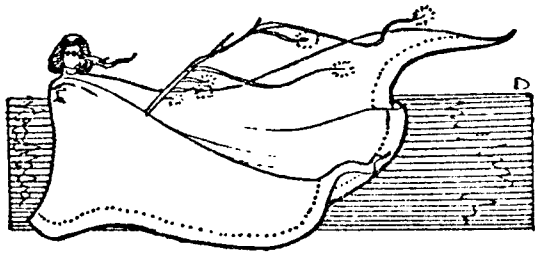
Those who were at the CONSTELLATION masquerade know that the hall where it was held was enormous. The photo area was located in the rear of the hall and as the masquerade went on, the spectators in the rear realized that they could see the costumes better in the photo area. So, all during the masquerade people drifted towards the photo area until at the end there were more spectators there than photographers.

The there was the 1985 WESTERCON photo session which could have been the worst photo session ever. The woman in charge of the masquerade had never done one, or worked in one, or participated in a masquerade before. Her idea of a photo area was to have a lighting company come in and set up two lights. She appointed no one to be in charge of the area and did not have the faintest idea what type of lights were installed or how powerful they were. In addition, the photo area was right in front of the main and only entrance to the ballroom where the masquerade was being held. Only some investigation by Clint Bigglestone saved the day. Once he and George King realized what the situation was, they got together with the other photographers and formed an ad hoc photo crew that took charge of the photo session, and made it come off smoothly despite everything.

LACon II was memorable for the shear size of the photo area. Instead of the usual flash and available light areas, we had a flash area, a 3200K available light area, and a daylight available light area. In addition, the size of each area was larger than the entire photo area of a typical WESTERCON. I reported to work at 10AM on Saturday. Alan Frisbie had already been working there for over an hour. I finally went off duty at 2AM the next morning, leaving Alan and two friends to cart his equipment away. Except for two quick runs to the snack bar for lunch and dinner, I worked straight through for 16 hours. Nothing went wrong, but due to the huge size of the photo area, it just took a lot of work to get it set up.

The CHICON IV photo session went quite nicely and was not memorable except for one incident. As we were setting up the photo area, someone came up to us and said he was in charge of the photo area. Alan Frisbie responded that he was in charge of the photo area, and since he had the lights, all the other equipment, and an experienced crew on hand, he was running the photo area. The other person went off in a huff. Long after the convention I discovered that two different people (one of them being Alan Frisbie) had been told they were to run the photo area. That confrontation at set-up time was the first either person knew of the other.

When I first started working in the photo area, I just looked at the costumes. It was only after years of looking that I decided to take pictures as well. I thought my experience working in the photo area would be a great help as I knew all the things that could go wrong. However, I found out that with photography there was a whole new set of disasters that could happen, but that's another story.



Low's Night Light

A Retrospective Look At

Cordwainer Smith

An article by David M. Shea

In the liner notes of his major 1967 double album, Freak Out!, Frank Zappa, the founder and musical director of the Mothers of Invention, wrote: "The following people have influenced our music in many ways. Please do not hold it against them." The list which followed was diverse and interesting; but it is no coincidence that among the names was that of "Cordwainer Smith". It is difficult to comprehend the cutting edge of avant garde rock without a grasp of Zappa's seminal work; likewise it is difficult to be sure of the direction of modern science fiction without studying the works of "Cordwainer Smith". It is sad to see one of the field's most original and unique visions falling into obscurity.

Though they both spent substantial portions of their lives in the same city, it is not likely that Zappa personally encountered "Smith" outside the pages of a book. The author wrote extensively in and out of the genre all his life, but distanced himself from fans with "Smith" and other pen names. In real life, he was Paul Myron Anthony Linebarger, to which he could append, if the mood stuck him, such prestigious honorifics as "Doctor" (Ph.D), "Professor" (of Asiatic Studies, Johns Hopkins), and "Colonel" (U.S. Army Intelligence, retired). For extensive biographical material, as well as insightful commentary on many "Smith" stories, the reader is referred to J.J. Pierce's excellent introduction to DelRey's anthology The Best of Cordwainer Smith.

"Smith"/Linebarger did his major work in the science fiction field in the period from the end of World War II until the early 1960s (he died in 1966). During that time he compiled a body of work which even today is amazing in its scope of style, invention, imagery, and insight. It is no idle suggestion to claim that "Smith" must be regarded, together with C. L. Moore and the young Ray Bradbury, as one of the major predecessors not only of the explosive "New Wave" of the 1960s, but generically of such major writers of today as John Varley, Connie Willis, and Thomas Disch.

It was "Cordwainer Smith", for example, who invented the concept of the anti-agathic drugs, an idea borrowed, with or without credit, by James Blish (the Cities in Flight tetralogy), Frank Herbert (Dune) and Christopher Rowley (The War for Eternity). It is hardly surprising that Linebarger, rather than making it central in its own right, merely stipulated the concept as a given and used it as a tool to expand his universe.

Religion and myth, myth and sex, sex and religion were all grist for Smith's mill. Long before other writers dared explore such themes, Cordwainer Smith was writing in these primary human colors. In the memorable "The Dead Lady of Clown Town" (1964), for example---a story of shattering impact---the human protagonist has an apparently gratuitous sex act with a character who literally comes out of the wall for that purpose. Yet viewing the story in its entirety, the scene is organic and integral to the plot.

Linebarger's theme throughout his work, as he tells the reader with a directness which verges on subtlety, is the "rediscovery of man": the passion, horror, danger, and doubt which alone make the human experience meaningful. What price virtue, where there is no sin? The basis of his work, however, is woven behind themes and subthemes (some borrowed from his expertise in Chinese lore), vivid characterization, a sharp juxtaposition of styles, and even -- occasionally -- a despairing sense of humor.

Today's writers might well study Cordwainer Smith's apt talent for turning a phrase. Consider this opening hook from his first published SF story, "Scanners Live in Vain" (1950):

> "Martel was angry. He did not even adjust his blood away from anger."

Or in "The Crime and Glory of Commander Suzdal" ((1964), an inventively peculiar sex story which foreshadows such benchmarks as LeGuin's The Left Hand of Darkness):

> "Do not read this story; turn the page quickly. The story may upset you.... Don't let yourself realize that the story is the truth ... These are all just imaginary, they didn't happen, forget about it, go away and read something else."

Or on rare occasions when he felt like lecturing outside the classroom: "Bright brains serve madness as well as they serve sanity -- namely, very well indeed."

All of Cordwainer Smith's science fiction took place in his own peculiar and far future universe; and since he could seldom be

David Shea & Cordwainer Smith

troubled to explain it, the reader must plunge in unprepared. This makes the stories less accessible than they might have been, especially to the lazy reader; yet in the last analysis, Smith is writing about primal human aspects so that, like Shakespeare, he always has something to say to those who are willing to take the trouble to listen. In "The Lady Who Sailed The Soul" (1960), for example, the author tells us right out in front that it is a love story. And so it is: a sad, grotesque, and even morbid love story, but a love story nonetheless. "The Game of Rat and Dragon" is likewise a very basic story about emotion, distinguished mainly by the fact that it is entirely sublimated and takes place solely in the minds of the characters. In such stories as "The Ballad of Lost C'Mell" (1962), the memorable "Alpha Ralpha Boulevard" (1961), and especially "The Dead Lady of Clown Town" (1964), Linebarger and his beloved stand-ins, the Underpeople, peel back the surface of the soul and explore the definitions of "Human" and "person". All of these themes are woven into the the author's one major novel, Nostrilia (1960, 1975).*

The comparison to Shakespeare is not an inexact one; for Smith's universe of the instrumentality can be as frustrating at times as the Italian, Scandinavian and Celtic mythos out of which the Bard lifted his best backgrounds. Yet if the cultures of medieval Italy or Romalhaut III are distant to the reader of the late 20th century, still they are, in the last analysis, about us. Indeed they are us. It seems now unlikely that "Cordwainer Smith" will achieve the fame, even within SF, that he deserves; yet it is not too late to find Smith's work, and to spend some thoughtful time in his worlds.

Read him.

It's that simple.

Unless you already know everything, this might be a good place to look for some of the missing pieces.

* Nostrilia was first written in 1960, then split into two parts and published separately (with extra material so as to seem like individual novels) as The Planet Buyer (1964) and The Underpeople (1968). The first book publication as one novel occurred from Ballantine in 1975.

Survivalist Dystopias in Film

An article by Dale L. Skran Jr.

A Survivalist Dystopia portrays survivalism itself as a madness in society, a final excess of the nuclear age. The key factor defining this sub-genre is that it concerns people -- survivalists -- who actively prepare for disaster by building shelters, buying retreats, or stockpiling food and weapons. Hence, excellent postholocaust films such as Road Warrior don't fit the description since there is no evidence that the embattled refinery operators actually prepared in advance for the war even though the story strongly affirms survivalist values. Likewise, the strongly dystopian Defcon4 cannot be considered since its characters apparently made no advance preparations either -- they simply came to power after the war and created a nightmare society that might have grown out of fanatic survivalism, but instead grew out of old army units.

The prototype for Survivalist Dystopia [SD] films must be the Twilight Zone episode "The Shelter". Here a well-meaning survivalist finds himself and his family besieged by neighbors attempting to enter his well-stocked shelter. At the last possible moment, word comes that it was a false alarm, and the shamed neighbors decide to hold a block party for the bloodied and bruised shelter owner. The message is clear: this shelter nonsense will set us all at each other's throats. Still, this is not true survivalist dystopianism. The shelter owner is not portrayed as a nutcase or pocket Hitler acting out a childish fantasy of power; rather, a regular fellow trying to do what is best for his family.

A more strongly dystopian view emerges from Ladybug, Ladybug, a film concerning the evacuation of a school and the events that follow. Like Lord of the Flies, Ladybug attempts to illuminate adult behavior by showing its reflection in children. Unfortunately, this results in children saying very unchildlike things. Briefly, the alarm comes to a particular school, and there aren't enough buses. A teacher has to walk home a large group of children who live near the school. Long stretches of tedium assault the viewer as the director tries for a lyrical ambience but succeeds only in creating boredom. Finally, the last group of children are left off at the last house, where coincidentally a large fall-out shelter is loca-

ted and the parents are out shopping. A teenage girl leads the final group of children into the shelter and establishes a pocket tyranny. She forces the kids to eat the mushy rations provided and to sleep on a schedule. When a little girl tries to gain entrance to the shelter, the "shelter bitch" refuses to allow it. Her hidden motive is jealousy, as the oldest boy in the shelter likes the girl locked out, and eventually breaks out to find her. A chase through a junkyard ensues (this scene has *deep meaning*, of course), with the girl locking herself in a refrigerator and presumably suffocating, and the boy running wildly this way and that unable to find her. By this point, the audience is aware that the alarm was an accident, and the tragic events for naught.

Throughout Ladybug, we are treated to a heavy-handed anti-war message as the children speak adult lines. When they do act as children it is too contrived an effect, as when several boys play "atom bomb" in the shelter and talk glibly of killing millions, obviously without any comprehension of their prospective role among the casualties. The message of Ladybug can hardly be missed: all this fall-out shelter stuff is wrong, trying to survive brings out the worst in people, and in any case the food won't be very good. Further, our children will be left to fend for themselves in a nightmare world.

Although Ladybug qualifies as a survivalist dystopian film, the pure stuff is surely the '80s film Massive Retaliation. In most ways a more interesting and substantial film than The Day After, Massive Retaliation puts many of the moral dilemmas of the shelter into stark relief. The action begins as a group of survivalists call each other to get out of town based on the prospect of war in the Middle East. Their children have already left in a van. The six suburban survivors arrive at their stronghold only to find that their children haven't arrived. The stronghold mirrors the survivalists themselves -- seemingly prepared, but in reality a half-measure, full of blunders, and not remotely ready for the real thing. One mother attempts to steal a car and go looking for the children. While the chase develops, it is discovered that the mine fields cannot be turned off easily. When the smoke clears, both the mother and the drunken football player have been injured. The only reason they aren't dead is that the mines were duds. Later in the film we discover that the retreat's water source is an open pond!

The action shifts back a forth between the struggles of the kids to get to the retreat, complicated by the failure of the van's water pump, and the survivors falling apart at the retreat. We are introduced to a remarkable gallery of stereotypes: the doctor who has set himself up as a fascist god, the career woman who apes mannishness by taking survival seriously, the drunk-comedian husband whose "human" advice is valued for no discernable reason, the "regular housewife" who acts as the repository of "real human values" in the face of the virus of survivalism, the superficial mistress with a heart of gold, and the man who is so attached to his computers that he worries more about them than his kids.

The fascist doctor (who has never been in the armed forces) and the computer hacker (who is a Coast Guard reservist) go off into the night to investigate someone trying to sneak over the fence. The mines have been abandoned because a power failure destroyed the single floppy containing their mine control program. They shoot someone who turns out to be an old friend of the housewife's. We now have the classic debate: should they expend resources on an outsider? The doctor and the career woman say no; the mistress and the housewife say yeas. The doctor refuses to operate, so the housewife (who turns out to be a nurse) goes ahead and removes the bullet. The operation is remarkably successful, even, yes, fancifully successful.

Pretty soon the kids show up, but they have been overpowered by two hill-billy types who want all the survivalists fuel and say they'll shoot the kids unless they give in. The doctor goes berserk and starts hitting the oldest boy, his son, demanding to know why he brought back these "vermin". Eventually the survivalists come out of their retreat with guns and line up on a hill. The "bad guys" take one kid and move off, threatening to blow up the van if the kids try to leave it. At this point the boozie jock, who happens to be married to the tough career woman, comes hobbling out on crutches, yelling that the war is over. Apparently the Pope has excommunicated all combatants and mass desertions have forced both side to quit. Of course, the "bad guys" shoot him. At this point, the spine goes out of the computer hacker, and he walks forward with his hands up. The doctor shoots him. The kids come out and surround the computer hacker to protect him from both sides with their bodies. The music swells up. The women, even that bitchy career woman, are crying. We know that violence is not the way, and that it never solves anything.

The major problem with this scene is that the right and wrong of it vary so much. Under the conditions shown, the doctor IS right most of the time. Survival does take sacrifice, perhaps even our own children. The image that comes to mind is that of a mother suffocating her own child in a bunker in the Warsaw Ghetto so that the Nazis don't find the entire group (read: The Bravest Battle). Things go the other way only when we introduce the idea that the war was called off, and suddenly, people are awfully eager to surrender to a couple of guys who moments ago were threatening to incinerate their kids.

The message of Massive Retaliation goes beyond indicting survivalism to attack particular professions and attitudes. Who is the enemy? Doctors, computer hackers, and career women. Who are the real humans? Housewives, whores, and drunken jocks. Generally, the less competent, the less intellectual a character is, the better person they are portrayed as being. The competent

are uniformly out of touch with others. As in Ladybug, kids echo pat lines: "I think the war should never have existed because it's so horrible," says one little girl.

A major theme in SD films is the false alarm. Without this essential twist, the stories lose their political punch; the villains emerge in reality as the heros they only believe themselves to be in the films. All the tiring, degrading, tough things the character have gone through would then be necessary, and perhaps even too little, too late.

I find it interesting that in anti-nuclear war films that deal with survivalism the war never comes, but in anti-nuclear war films where the war does come, everyone is totally, even laughably, unprepared (e.g., Testament, The Day After). The really effective film would be one in which a group of seemingly well-prepared survivalists find the actuality of nuclear war to be beyond the bounds of their planning. Still, such a film lacks the emotional punch of people watching their children die while wringing their hands (Testament), or a pocket Hitler gone berserk (Massive Retaliation), and in propaganda, emotional punch is vital.

The Ratings

On the Leeper scale (-4 to +4):
"The Shelter": NR
Ladybug, Ladybug: +1
Massive Retaliation: +1

Some Thoughts on Female Characters

Musings by Fred Jakobcic

A sentence in Margaret Middleton's article "On Andre Norton" which appeared in LL #16 set off a train of thought as I walked home from work: "One of the hallmarks of Norton's books was the absence of conventional heroines." The remark led to thinking of a particular woman character in a British TV series called Dempsey and Makepeace.

Makepeace is a member of a special London police unit, and Dempsey is an exiled New York detective. The character of Makepeace is startlingly different from that of Angie Dickinson's role on Policewoman. If you have seen both shows, then you what I am trying to point out. Women's roles on TV and in the movies have come a long way from Policewoman to Dempsey and Makepeace.

Angie acts more like the helpless female and happens to be a cop. Makepeace is a cop who happened to be female. Makepeace is more physical (and nice to look at), holds her own against any man or woman, and get herself out of tough situations. The only similarity between these two series is that each female has a male partner. Angie was the star of the series, but not the equal as Makepeace is with Dempsey (if not more than equal at times). I mean this in the intellectual and physical sense, as in slugging it out with a male. Dempsey is not dumb, but his portrayal is more to physical action whereas his partner is a computer expert, calmer, tends to think things through and less likely to go flying off the handle.

If you have not seen either of the two series, then it will be difficult for you to see the differences between the two female detectives. Agie is up on the screen looking pretty, sexy, and little else more than a nice-looking cop. Makepeace is nice looking, sexy, but also a tough, physical, thinking, cop of action. Can you imagine Angie Dickinson physically fighting with a guy? She would draw her gun out of her purse, arrest him, and that would be it. She wouldn't throw a guy around with Judo, or Karate, or some other form of martial arts.

Women police do not have to be "Dirty Harry" type cop, but neither do they have to be a "Barney Fife" (of Mayberry fame). Cops should be portrayed as people, not cast in stereotypical male or female roles. Women should not be portrayed as cops who are the weaker sex.

A continuation of this point is brought up in Warren Norwood's trilogy, "The Double-Spiral War. In this series women are the equals of everybody--they are admirals, tough sargeants in the ground forces, leaders inferior to none, and treated as equals in every sense of the word. There is nothing wrong with a woman being a combat pilot and flying a dangerous mission. Are there so few women in the US, or in the world, today that we have to worry about too many of them being killed off in war? I think not.

What is the real problem here?

I think it's the male lust for women, and women, in close proximity among men in the armed services, would be unjustly accused of luring the man over the line of controlling himself and not controlling himself. Men are afraid that the female body is too much resist, and the man should not have to worry about self-control. It seems to be the chauvinistic attitude that a man is only human, and that he, being dominant, has the right to force the woman to satisfy his natural urge for sex.

This is wrong, and we are seeing it change in many TV shows and movies. What do you think?

Today's Magazine Scene

Toastmaster's Remarks by Uncle Andy

This is being called the age of -- among other things -- specialization. Nowhere is that more manifest than in the magazine business. First it was Today's Jogger, then Jogging Today, the Jogger's Digest closely followed by Left-Footed Joggers and Slow Jogging in Boots Monthly. Do you think all this hyperspecialization started with those weird far-out things that became the SF/Fantasy magazines? -- or was it maybe what are called Men's Magazines? Do you ever scan the list when you receive your pretentiously outsized 50 billion dollar sweepstakes from Publishers Clearing House or Publishers Central Bureau? Journals you never heard of -- and when you do, you wonder why!

True, it isn't seemly for me to sneer. We subscribe to MacWorld, a big handsome slick strictly for owners of Apple MacIntosh computers, and to another Mac-owner's magazine: MAC+, and InfoWorld, about the micro'puter industry in general, and to Prevention, a health-oriented digest. Not to mention Jon Sable, Freelance, Southern Living ... and Savage Sword of Conan.

Yes, those are real magazines.

So are these: Inside Kung Fu, Reincarnation Report (Report! Eyewitness accounts, d'you reckon?), Blue & Gray Magazine, subtitled "For Those Who Still Hear The Guns." Grood Gief! Aren't Soldier of Fortune, with real armaments ads, and New York Scene enough for those who like the sound of guns? How about two separate mags devoted to sweepstakes, not to mention Soap Opera Digest? Yep. All three exist.

There is also Make It W/Leather. (I think it's about making things, not people, and so not for us leather fetishists and/or b&d enthusiasts.) Soybean Digest really exists! D'you think the pun is deliberate or just an ooops? A digest is a compilation of cut-down articles from other sources; where in the name of Saint Soyburger do they find enough articles to keep 'em in business? Quick -- write one!

Another highly specialized one is Lefthander Magazine. Really. (Expect no smart-alec comment here; my daughter Scotty has taught me to make no wisecracks: "One more remark about left-handedness and you can pack up and head south, Paw.") Then there is Bicycling Today. Look, do you ride a bike? Here's a ready article market, right? Another is Over Fifty. Another genuine magazine is Gay World. I swear.

Can you foresee further specialization, as gayness becomes more and more "in" (God's Plan To Control The Overpopulation Problem) and we poor heteros feel more and more self-conscious and in need of psychiatric help? How about Gay Bicycling Today? Or Gay Lefthander Magazine? A merger or buyout would result naturally in Gay Lefthander Bicycling Today.

Also Over Fifty Soldier of Fortune, For Those Who Just Can't Stop Dreaming Of Being Mercenaries -- and of course for Secretaries of State.

Blue & Gray Magazine could merge nicely with Southern Living, don't you think? We could also merge Chicago Magazine with Inside Kung Fu to some benefit, surely.

I can think of lots of other specialties and teeny interest groups not covered---yet. Just from my own hobbies, for instance: What the heck would you call a journal devoted to people with several tape decks (we have seven, two of them with two decks) who tape from albums and records and other tapes and the radio and occasionally TV music and revise and edit and combine those tapes, as a hobby?

Modern Cassette Thievery, maybe...

...with another devoted to those people who compile tapes made from the marvelous "Music from the Hearts of Space" program on public radio stations. (Modern Space Heart Transplants?)

Continuing with my hobbies -- what about a journal devoted to drawing naughty picture onscreen with your MacIntosh? That's a pretty long title. Maybe call it MacNaughty, with an explanatory subtitle?

Look for Con Producers' Monthly, with articles by various people we know (ghost-written by the gofers).

A guvmint pamphlet might be better than a magazine for this one: Making tasteful decorative arrangements with your convention GoH/Toastmaster/MC (NEVER "Toaster"!) trophies. A magazine already exists, believe it or not, for Toastmasters. Two, counting the house organ for the Toastmasters International organization that helped me so much. No, I don't subscribe to either.

What about one for the people with two videocassette machines who rent several movies for the weekend and tape 'em? Again, we could have a problem with titling, here. Not so easily arrived at as Modern Mower's Guide to Crabgrass Cultivation or The Bull Dehorner's Journal! Or the very trendy Today's Abused Spouse. Still, real specialization would call for Wifebeater's Gazette and Husband Tormentor's Monthly.

You're not amused? Quick, telephone Farah Fawcett Minor in her black sackcloth dress!

That reminds me: Today's Bularemic should sell. With its sister publication Weight-watchers, maybe. (Yes, that one exists.) The Modern Heart Transplanter does not. How about Soybean Eater's Digest! Surely there are enough Jehovah's Witnesses around to make that one a go?

Mentioning the Watchtower purveyors leads to another handy journal: Doorknockers' Digest. Of course that might well lead to Bigknockers Annual, after which a guvmint agency would force publication of the companion journal, Smallknockers Semiannual.

If you like the alliteration of "Doorknockers Digest", you might want to subscribe to Dyslexic Digest, or Anorexia Annual, or Modern Mythmakers Magazine, for us SF/Fantasy writers -- and the members of the President's cabinet.

Any President's cabinet.

Today's Flyswatter!

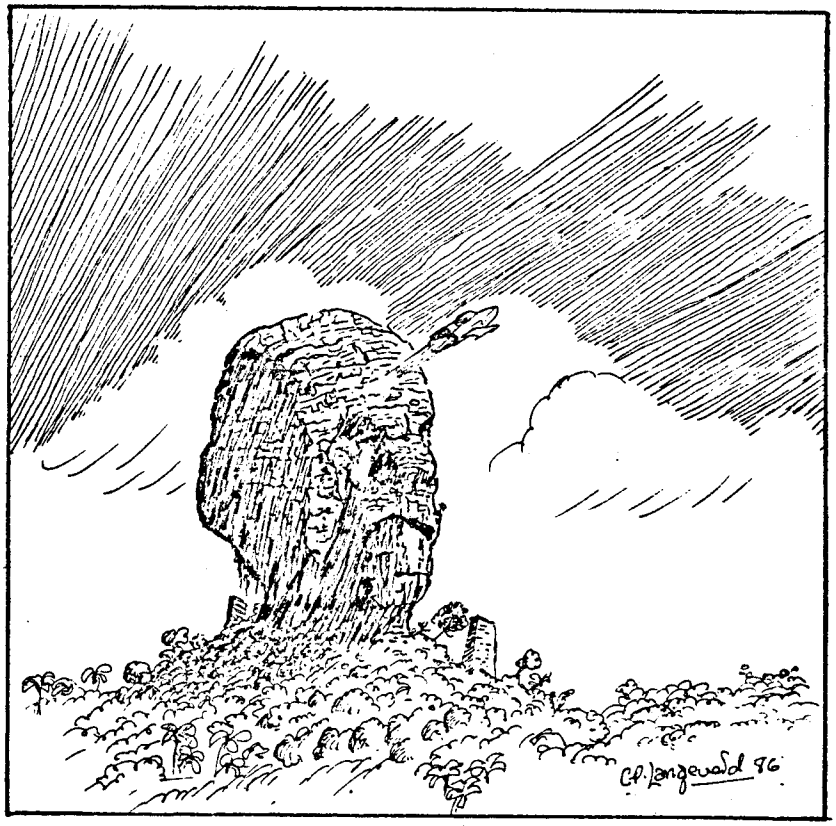
Combine that with Handyman, maybe -- also a real journal. Could the Society for Creative Anachronism support Making it with Chain ... subtitled "Armormakers' Bimonthly"? (That leads to Shiriken Shoppers' Guide, for us throwing star enthusiasts.)

Don't forget Gay Catholic Urban Living, Modern Petunia Grower, and Pickpocketing ... Today! A crying need obviously exists for a magazine devoted to former priests who marry former nuns.

Ah -- forget not Window Washing Digest! Mouthwashers Monthly! Wok-Owner's Guide to Turnip Preparation! Chileeater's Gazette!

Sorry. Obviously I'm getting carried away, or should be. Yet we haven't even dealt with a magazine devoted to reheating suggestions for the White Castle hamburgs you couldn't stand to finish last night because they're small and you bought 30.

-30- That's a good number. It means That's All/The End.



Recent Nuclear War Films

An overview by Dale L. Skran Jr.

For many years post-holocaust literature and films has been on of my genre interests. The last year or two has spawned a slew of new style nuclear war film that deserves special notice. For the first time filmmakers have been given the freedom more-or-less to graphically depict the sheer awfulness of nuclear war. Happy endings of the most stupid sort a la Panic in the Year Zero are no longer mandatory. Put on your lead suits as we embark on our journey into Hollywood hell!

The Day After

It seems appropriate to start with The Day After, the mainspring of the current crop of films. The director was highly aware of the serious nature of nuclear war, so he larded the first half of the three hour program with soap-opera nonsense. We are treated to sisters fighting over diaphragms and other suchlike excitement. The war itself (much belated), apparently begins with an accidental firing of a missile that results in massive Russian retaliation.

The next one and a half hours gives the impression of having been extracted from a much longer film that made more sense. Rumor

has it that the program was originally intended to run for two nights, but network execs feared no one would tune in the second night. Although a quantum leap forward in technical accuracy, The Day After contains major cause for complaint. On the plus side, we see widespread damage, massive EMP effects, and a more-or-less realistic portrayal of the effect of radiation sickness. On the minus side, human behavior varies between the inane and the implausible. At one point hundreds of badly injured people besiege a hospital, but no voilence erupts as the staff turns them away. Post-attack crime consists of some looting and the murder of a rancher by refugees. Most people wander about in a fog more characteristic of valium addicts than people about to die. Some, even a majority, I can believe, but at least a few oddballs would act as though they were awake.

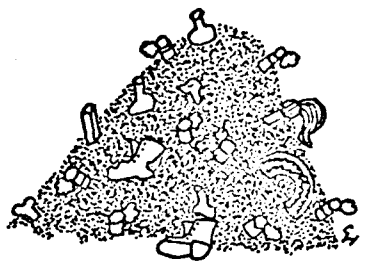
The Day After perpetuates the "American Basement" mythos of nuclear war survival -- all you need to do is go downstairs and stay in the root cellar for a couple of days and all will be A-OK. This rank nonsense ignores the required air filters, bottled water, and sanitary facilities. Most such troglodytes would be doomed in the absence of special preparations never described in the movie, such as sealing all cracks with tape. The Day After leaves the impression that most of the characters will survive for a while, albeit in a grim world. The nuclear winter is never mentioned. People have healthy horses, the presence of which is never explained. My favorite ludicrous scene occurs when the rancher's daughter comes up for a breath of air to discover the farm covered every few feet with dead horses, pigs, sheep, and so on. Where did they come from other than the director's need for a dramatic if implausible scene?

The Day After stands as just another over-hyped docu-drama, neither the commie propaganda claimed by some, nor the realistic warning of doom put forward by others.

Testament

Following soon after The Day After came Testament. This film was originally intended to be shown on PBS, but seemed strong enough that the producers decided on a general release. Testament wastes more acting talent than most films have. Focused tightly on a grim woman who "keeps a stiff upper lip" while her kids die slowly and in BBC-style graphic detail, Testament completely fails to deal realistically with nuclear war. The movie is obviously about some other disaster, a plague perhaps. It centers on a miraculously undamaged town in northern California. No refugees ever come to this town, and we never see anyone suffering from severe external physical injury. The single criminal act in the film consists of a fat bully stealing a bicycle.

Technical inaccuracy is only half of the problem with Testament. I consider it a moral atrocity. If the heroine were portrayed



as mentally retarded or otherwise incapable of making rational judgement, I would claim Testament to be a moving drama of human courage. Alas, she is not. She could learn about radiation and attempt to deal with the situation. She has a chance to leave with her neighbors. She stubbornly refuses to admit the probable death of her husband. If not for herself, she should struggle to protect her children, or lacking the means to do so, kill them painlessly. If the movie portrayed her trying to do all these things, and failing horribly out of ignorance or her human foibles, it could have been an excellent tragedy.

The only possible explanation lies in the need of the directors and actors to make a political statement against nuclear weapons. This statement might have been more effective if a) it was not so obviously manipulaative, b) the characters struggled to survive, however ineffectively, and c) the film was about nuclear war.

Threads

Threads, the BBC version of The Day After, as usual bests it utterly in every way. The only disappointment in Threads is its failure to deal more completely with nuclear winter. However, the relatively mild winter in the film is technically accurate given the scenario of a limited, European-only use of "tactical" nuclear weapons and the warming effects of the ocean on Great Britain. The title derives from the films efforts to follow about ten characters to their destinies. For once, the percentage of survivors is realistic -- less than one in ten. We see both the lucky (who starve in deep shelters) and the unlucky (caught in a fire storm). Threads holds back some, but on the whole is far more graphic than either Testament or The Day After.

Threads is more of a documentary than a drama, with frequent narration, maps, and so on. This results in a first-class docu-drama, but a less than great movie with incompletely developed characters. Overall, we are treated to one of the best, most accurate, and grimly horrible views of a possible nuclear war available on film, rivaled only by the BBC production The War Game.

Defcon4

After three heavy films, Defcon4 comes as a low budget relief. Defcon4 starts with three astronauts on a secret orbital weapons station. They view the final war via computer screens from their Eagle's nest, avoiding the use of the traditional US government stock footage. Although pretty good for a low budget film (they have the gravity in the correct direction), the plot is chock full of amazing coincidences.

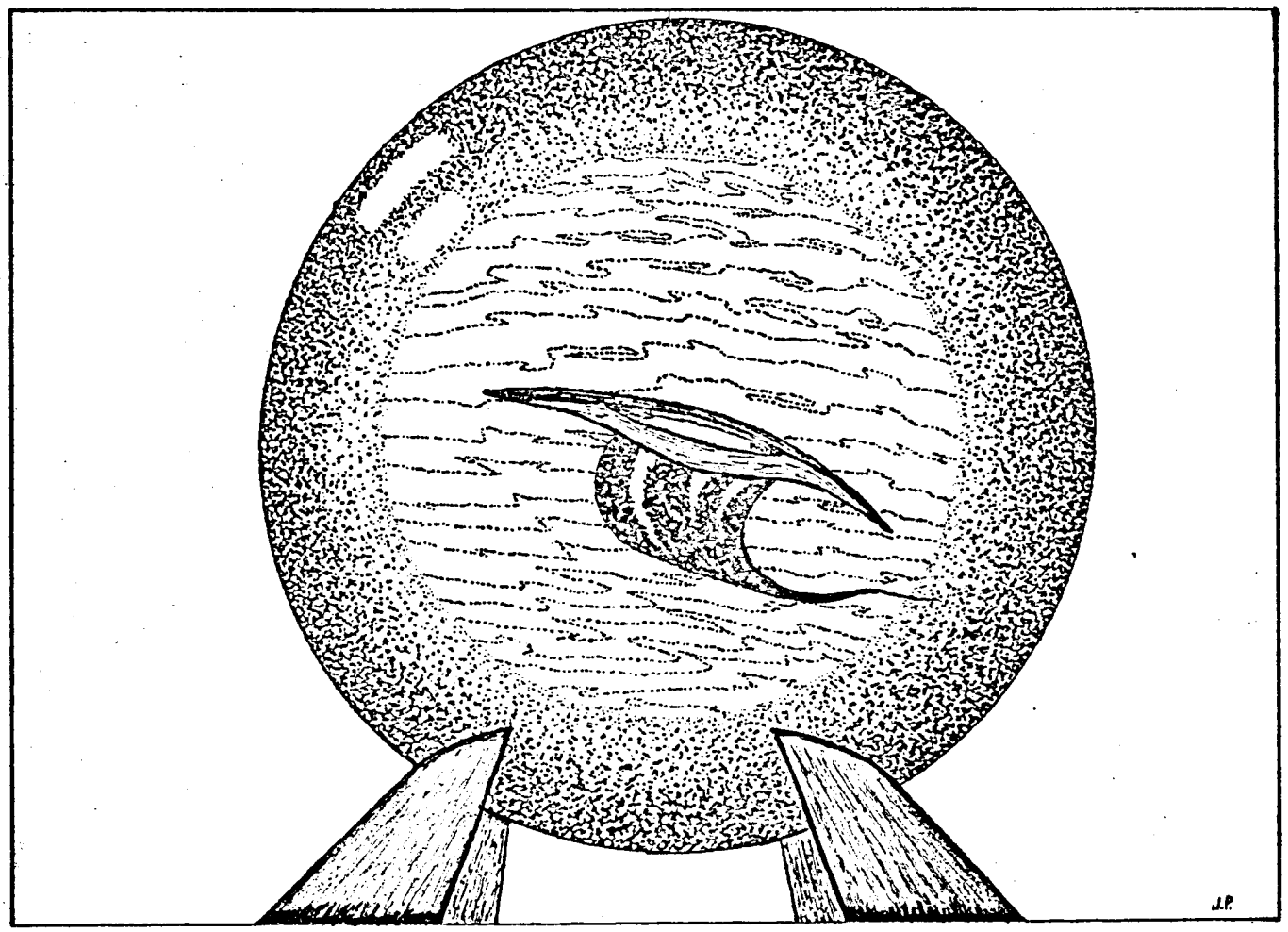
Once the action moves to the Oregon coast and fighting between various bands of survivalists and ex-army types, the action becomes more ho-hum. Defcon4 (the name is never explained) paints a fairly realistic portrait of a crazed, ruthless man dominating a small group by sheer force of personality. The technical background is more on a par with the budget. We are told by the handsome, youthful "leader" that his camp is surrounded by the Contaminated (who seem to be flesh-eating refugees from a zombie flick), and they must move to a "clear zone" within two months to avoid a similar fate. If you buy this....

There are a few witty scenes that come a bright surprises in an otherwise leaden and contrived script. Watch out for the door to the basement! In its odd notions of how radiation works, Defcon4 harkens back to 50s movies featuring mutants, but its violent and broken-down society puts it more in tune with the modern view of likely post-nuclear conditions. Some may find Defcon4 a confused Road Warrior imitation, but it stands by itself as an interesting, if low quality, post-nuclear war film with strong SF content.

The Ratings

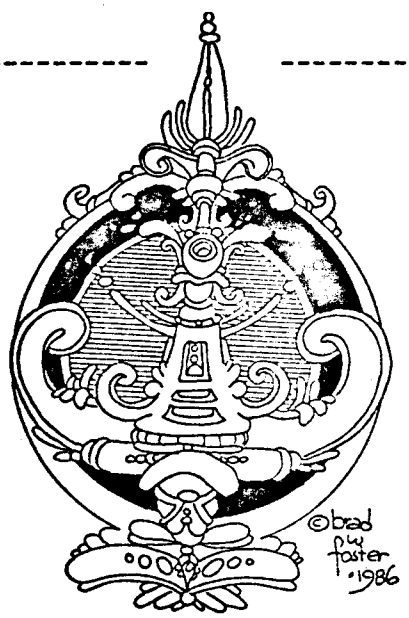
On the Leeper scale (-4 to +4):

Threads	+2
Testament	+1
The Day After	0
Defcon4	-1



Shran ends Nuclear War

CONVENTION ETIQUETTE A PRIMER



An article by Mark Bernstein

Nerd.
Geek.
Feeb.
Toad.

I think most fans have, at some time during their lives, been stuck with one or more of those. Or at least something similar in intent and connotation. They even get used within fandom, to describe those individuals still lacking in what fans consider proper social graces.

There is a different, though, between the Buse of such names in mundania and their use in Fandom. In the first place, people are rarely called "geek" or "nerd" to their faces. Instead of being used as direct insults, the terms are thrown about privately, in those gossipy "cat sessions" so many of us seem to be fond of. Second and more important, most fen realize, often through personal experience, that the degree of social ineptitude indicated by these labels can be outgrown, so the label is almost never assumed to be permanent.

In fact, I believe that one of the most useful and important aspects of fannish activity is that it provides "nerds" with exactly the right atmosphere to learn the social skills that will serve them well in both fandom and the mundane world. Nobody is automatically ostracized. Everyone is given repeated chances to learn from their mistakes. Advice, while never pushed, is usually available for the asking. On the other hand, there is no automatic acceptance, either. If you offend people, you probably will hear about it eventually.

Unfortunately, the learning process is getting harder. As fandom gets larger, it gets more complex, and the unwritten rules of behavior get more numerous and more complex. It therefore seems sensible to take some of the more basic unwritten rules (for they do exist -- fandom is a subculture, not an anarchy) and transcribe them, to form a base of commonsensical behavior on which those wishing to improve their social skills can build. I am <u>not</u> trying to set myself up as the Miss Manners of fandom. This is a first draft, to which additions and corrections are not only welcome, but urgently requested. I am also <u>not</u> saying that this should be shoved at every new arrival in fandom---only that having it available would be a good idea, for there are those who might benefit from some straightforward guidelines.

I think that's enough philosophy for now -- the rest of this article is my first cut. I've chosen to address only convention behavior here, as that's the only area with which I can claim extensive familiarity. Please, if you have any comments, questions, or complaints, write in and let me know.

Convention Etiqueette

Welcome to the convention. Depending on how long you've been involved in fandom and going to conventions, you may or may not have noticed that fandom, like any culture or subculture, has implicit in it a set of rules and attitudes as to what constitutes proper behavior. To help you settle in, here are some simple guidelines, based on the opinions and experiences of several long time fans. No hype here -- there is no such thing as a sure road to popularity and happiness. All I can offer is a chance to avoid some of the behavioral pitfalls that can give you a reputation as someone to be shunned.

Conversational Basics

The pros may be elusive, the banquet buffet may be empty, even the beer may run dry on occasion, but one thing never in short supply at a convention is conversation. Faced with so many people who are not only interested in talking, but can talk about the things that also interest you, it's easy to be a little overwhelmed. Just relax, take a deep breath, and remember a few basics.

Most of the time, if a conversation is intended to be private, it's held in a private place. If you hear people talking about something interesting at a party, in the con suite, or in a public area of the hotel, it may well be acceptable for you to slip in. (If you're not sure, go ahead and ask, "Is this a private conversation?". Then if the answer is "Yes", simply smile, say "OK, thanks", and walk away immediately. The ability to handle disappointment well is usually regarded highly.) The important thing is to slip in politely. One good way to start is to simply move a little closer and listen quietly for a while. Asking a question related to the topic at hand can also be useful. The tactic to avoud is to barge in with an opinion or witticism, especially when you've only heard a little of the conversation. Quite often you'll find that you've said something that somebody else already said, or that you didn't really understand what they were talking about. Needless to say, this does not impress people.

What do you do once you're already involved in conversation? Since so many of us have trouble finding people who "speak the language" in our mundane lives, there is a great temptation to grab the opportunity at hand and impress the assemblage with profound thoughts, immense wit, and conversational skills you never have the chance to demonstrate elsewhere. Resist this temptation at all costs! Like it or not, you are not unique in this regard, and failing to recognize that the other people in the group also have valid and interesting things to say can get you branded as selfish and egotistical. Fandom is overflowing with good talkers. Effective listenres are in much shorter supply and are thus valued more highly. Possibly the most important single social skill you can master in fandom is the fine art of Knowing When To Shut Up.

Sometimes a conversation will turn to subjects you're not familiar with. There are a couple of easy methods for dealing with this. The most obvious, if the new subject really is of no interest to you, is to walk away and find another conversation or an alternative amusement. Another you might try is to stick around, listen, and ask questions -- you may learn something interesting. The one thing you should definitely NOT do is object to, or otherwise try to change, the current subject. People taking part in a public conversation have every right to talk about whatever they please, even if they have been talking about computers for the last five hours. There is something you should remember in this regard. Often, a negative reaction to an unfamiliar subject is based in a fear of appearing foolish, of being embarrassed by your ignorance. There's really no reason to feel that way. Nobody is capable of knowing everything about everything, and there is NOTHING wrong with saying "I haven't read that book" or "I haven't seen that movie" or even "I don't know".

While we're on the subject of egos and insecurities, there are two conversational tactics, born of one or both, that are held in general contempt. The best description for the first is one-upmanship (no sexism intended). Some people have such a tremendous need for the spotlight that their instant response to an interesting story or opinion is to try to top it, thus dragging attention back to themselves. Try to avoid this -- it doesn't work. How do you expect others to respect you if you refuse to respect them? There's no fancy name for the second -- it's lying, pure and simple. If you make a habit of twisting or ignoring the truth, you will get caught at it, either because you'll meet up with someone who knows the real facts, or because two people you've told conflicting stories will compare notes. There are people currently active in fandom whose names have become synonyms for unreliability, as in "Well, I heard thus-and-such, but I heard it from _____ _____, and you know how reliable s/he is". Do you want to be one of them?

Dealing with Women

Guys, I hate to be the one to break this to you, but a con is a lousy place to get laid. Your dealings with fannish women will get a lot easier and more cordial if you can just remember that fact, lower your expectations a little, and not treat a con as a hunting expedition.

Fandom has something in common with Heinlein's The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress -- males far outnumber females, and certain social rules have grown up around that fact. Any attractive woman gets a lot of attention at a con, so it's more than a little silly and/or arrogant to expect her to suddenly start paying attention to a stranger, i.e. you. Difficult though it may be, the best possible thing you can do is put a lid on your hormones and treat people as people, no matter what gender they happen to be. Over the

long run, you may develop friendships with females which may eventually become something more.

These principles do have a few specific corollaries. Note them carefully and obey them strictly, for failure to do so could mean that no woman will ever want to have anything to do with you.

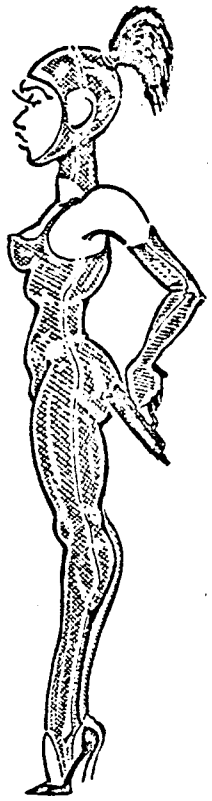
When you first get involved in conventions, one of the first things you'll notice is all the physical contact that goes on in public in the form of hugs and backrubs. There are two common reactions to this: to want to be a part of it, and to fantasize about what goes on in private. As to the first, the vast majority of hugs and backrubs occurs between people who've known each other for a while. The fantasies you can forget -- most of them just ain't so. The guiding rule is extremely simple. Never, NEVER, NEVER put your hands on a woman in any way unless you are more than reasonably certain that your touch will be accepted and appreciated. If you are not certain, either ask or refrain. No exceptions. I hate to come down so hard on this, but the sad truth is that this is the single most common way for a male new to fandom to get a bad reputation.

There may be situations where asking questions is appropriate. These can range from "Would you like your shoulders rubbed?" to "Would you like to stay with me tonight?" (Exercise extreme caution with the latter type.) If the answer is no, then over ninety-nine percent (over 99%) of the time that means NO. Fans are, as a rule, not inclined to play the social games so common to society in general. If someone says no, take it at face value. Don't try to change her mind, and don't come back and ask the same question an hour, or even a day, later.

Fans, being intellectually oriented, have an appreciation for style and wit. Try to be sure you know what these are before attempting to practice them. Crude remarks and clumsy double entendres will be treated with contempt.

Finally, if you are attracted to a specific woman at a con, and she doesn't seem to be returning your interest, DO NOT follow her around the con, hoping to attract her attention. It won't do any good, and will do both your reputation and your ego considerable harm. I know of no more demeaning designation for a male at a con than "puppy dog".

Costuming



Dressing up in a costume and taking on a persona for a weekend can be a lot of fun. It can also make you look pretty bad. This subject has been written about elsewhere, so I'd just like to point out a couple of items for your consideration.

Do you really have the right body for that outfit? If you don't have it, or have too much of it, trying to flaunt is will get you talked about, and not nicely. If you are not sure, ask someone you trust to tell you truthfully whether you look good.

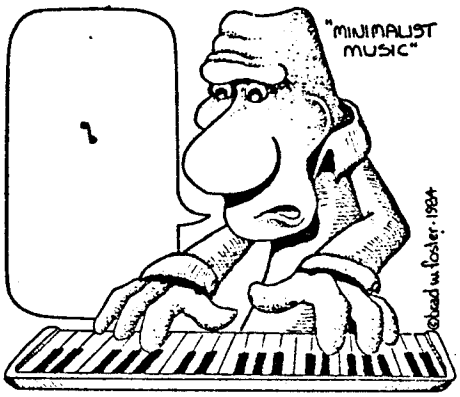
Be aware not only of what you're wearing, but of where you're wearing it. The hotel management has every right to get upset if someone in the lobby is violating the local indecent exposure laws. The hotel restaurant, and the other restaurants around town, not only have the right to refuse service to those with bare feet, they could get in trouble with the health authorities if they didn't. Conversely, fur-clad barbarians generally should avoid the jacuzzi -- the hair could clog the drains.

Dealing with someone who is "in character" can be fun -- in small doses. Remember that as a living, breathing (I hope) human being you are inherently more complex and interesting than any character you care to play. Don't be afraid to be yourself. It's far more rewarding to be accepted that way.

Filksings

Those of you who never attend filksings can skip this section. In fact, those of you who never attend Midwestern filksings can skip it, too. The Midwestern filksing is a peculiar and ever-changing creature, but there are a few basics of courtesy that remain constant.

Try to imagine that there is, wandering about the filk room, an invisible spotlight. This spotlight rests on whoever happens to be performing at that moment, then moves on to the next performer. The single rudest thing you can do at a filksing is step on someone else's spotlight. Whoever is singing, or introducing a song, deserves the complete attention of the audience. No matter how humorous your remark, or how relevant the story that just occurred to you, don't say it. The ONLY possible exception to this is when a humorous song gets the whole room involved, so that it is obvious that lines from the audience are welcome. If



you're not absolutely certain that it's obvious, don't. In the same vein, while many songs are intended as sing-alongs, many others, including the majority of serious songs, are not. If it seems like it's been too long since the last sing-along, go ahead and request one. Most performers will be glad to oblige, especially if you've shown respect for their performances.

If you come to the filk intending to perform, there are two opposite rules to remember. First, if you're exceedingly shy, you're going to have to force yourself to speak up. Nobody is going to point at you and say "Sing!", mostly because nobody knows for sure that you want to, and doesn't want to put you on the spot. Just do whatever you must to steady your nerves, strum your guitar if you have one, and say "Excuse me, can I do one?" You may be surprised at how quickly a rowdy room will quiet down. There's a great deal of affection and support for nervous newcomers.

If you're not the shy type, make an effort to remember that there are other, shyer singers, and that they deserve turns too. If there are ten singers, and you just did the song before last, wait a while longer, even if you do have the perfect follow-up to that last number.

Okay, the spotlight is on you. What now? There are policies you can follow that will improve the audience's opinion of you.

Remember that the primary purpose of a filksing is singing, or related types of performing. If you have a huge stock of humorous anecdotes, save them for conversations, or volunteer to organize a panel on humorous anecdotes. Similarly, a long, rambling, poorly organized introduction will lose the audience's attention before you even start the song.

As to the songs themselves, the audience is your best gauge. If a song bombs the first time you do it, it may be the particular crowd. If it bombs two or three times in a row, that's a pretty clear indication. Continuing to perform it will only make people think you're insensitive and/or dense.

A couple of general rules have been pretty well proven. An extremely long song must also be extremely good in order to be well-received. Songs that take twenty verses to tell a story that could have been told effectively in five should be avoided, especially when every verse is to the same monotonous four-line tune. Humor can be a touchy thing. Just because a song is funny to you, or even to the populace in general, does not mean it will work well at a sing. Again, the audience will let you know how successful it is, if you know how to listen to them.

One practice becoming more and more common is for someone to hear a song on a tape of a sing, like, learn it, and perform it at the next sing s/he goes to. There isn't anything inherently wrong with this, if you handle it well. Before you perform the song in public, find out who wrote and/or performed it on the tape you heard. It can be extremely embarrassing to discover that the composer/lyricist of the song you just finished is sitting next to you. If the person associated with the song is at the con, either don't do it or ask permission first. A fair proportion of the time you'll get that permission, along with gratitude that you asked. If that person is not at the con, giving credit where due when you perform is not only nice, it lets whoever listens to the tape of the sing where you performed it know the original source without digging.

Finally, be honest about your voice. Singing, like any other activity, takes practice. The best singers are the ones who do it most often, and who have had training. If you want to sound good at a sing, listen to tapes of yourself and practice, practice, practice -- both your voice and your instrument.

Miscellaneous

Here's a few final items that can enhance your enjoyment of the con and everyone else's enjoyment of you.

If you can't hold your beer or liquor, don't drink. Drunks are obnoxious and unwelcome. If you're a minor, don't ask the committee to break the law.

Remember to respect other people's property. If someone is holding something, such as a gadget or a weapon, that you'd like a closer look at, don't touch it unless you have asked for and received permission. Even if something is being publicly shared, like a bottle of whiskey at a sing, never assume that you're invited unless you know you are.

Respect the hotel's property too. Damaging or stealing hotel property can make it difficult or impossible for a con to return to that hotel, or even to find another hotel.

In case you didn't already know, con committees are made up of fans who contribute large chunks of their time, and sometimes chunks of their personal savings as well, with no return other than strokes to their egos and sometimes free memberships and banquet tickets. They're not evil, they're not dictators, and they usually have good reasons for their policies. If they require identification with checks, it's because there have been bad check artists in the past. If they ask you to check your bag entering the art show, it's because there have been thefts. It's not that they don't trust you specifically, it's just that rules like those can't have exceptions. If you have a legitimate grievance with the con or the hotel, they'll listen. If you have a question, they'll try to answer it. Don't just sit around and bitch -- most of the time it only reflects badly on you.

The pros who are guests at the con know that some people came to meet them, and will generally be cordial. Be polite, though. If they're busy talking to someone else, wait your turn. Once you have their attention, say what you have to say, get the autograph if you want one, and give someone else a chance. And, if the pro in question has a reputation for wit, don't try to prove yourself with a confrontation. Not only is it dumb, you'll lose.

* * * *

Most of what I've laid out here can be boiled down to a few simple principles. Relax. Don't push. Respect those around you. Show some common sense. Don't expect to be universally admired and accepted from the start. Remember that you have to open up a little and be friendly to everyone else if you expect them to be friendly to you. Given a little patience, a little thoughtfulness, and a little concern for the feelings of others, a con can be a rewarding experience. Enjoy.

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Fanzine Reviews

by Lan

For as long as I have been publishing LAN'S LANTERN, I have been receiving fanzines in trade for it. I never reviewed the zines I received, though I did loc some when I had the time. Now I think I should have a fanzine review column for two reasons: it will help other people to see what else is being published, and it will force me to read the zines I have been getting! So let's see what has been coming to the 55 Valley Way mailbox.

ANVIL: Charlotte Proctor, 8325 7th avenue South, Birmingham, Alabama 35206. Available for the usual or $6/yr. Underwritten by the Birmingham SF Club.

#40 -- Charlotte has just recently changed this zine from a clubzine to a genzine -- merely by taking out the club news. It's good, and certainly deserves consideration for the Hugo award for which it has been nominated. Between the Brad Foster front cover and the Steven Fox back cover there are a lot of nice articles from regular contributors like Buck Coulson, Charlotte herself, Krsto Mazuranic (reporting from Yugoslavia), critic Patrick J. Gibbs, and an occasional Feghoot by Cindy Riley. This issue is particularly fun to read, especially Charlotte's account of learning that ANVIL garnered a Hugo nomination. There are lots of letters too. The graphics are improving, although the mimeo printing is somewhat fuzzy in spots.

THE BEWILDERBEAST: Dennis K. Fischer, 366 N. Spaulding Ave. #12, Los Angeles CA 90036. $2.35/copy, but this issue, #10, is his last one.

#10 -- Earlier issues of THE BEWILDERBEAST were my first real contact with media-zines, and I was duly impressed by the depth and breadth of Fischer's reporting. His interests and activities are legion, and at this time has to drop something, so the fanzine goes. A pity, since he does a good job with it. This last issue contains some nice interviews/articles on Jonathan Pryce (Brazil & others), Samuel Fuller (writer, producer & director), Edward D Wood Jr (Glen or Glenda, Plan Nine from Outer Space & al.), and Larry Cohen (It's Alive et al.); Dennis also includes a transcription of a panel discussion on B-movie actors, fanzine and book reviews, and a lettercol.

CRI de LOON: T. Kevin Atherton, 3021 N. Southport, Chicago, IL 60657. Bimonthly. Available for ??? I think if you express interest and send a SASE you might get a copy.

#6 & #7 -- Crazy and off-the-wall writing, always interesting and humorous. This is one zine that I can count on to brighten my day when it arrives. Good stuff and highly recommended.

DUPRASS: Edited by Leslie Smith (6092 Drexel Rd., Philadelphia, PA 19131) and Linda E. Bushyager (24 Leopard Road, Paoli, PA 19301. Available for the usual, trade (one each to the editors), or $1 each.

#1 -- Linda, who formerly edited GRANFALLOON and KARASS, still has her former skills

as a mimeographer. The thirty twilltone pages are nicely printed and arranged with articles (new and reprinted) and artwork. The reading is fun, and I look forward to the next issue. Nice to have Linda back pubbing again.

FANZINE FANATIQUE: Keith & Rosemary Walker, 6 Vine St., Greaves, Lancaster, Lancashire, LA1 4UF United Kingdom. (Available for the usual, 25p + postage, 3/L1, or 3/$2 (sea mail).

#63 -- Keith and Rosemary put together a reviewzine of the fanzines they receive. This copy and the next are merely a listing of those received in 1985 with no reviews. Good listing, recommended if you want to see what's being pubbed.

FILE:770: Mike Glyer, 5828 Woodman Ave. #2, Van Nuys, CA 91401 USA. 5 issues for $4; air-overseas, $1.25/copy.

#59 -- The bulk of this newszine is taken up with Mike's AUSSIECON II report. He goes into the problems the convention had, the treatment of their Pro GoH Gene Wolfe, and the Hogu and Hugo winners. Other items include the trouble at the Nebula Awards banquet, the TAFF and DUFF Winners, and news about the coming Worldcon bids and the '87 NASFiC being run for profit. Highly recommended.

FOSFAX: FOSFA, PO Box 37281, Louisville, KY 40233 USA. 12 monthly issues/year is $6.

#104,105 & 106--The zine is produced by committee and comes out monthly. Lots of reviews of both books and films, and some short essays of various things. Silliness is also included. Lawrence Watt-Evans is a regular contributor. The layout is rather bland, and few illos are used, but I found some useful information here. Recommended.

HOLIER THAN THOU: Marty Cantor, editor, 11565 Archwood Street, No. Hollywood, CA 91606-1703 USA. Selected trades, contributions, locs accepted, or US$5/copy.

#24 -- Marty has just changed some of his policies about how a person can remain on his mailing list, and changed his format somewhat. There is some discussion on this first topic. Other articles include anecdotes about jobs from Marty and fans Hank Heath and Steve Green, reminiscences about Linda Blanchard's youth, Harry Warner's "All My Yesterdays", and various humorous pieces by Darrel Schweitzer, Joni Stopa, Skel, Milt Stevens and others. There is a lengthy lettercolumn arranged by topic, and nicely reproed artwork. (And Mike Glyer does a long critique of LAN'S LANTERN #18.) Recommended.

THE MENTOR: Ron L. Clarke, 6 Bellevue Road, Faulconbridge, NSW 2776, AUSTRALIA. Bimonthly, for the usual, or $2 per single issue. Needs filler art.

#57 & #58 (January & March): Good writing, some short fiction, lots of reviews and a good lettercolumn. One of the few genzines coming out of Australia, and well worth it. I loc it too infrequently and it deserves a lot better. There are regular columns by Boris Zavgorodny and Igor Toloconnicou who report from the Soviet Union. The cover art is always outstanding. Highly Recommended.

NEOLOGY: Edited by Kathleen Moore. ESFACAS, Box 4071, Edmonton, Alberta, CANADA T6E 4S8. Bimonthly. Avaiable for the usual, $1/issue, $10/year (to help with postage I assume). Mimeo.

Vol. 11, #2 & #3 -- Filled with art, interesting articles on SF, fantasy and comics; convention listings, book & fanzine reviews, some gaming news and a lettercol. As a clubzine it is well done and has a little something for everyone. The printing is fuzzy sometimes, but generally legible.

NOVOID: Colin Hinz, 1118 College Drive, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, CANADA, S7N 0W2. Available for the usual, $1/copy, $5/6 issues (which might be a year, since Colin is shooting for a bimonthly schedule).

#2 & #3 -- Good artwork in both issues, but better repro in #2 than #3 (#2 looks offset, #3 mimeo). Many interesting musings by Colin, some book, comic & movie reviews, and each has a Conreport. Highlights in #3 are: "Contextualize" by Somtow Sucharitkal and "Erich Dogstoevski's Deserved Place in Modern Literature" by Dave D'Ammassa.

SIKANDER: Irwin Hirsh, 2/416 Dandenong Rd, Caulfield No., Victoria 3161 AUSTRALIA. Available for the usual, or $2 (of which $1 goes to GUFF).

#11 & #12 -- Nice, pleasant and interesting reading. Irwin's meanderings is one of the high points of the zine. Mark Loney's article about the death of his father and two friends in #11 is very touching. In #12 John Foyster writes chapter 4 of his 1979 GUFF report, "Fanzinatin' Rhythm", appearing here because this particular section deals with fanzines. And Jack Herman does a lengthy review of fanzines as well.

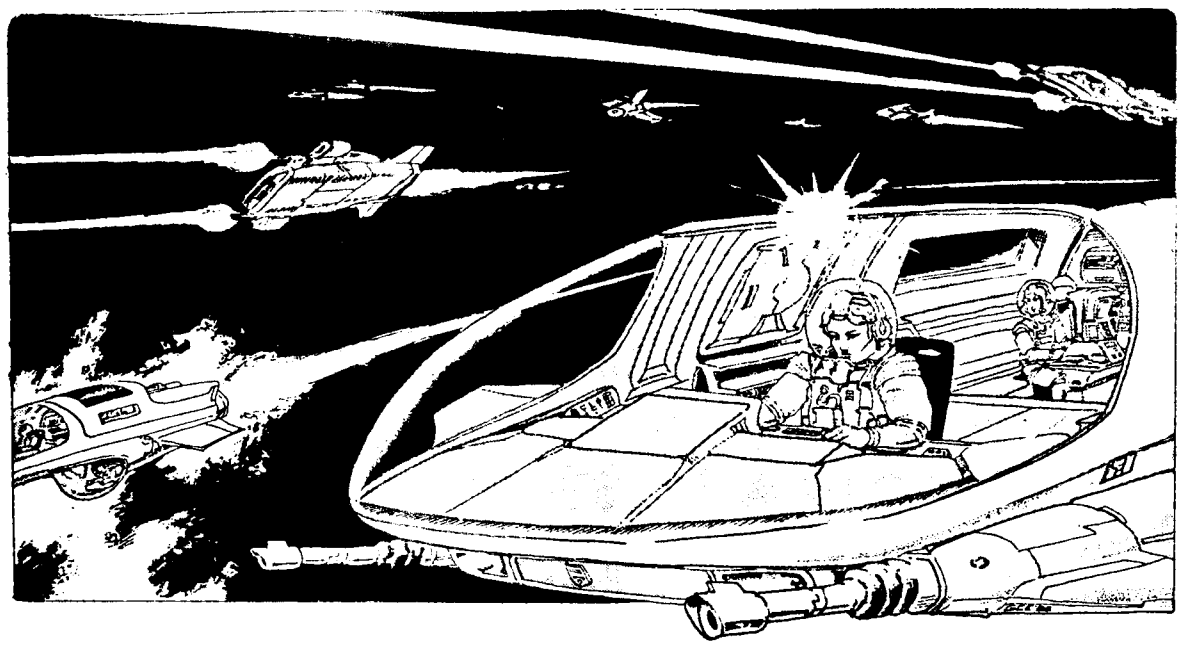
TRAPDOOR: Robert Lichtman, PO Box 30, Glen Ellen, CA 95442. The usual, or "as a final resort, and only once, $2.50 cash".

#5: I found this buried in a pile of fanzines I had meant to loc earlier this year, but never got around to. It's filled with interesting articles and a lively letter column. Robert wants participation rather than money. Get started with it, and contribute. Highly recommended.

XENIUM: Mike Glicksohn, 508 Windermere Avenue, Toronto Ontario M6S 3L6 CANADA. By whim alone (and maybe a bottle of single malt) can you get this zine.

#14: The bulk and high point of this personalzine is Mike's trip to Great Britain last year. He has a marvelous way with words and a great command of the English language (for a math teacher)...he can even spell well and type correctly (unlike another math teacher I know). Highly recommended, if you can persuade him to release a copy.

PULP AND CELLULOID



Book Reviews

Film Reviews

BLOOD MUSIC

by Greg Bear
Ace Books, [1985] 1986, $2.95

A book review by Laura Todd

You don't see too many SF novels that are actually about science. And the ones you do see often read like a thinly disguised term paper, with a cops-and-robbers plot tacked on. But not this one. Blood Music is a unique book, one that has it all.

To be sure, it starts out conventionally enough -- with and archtypal mad scientist. Now we all know that the DNA molecule is capable of storing vast amounts of information. It would make a great little microscopic computer, and that is what the company called Genetron would like to develop. But one of the company's researchers, Vergil Ulam, has gone farther, and done some forbidden experiments. He has created a form of DNA that will not only code any data, but can exchange and manipulate it with logic and purpose. In a word, it is intelligent. Then he has inserted these smart genes into a culture of human lymphocytes. When the company discovers his work and orders it destroyed, he tries to save his creations---by injecting the culture into himself.

This is a pretty mind-boggling idea. Picture intelligent cells, capable of altering their environment and shaping living material any way they wish. What would their purposes--their thoughts--be like? They could endow their host with longevity and perfect health, but that's just the beginning. They could adapt themselves to become immune to any antibiotic or poison. Maybe they could eventually change the face of the Earth, just as their giant human counterparts have done.

And so it proves. Vergil's chronic health problems disappear, and the formerly shy, unattractive nerd is able to make love seven times a night. Then he begins acting strangely, hallucinating and holding "conversations" with the micro-intelligences within him. He calls them "noocytes" (mind-cells) and regards them as his children.

Inevitably, the noocytes get loose and infect others, and begin their own experiments with the bodies of their hosts. Within a few days America is in the grip of "the worst plague in history". The continent is quarantined. There is world-wide hysteria.

Then follow some of the scariest scenes I've ever read. Susan, one of the few Americans who remain mysteriously untouched, watches as the bodies of her family (and everyone else) are slowly dissolved. Human tissue is reassembled into gigantic, bizarre living structures that engulf whole cities. As the noocytes multiply, they construct their own "cities" and civilization, and America becomes covered with an alien biolandscape like something from another planet. It's a lot creepier than your usual ghosts-and-ghoulies horror novel.

But this is a lot more than just a horror book. The story continues through the eyes of a doctor who had already been infected, who has escaped to Europe and offered himself as a research subject to those seeking a cure. While living in his hermetically sealed cubicle, he begins to communicate with the noocytes within himself. Eventually he shares consciousness with them and experiences their microscopic universe -- a world of undreamt-of chemical sensations and flavors. He learns of the micro-beings' childlike curiosity and hunger for knowledge, and their reverence for the gigantic "macro-life" in which they reside. They regard him as their creator, their god, their universe. These are wonderfully evocative and vivid passages, every bit as strange as any "alien contact" story.

Finally the awesome potential of the new life-form becomes apparent. The noocyte network, a larger concentration of intelligences than any that has ever existed before, now seems capable of altering the nature of reality itself. Out of their near-infinite capacity for data storage, the noocytes have preserved the personalities of those they absorbed. These individuals, it seemed, never really died, but entered a whole new state of being within the network of micro-intelligence. This network can manipulate matter, retrieve all human knowledge, bring to life alternate realities that never were. What seemed horrifying now seems wonderful -- a quantum leap in evolution that unlocks awesome possibilities for the future.

Or does it? Suppose this empire of micro-beings is really a tyranny that will ingest humanity, blotting out all individuality and freedom? We are left to wonder.

As in many idea-oriented novels, characterization is sketchy. But this time I barely noticed, the concepts and its presentations were so stunning. This is a book that will blow the most jaded reader's mind. It kept me awake at night, and what really struck me was a comment made by Vergil Ulam as he attempts to deny responsibility for what he has done. "They made me do it," he cries, "the goddamn genes! So they won't have to rely on us any more. The ultimate selfish gene...."

That's right. When you study the way our genetic heritage affects our behavior, it sometimes seems as if genes are pretty nearly intelligent already. Maybe they've been manipulating humanity all along, and are too smart to let us know it. Perhaps this book isn't so farfetched after all....

LETTERS TO SHERLOCK HOLMES

Edited by Richard Lancelyn Green
Penguin, 1985, $6.95

A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper

If one travels to London and goes to 221B Baker Street, one discovers that it is occupied by the Abbey National Building Society.

But if you send a letter to Sherlock Holmes at that address, you will get a reply from "Holmes's secretary." This gentle deception has been going on since 1950 when the Sherlock Holmes exhibition in that building greatly increased his mail. (Even before then, letters were sent to him, but no one person answered them, some going to Doyle, some to Dr. Joseph Bell -- Doyle's basis for Holmes -- some to Scotland Yard, etc.)

The book is certainly a tribute to Doyle, though he might not see it that way -- one correspondent from Canada asks if Doyle ever wrote any other stories besides his Sherlockian ones. This is reminiscent of the "Star Trek" fan who wrote James Blish to ask if he had ever written anything besides the "Star Trek" books he adapted from the show.

Although at times amusing, all too often the book seems to be laughing at people, rather than with them. Many of the letters are obviously written by children and ask for autographs, pictures, and other souvenirs. Some are by adults who are aware of the deception be practiced and go along with it for a lark. Others--those asking for Holmes' help in real cases -- are often the saddest. A child asking Holmes to find his lost cat or a girl asking Holmes to find her missing sister are obviously setting themselves up for yet more disappointment. Perhaps a student of psychology could learn something about why people confuse fantasy with reality. In general, though, I cannot recommend this book.

HIGHWAY OF ETERNITY

by Clifford D. Simak
DelRey Hardcover, 1986, $14,95

A book review by Lan

I eagerly await each new Simak work. His stories have a warm feeling to them, and his characters are usually interesting and intellectually thoughtful. The plots are invariably thought-provoking, and I can count on him to let me leave the book with a good feeling.

At 82 years old, Simak is still creatively producing SF. In the last few novels he has been exploring what the next "survival trait" might be. First survival was based on size and strength (dinosaurs), then intelligence (humans), but what's next? Simak's latest novel, Highway of Eternity, tries to answer that. He comes up with a tentative solution, but I don't think he himself is convinced of it.

The story: Jay Corcoran, who runs an informational service business, has a trick vision which enables him to see things others can't. While investigating a client's hotel suite (because the building it is in has been condemned and is to be demolished), he "sees" a huge box affixed to the outside of the apartment, and calls in a reporter friend, Tom Boone, who has the ability to "step around a corner", i.e., to remove himself from danger by disappearing into another dimension and returning when the danger passes. While the two of them search the apartment, the building is destroyed, and Boone escapes to the box taking Corcoran with him. The box turns out to be a time traveling machine, and they wind up helping a group of people from the future. These people fled into the past to escape the Infinites, a race who offered to turn humans into discorporate beings, thus making them immortal. The Hopkins Acre Family was one group who refused to give up their bodies.

The group from the future has only one really developed character, Timothy, who has been searching history to find out what led the human race to be receptive to this idea of discorporate existence. The others are pretty flat, except maybe Henry. He accepted the process of discorporation, but changed his mind part of the way through the process. He wanders as a ghost through time and space, and tries to help the Family of Hopkins Acres. As the story moves along, more characters are added, many of them aliens. In the wanderings of the Family, Boone and Corcoran, they stumble across the Highway of Eternity (which runs from one end of the universe to the other) in another dimension, which turns out to be the one that Boone "steps into".

The novel is a mixed bag of the the elements I expect in a Simak book. There are robots, aliens, and dogs (wolves, actually), and assorted human and alien characters. The story is only mildly interesting (but gets more intriguing towards the end), and many of the characters turn out to be two-dimensional. In addition to Timothy, the main characters, Jay Corcoran and Tom Boone, are the only fully developed ones. There are others who are paritally developed, but the majority are background actors established to carry the story along. I have found one personal annoyance that has crept into Clifford's writing in the last few books in his handling of conversation. People "yell", "scream", and get angry with little cause or

buildup. This is most likely tied into the lack of character development of those who behave this way.

The novel is slow in spots, and I left it several times, but always came back. The story, however is nicely tied together at the end, with a few strings left dangling for the reader to think over. The last few chapters are well worth pushing through the rest of the book. Cliff manages a few surprises there.

Do I recommend the book? Yes. In spite of the slow spots, the story does move along and gets more interesting as the reader progresses. Simak is good at introspection, and when the characters talk to themselves and sepculate about the events that have taken place, he is at his best.

PHAID THE GAMBLER

"Being Part One of The Song of Phaid the Gambler"
by Mick Farren
Ace, 1986, $3.50

A book review by Maia Cowan

PHAID THE GAMBLER starts promisingly, with a vivid description of Phaid, his surroundings, and the dilemma in which he finds himself.

The promise is to use vivid description at least thrice per page to pad out a mediocre one-volume story into two volumes.

Phaid makes an unlikely hero. When we meet him he is a drifter on a run of bad luck, trying to get from an isolated village back to civilization. He manages this mostly by letting a string of emergencies panic him into following the first advice offered. At no time does he make his own decisions, consider the wisdom of what he is about to do, or do anything that he wasn't pushed into. He gets involved in numerous desperate enterprises and gets out of them more or less intact. He has no effect on any of them, and manages no improvement in his life.

The plot, combining a revolution against a mad dictator with a fellow traveler's mysterious threat to Phaid's life, keeps accumulating details without really going anywhere. The story ends in mid-stride with a warning to watch for the second volume, "Citizen Phaid." I saw no reason to believe that the second volume will make more sense, or have more meaning, than this one.

I might have enjoyed the book anyway if I hadn't constantly been distracted by passages such as, "He might call himself a gambler, but he really only played the odds and hustled for a living, the wind players were the real gamblers." And "To be broke and hanging around in a place like Freeport was as equally imprudent as trying to get away with some of the inhabitants' money." And "The three roustabouts were ugly characters. Between them they had two broken noses and at least half a dozen facial scars." And "Still more, who from their matted pelts and deathly pallor seemed to stay permanently in the darkness of the underground maze, either sat and stared, contemplating some dull nonhuman nirvana or scavenged, for what, Phaid didn't care to think about." My ninth-grade composition teacher wouldn't tolerate such bad grammar. How did it get past the book's editor?

UNEARTHLY NEIGHBORS

Volume #8
"Classics of Modern Science Fiction"

by Chad Oliver
Crown SF Classics, [1960] 1984, $8.95

A book review by Robert Whitaker Sirignano

Sometimes I ask myself when I finish a book, "What was all that about?" Sometimes I know what the wroter was attempting to do; I am aware of my reaction as a reader whether or not the writer succeeded in his goals. This is done by the presentation and the sincerity of the work. Then there are the books which cause me to say, "Why on Earth am I reading this?", a sort of feeling that crawls over you when you are reading something that makes you wish you weren't reading it...like some of Ron Goulart's exercises in novels. There's another category: "Why was this published at all?" This covers things written by Zach Hughes, or William Hope Hodgson's The Night Land. The latter falls into the "Why on Earth has this been reprinted?" category, into which Chad Oliver's Unearthly Neighbors also goes.

Though the novel has been slightly revised for its current republication, it still isn't a good book. It never was a good book in the first place. It will never be a good book, and calling it a "forgotten masterpiece" is ducking the issue: it wasn't forgotten so much as ignored. This happens to a lot of good books by good, bad, and indifferent writers. Chad Oliver has been all three.*

The novel appeared in 1960. It had an interesting Powers cover on it (not a good cover, mind you, just interesting). There were a few reviews. No one raved about it; it gained no reputation for having any merit whatsoever. Now in SF fandom, a novel that has some core of quality gains a word-of-mouth reputation. H. P. Lovecraft, E. E. Smith, David Lindsay, H. Beam Piper, Evangeline Walton, James Branch Cabell, Hannes Bok, Ernest Bramah, and so on, maintained a

*That Chad Oliver can be unreadable should surprise anyone aware of his early work as a writer, where he showed some common sense and sensitivity in his fiction. That he could write something as bad as Giants in the Dust, his most recent original publication, shows how out of touch he is with writing over production.

folklorish type survival in fandom. They were fictional reference points. I've never encountered anyone who had anything to say about Oliver's Unearthly Neighbors.

Oliver's reputation in the SF field rests on the short stories he wrote in the 50s. He has, however, never gained any sort of stature with them beyond being a minor figure in the field.

While Unearthly Neighbors does contain a good idea, it is presented awkwardly and without conviction: is a society a society without any tools at all? Oliver's aliens, the Merdosi, communicate through dreams in a collective conscious/unconscious state while they sleep. While the idea has a special attraction for me, it isn't presented very well. Part of this problem in the presentation of the book is that Oliver's people are all blank faced and carry no emotional weight. None of them stands out, none of them are given any real character, none of them can survive a closing of the book and saying, "What was Monte like?" Monte, the lead figure of the book, has his wife killed by the Merdosi. What grief is felt by the character is not communicated to the reader, only the image that you should feel grief for Monte and that Monte should feel grief. Besides, with so little known about the woman and the relationship, why should you care at all?

The book doesn't go anywhere. Its central idea is wasted. While Monte is supposed to be observing the aliens, he moans about the loss of his wife, and the conflicts with the natives and the situation at hand. He's very boring. This book isn't a classic. It's a piece of crap.

KAMIKAZE '89

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

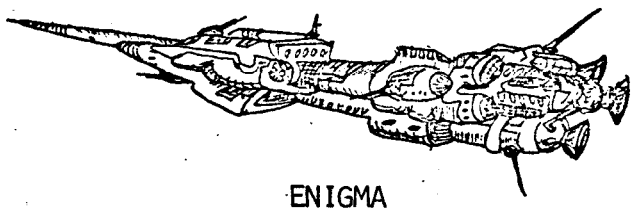
CAPSULE REVIEW: German import film gives a confused look at the year 1989 with a hard-to-follow story. Some interesting images.

An unlikely formula that seems to be the basis of a number of science fiction films since Alphaville is the futuristic detective story. The story is part mystery, part travelogue visit to a future society. In addition to Alphaville, we have Last days of Man on Earth, Runaway, Bladerunner, and the 1982 German Kamikaze '89.

It is 1989. All is in order. Pollution and dangerous drugs are just bad memories. Poverty and starvation have been eradicated. Germany is the richest and most powerful country in the world and Germany is virtually ruled by "The Concern." "The Concern" is a megalithic conglomerate that (among other things) runs Germany's media. 98% of Germany tunes in to see entertaining programs like laughing contests and to read comic strips in which the Blue Panther fights the evil organization Krysmopompas. Krysmopompas may or may not be a real organization but the few discontents of society have taken its name to be their battle cry.

Somebody, perhaps Krysmopompas, has made a bomb threat on the Concern's offices and Police Chief Inspector Jansen (played by art film director Rainer Werner Fassbinder) is called in to investigate. Jansen is a consummate slob in his leopard-spotted leisure suits. Even his car and the handle of his gun are decorated in leopardskin. Jansen's adventures in the pop-art near-future world are more confusing than enlightening. And any understanding of the plot that the viewer gleans are hard-won victories over a film style intended to obscure rather than to enlighten. Still, every once in a while director Wolf Gremm gives the viewer a tantalizing look at a sort of pop-art future with millions anesthetized by the totally banal media that the Concern serves up. And we see Jansen's frustration with the banal society and his retreat into images of adventure and the untamed.

Kamikaze '89 is hardly the most entertaining film available in video stores. It is a hard film to watch and nearly impossible to follow. But stick with it. There is more to this than meets the eye. I would give it a 0 on the -4 to +4 scale. Maybe if the story were better told it would have been rated higher.



ENIGMA

by Michael P. Kube-McDowell
Berkley, 1986, $3.50

A book review by Lan

Although this novel is a sequel to Emprise, and the second in the Trigon Disunity Trilogy, Enigma exists separately and can be read and enjoyed without reading the first one.

The story revolves around Merrit Thackery who, upon having what could be considered a religious experience when see Jupiter up close from a spacecraft swinging around it, decides to leave his studies in Government Services and applies for the Unified Space Service. The reader follows Merritt's career through the service, his leadership of a Contact team (which makes the initial communication with First Colonies), and commander of mission designed to search for the race that may have come before Humans. The book is a careful study of Merrit, his roles and relationships with other people, and his discovery which has cosmic repercussions for Earth and her Colonial Expansion program.

As the protagonist, Thackery is superbly drawn with all the faults and virtues that make him human, and the drive that makes him a hero. The supporting characters are also

well-rounded, and easily kept separate via well-defined personalities. I found the story fast-paced and rearranged my busy schedule to allow extra time to read the book.

The novel is complete in itself, but does give an indication where the third part of the trilogy, Empry, will concentrate. While I eagerly look forward to Mike's next book, I consider this his best to date. Emprise, his first novel, I considered among my Hugo nominations last year, but Enigma is better. It now heads my list for the next Hugo selections for Best Novel. Very highly recommended.

THE WAVE AND THE FLAME

Volume One of Lear's Daughters

by Bradley Kellog and William Rossow
NAL/Signet, 1986, $3.50

A book review by David M. Shea

A landing craft from the Terran exploratory vessel Hawking has come down on the planet Fiix. The so-called "planetologist" Emil Clausen is basically a prospector for the coporate sponsors of the mission, looking for geological assets to strip-mine and exploit. Some of the other members of the team, however -- notably the biologist/medic Suzannah James, the anthropologist Megan Levy, and the linguist Stavros Ibia -- are more interested in the native humanoid race. The Sawl dwell in giant caverns carved in the cliffs over generations, practicing their skilled "primiticve" crafts and their curious dualistic weather-religion. Some of the Terrans soon begin to suspect there is a great deal more to the Sawl than the simple front of hand-loomed cloth, dung-burning fires and oil lamps they present to the casual eye. However, when an abrupt storm dislodges the lander, the survivors of the Terran crew are forced to move into the Sawl caverns. They must gradually earn the trust of their hosts and face a battle to save Fiix from exploitation---but the cost is not immediately apparent.

I speculate that the first of the four parts into which this volume is divided was Rossow's contribution. I make this guess because, on the basis of Kellog's appealing, though not wildly original first novel (A Rumor of Angels, 1983), she is a pretty good writer. It therefore follows that she did not write the opening section of this book, because "Book One" is, to be brutally frank, execrable. The plotting is dull, the pace glacial, and in best bad-amateur-writing tradition, the cardboard characters stand around dully lecturing each other on things they ought to know already. "Book One" is also stuffed with appalling purple similes that fall on the ear with the thud of a watermelon dropped from a fourth-story window. One paragraph on page 57 is so full of overripe imagery that it could serve admirably as a "how not to write" example for any writers' workshop.

If indeed this portion was written by Rossow, one can only wonder why Kellog, who gained a certain modest regard in the genre with her engaging first novel, permitted this ghastly sludge to see print with her name on it. It's doubly a pity because, aside from this first section, it's an excellent book. As soon as Kellog takes over at the beginning of "Book Two" on page 87 (the change of styles is so different as to be jolting), the characters come alive, the narrative takes on snap and pace, the alien culture suddenly becomes interesting. I slogged stubbornly through the first part, shaking my head repeatedly in dismay; but the first few chapters of "Book Two" restored my confidence and I raced through the remainder of the book with fascination. It reminded me a little of Lee Killough, and perhaps a little of Ursula K. LeGuin (high praise indeed), and a lot of Kellog's first novel, which I quite enjoyed. The Wave and the Flame is a more mature writer and a more mature concept; if it were not for the positively awful first section, I would recommend it without hesitation. As the book actually exists, I can only say that I personally am looking forward (though not without a certain trepidation) to find out what happens in the later volumes of this story. It may be a backhanded compliment, but if you can suffer through the first section of this otherwise interesting book, the remainder of it is well worth reading.

THE OTHER TIME

by Mack Reynolds and Dean Ing
Baen, 1984, $2.95

A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper

WARNING: Some Spoilers.

Don Fielding, an archaeologist, somehow steps backward in time to the era of the Spanish conquest of Mexico. Naturally, he meets up with Cortez and then Montezuma. He spends a lot of time considering the paradoxes involved: can he change history? what happens to his world if he does? Unfortunately, not much is resolved along those lines.

Reynolds apparently wrote the first draft of this before he died; Ing finished it. One of them put in a lot of "local color" -- how

the Aztecs lived and worked, their customs and rituals, and so forth. The science fiction content, other than the premise itself, is rather thin. We never find out how Fielding went back in time, or what his interference will do to the present (i.e., the Twentieth Century). Basically what we have here is an historical adventure novel.

I'm sure I read a very similar novel over the last year or so. That one was an alternate history in which the Spanish arrive a few years later, when a no-nonsense king has replaced Montezuma. The new king promptly wipes out the Spanish and goes on to extend his empire into Texas and Northward. Unfortunately I can't remember the name of the novel. Like that one, The Other Time isn't great, but it's fun to read.

SHORT CIRCUIT

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

CAPSULE REVIEW: Number 5 is alive. So is this comedy occasionally. This is as close as John Badham should ever get to science fiction. The gags are repetitive but some are actually funny.

I cannot claim to being much of a fan of John Badham. His Dracula left a sour taste in my mouth in spite of being an effectively moody piece of horror. In the last scene Dracula's cape flies off as what is obviously a kite. His WarGames left a taste so sour it could have put United Citrus out of business. The last time I watched it I wrote down the technical inaccuracies and stupid ideas. I found they come, on the average, one every two minutes. Out of a misguided human-chauvinism the film presented a dangerously wrong view of the virtues of automated versus manual systems. (Just as filmmakers see Americans feeling militarily powerless and react with films like Rambo, directors like Badham see distrust of complex automated systems and make films like WarGames.)

While WarGames was a compendium of computer misinformation, Short Circuit takes one or two bad ideas and stretches them out to a full-length film. Of the two approaches, Short Circuit is much better. In Short Circuit an autonomous military robot called Number 5 is struck by lightening and given the political attitudes, TV preferences, and musical taste of an MTV fan. The concept is apparently that any logical mind will find Saturday Night Fever to be superior entertainment. Much of the humor of this comedy revolves around having the robot do non-robot-like things (disco dance, quote TV, imitate John Wayne) or having the robot or an Indian computer scientist mangle English expressions by substituting similar words ("Gag me with a fork!"). Perhaps this film's most interesting statements are about American idiomatic use of language. Our cute robot comes under the protection of Ally Sheedy in whom he brings out the maternal instincts. Together with a renegade scientist (who developed the military version of the robot) they try to hide Number 5 from a military surprisingly uninterested in this leap in artificial intelligence. (You better believe the U.S. military and the Defense Department has an interest in AI.)

Nominally Steve Guttenberg and Ally Sheedy get billing over Number 5, but the robot is, of course, the real star of the film. The robot is given a full range of emotions almost entirely with two metal flaps that act like eyebrows in conveying facial expression. The film is genuinely funny at times and really misguided at others. I am going to mugwump it and give it a 0.

THE FALLEN COUNTRY

by Somtow Sucharitkal
Bantam, $2.95

A book review by Dennis Fischer

Some books get bypassed by general readers because they are "children's" books, but one has only to recall that for years such works as Treasure Island, Alice in Wonderland, and the works of D. Manus Pinkwater were classified as "merely" children's works. Accordingly, Somtow Sucharitkal's new fantasy novel, The Fallen Country, is likely to be overlooked by many fantasy fans merely because it will be placed on the shelves next to Judy Blume novels and the like, though one only has to recall the quality of LeGuin's Earthsea Trilogy to know what treasures may be buried in such areas.

The Fallen Country explores a very serious problem, that of child abuse. The protagonists are Billy Binder, an abused child who retreats into a fantasy world known as The Fallen Country where he rides through a desolate snow-bound landscape slaying monsters with the help of a snow dragon, and Charley Moore, a normal, average kid who in the process of the story matures and learns to take responsibility in new ways. Charley and Billy strike up an uneasy friendship -- Billy has been hurt by much of life and, fearful of being hurt again, is afraid to get close to people. The more Charley learns, then more he realizes that Billy's is a problem which can't be ignored--someone has to do something. He finds that he cannot depend on adults to solve the problem but must instead depend on himself (and the help of those friends he is able to recruit into helping Billy).

Billy's Life is dominated by a man he thinks of as the Ringmaster -- in real life, his mother's drug-peddling boyfriend who himself was once an abused child, and in the fantasy world, the evil ruler of the Fallen Country whom Billy must defeat and forgive if he is ever to find peace within himself.

In the Fallen Country, Billy's greatest weapon is his hate, but the Country is a

place without hope or feelings, prefering numbness to pain and suffering, but paying the proce in never feeling joy or relief either.

Psychologically, the story jibes very well with case histories of abused children and presents some of their special problems and feelings. If it makes some school children more sensitive to the problems of their classmates, it will have done a good service. Sucharitkal also doesn't make his problems easy or his solutions simple. Billy needs help, but isn't always easy to get along with. Charley finds himself confronting difficult feelings when a girl he longs for starts paying more attention to Billy. A well-meaning and concerned adult at the school who is aware of Billy's problem wants to help and falls short of making the commitment necessary to do Billy some good. The story does not shy away from realistic, real-life problems, and though geared for ages 10 and up, is more mature than many "adult" novels I've read -- as well as better written.

Sucharitkal tells his story simply but effectively. He provides a good narrative hook by starting the book with Charley and his friends sampling some weed up in the church tower when Billy makes a frozen appearance suddenly on a steeple nearby. Sucharitkal is also good at capturing fragmented thoughts and impressions, and as the reader starts putting the pieces together, he achieves a deeper understanding of the characters and the difficult choices they must make. This resonant novel is worthy of any fantasy lover's attention with its evocation of a fantasy world which both helps and hinders the boy who escapes into it.

COBRA STRIKE

by Timothy Zahn
Baen, 1986, $3.50

A book review by Maia Cowan

Tim's forte is a pragmatic approach to plotting. This story, like all his writing, presents a problem to be solved, and a cast of competent characters who set out forthrightly to solve it.

COBRA STRIKE continues with the world established in COBRA, the high-tech warriors of the title dominating the government of the planet Aventine and its fellow human colonies. The advantage is that it isn't necessary to spend a lot of time developing the background --assuming the reader has read COBRA, and fairly recently. The disadvantage is that in this book the background is taken for granted and therefore much of the story seems to take place in a social vacuum.

Jonny Moreau, the hero of COBRA, is now an elder statesman on Aventine. His oldest son Corwin takes Jonny's place in council business during his father's frequent illnesses (the long-term effect of the Cobra armaments implanted in his body), though his qualifications for doing so aren't clear. One twin, Justin, wants to be a Cobra over his mother's strenuous objections. The other, Joshua, seems to be involved in politics mostly because it's the family business.

The humans are approached by their former enemies, the Troft, to eliminate a potential common "threat" presented by a newly-discovered inhabited planet. The payment would be five habitable worlds; the cost is both the risk of becoming mercenaries for the Troft, and of losing military or political advantage by failing to carry out the mission should they choose to accept it.

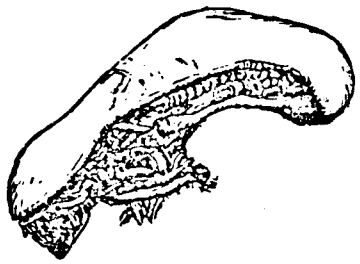
Of course, there's rather more to the mysterious planet Qasama than the Troft claim to know. The entire Moreau family becomes involved in the three faces of the problem: a reconnaissance mission to Qasama, a survey of the planets offered as payment, and the political consequences back home.

Tim tries to match the plot's complexity with character development, but doesn't quite succeed. In spots the characters' personal motivations are crucial to the action; for example, the twins' ambivalence about living up to their father's reputation. Most of the time, though, they're unclear and more than a little stilted.

The women in the book are particularly weak. Jonny's wife Chrys uses guilt to manipulate her husband and sons; her "irrational" concern for her family's health and safety annoys them, but doesn't keep them from their important manly pursuits. Her husband and sons don't seem to take any of her opinions seriously, and they're consistently surprised when she does something they consider sensible. Governor Lizabet Telek may have been included to show that Aventine is egalitarian; but she behaves like a "token" female who's had to become more masculine than the men to wield power in an otherwise male-dominated world. Jonny's sister Gwen makes a brief appearance toward the end of the book to lecture a nephew and be discussed as a love interest for another character. The only indications there are women on Qasama are a quick glimpse of dancing girls and a reference to "women and children" as a single category.

The story itself is choppy in spots. Things which have an important effect on the final decision were glossed over or only briefly described. Other scenes were longer than they needed to be to make the point.

In COBRA STRIKE, the "idea" of the plot is the most important element. The story unfolds consistently, with Tim's usual knack for developments which are at first surprising and then perfectly obvious in retrospect. The story by itself was interesting enough that I wasn't annoyed by the flaws until after I'd finished reading.



ALIENS —
TWO REVIEWS

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

CAPSULE REVIEW: James Cameron (The Terminator) returns in an exciting sequel to a near-classic science fiction film. In spite of many problems, this will still be, very probably, the best fantasy film of the season.

There are a number of ways to do a sequel to a film. The best sort of sequel broadens the context of the story in ways the second half of a story does to the first half. There is also the more-of-the-same approach to sequel-making. Aliens is a riveting action film but it is too much of a more-of-the-same sequel. The viewer will leave the theatre a bit out of breath, but not knowing much more about the nature of society in the future or the nature of the alien life form. We learn less new information about the alien life form in Aliens than we learned in five minutes of the original film.

The story deals with Ripley (Sigourney Weaver) making it back to civilization and a return visit by some very Heinleinesque marines--loaded with some heavy firepower--to the planet where Ripley's first expedition found the alien. Because of an apparent error in editing we are not sure how much time has passed, but we are led to believe that this is 57 years later and the planet has been terra-formed and colonized by humans.

As a sequel, Aliens has at least two problems. As the title suggests, where there was one monster in Alien, this film has many. One would expect each one to be as bad as the monster in the first film. No way. The creature in the first film could have eaten for breakfast most of the monsters in the second film. Specifically, the creature of the first film was invulnerable to flame-throwers, I think. It seems to me that the new creatures of the same species are not. There just is not enough time to make each creature as bad. The film Dawn of the Dead suffered from the same sort of deflation in monster power.

Another problem is the introduction of "soft characters." The film introduces a child character. It is a serious mistake because scriptwriters are bound by certain unwritten rules akin to chivalry about what can and cannot befall weak and sympathetic characters like children. Compare how much softer the tone, and how much less satisfying, the later "Planet of the Apes" films are when compared to the first one or two films. Consider films like The Poseidon Adventure where only the weak survive.

One final problem is the predictability of certain. Relatively early in the film I was seeing scenes and saying to myself, "I bet there will be a scene in which such-and-such happens later." At least twice I was right about important plot twists toward the end.

So with all that going against the film, I must not have liked it, right? Wrong! Aliens is an exciting film. It is not of the quality of its predecessor, but it has plenty to offer. Rumors were that because it was directed by James Cameron it would be closer to Terminator II than to Alien II. Not so. This is a solid action-packed film and even if it is not the most profound piece of science fiction I've seen in a while, it was solid suspense and action. Pieces of the film have a real Heinleinesque feel to them and there is even a reference to John Campbell's Laws of Robotics (popularized by Asimov). While Alien deserved a high +2, its sequel gets at worst a low +2. This is likely to be the big science fiction film of the season.

A film review by Dale L. Skran Jr.

This review is intended mainly as a counterpoint to Mark Leepers review. Aliens is definitely THE SF film of the year, but not just because it has no discernable competition at this point. Contrary to Mark's claim, Aliens is not "more-of-the-same." More-of-the-same would involve another mining ship finding the planet again and having its crew getting eaten by the Alien. What happens is for once a logical outgrowth of the first film. While it is true that the sequel adds only a little to our knowledge of the creature, it fills in the gaps about the future society, at least sufficiently so that we can understand that "The Company" is acting outside the law in trying to bring back the alien, while at the same time presenting an absolutely wonderful group of "Colonial Marines."

Aliens is the finest military science fiction ever put on film. It is NOT, I repeat, NOT a "haunted house in space" story. As the preview says, "This time it's war!", and a beautifully, carefully envisioned one at that. We see old standby SF weapons finally realized visually with a level of realism beyond anything previously. The Marines bring to bear the ultimate helicopter, the 20th generation Sherman tank, plasma rifles, smart guns, and a computer-controlled battelfield, coupled with old fashioned

guts, muscles, shotguns, and courage. Against the aliens it doesn't matter squat.

Contrary to what Mark claims, the alien in the first movie is not much tougher than the ones in the second. In the first film, the alien faced a civilian crew armed with electric cattle prods and industrial blow-torches. In the second film, the aliens face dozens of battle-hardened soldiers armed with plasma rifles and armor-piercing recoilless guns. Is it any surprise that the aliens sometimes come out a bit worse for wear in the second film? After all, they are only flesh and blood -- just very tough flesh and acid blood. Mark claims that the aliens in the second film can be killed by flame-throwers, but not in the first film. I cannot recall any scene in either movie there an alien is killed with just a flame-thrower. We might also consider that there is a big difference between an industrial blow-torch used as a flame-thrower and a military flame-thrower that fires jellied gasoline or napalm or whatever.

Aliens continues where Alien left off in defining for our time strong action-oriented female characters. While Ripley is somewhat fleshed out as a character, one of the female marines demonstrates that raw courage is not an exclusively male trait. At the same time the sole survivor of the colonists on the planet, a little girl, provides a refreshing counterpoint to the stereotyped hysterical female survivor of disaster character.

There are a couple of technical quibbles with the film, such as 1) how did the atmosphere became breathable after only ten years of terraforming, and 2) doesn't it seem unlikely that a fusion reactor would blow when cooling apparatus is destroyed? The answer to both questions is that we really don't understand enough about the technology involved to answer definitely at this point, so we shouldn't let it ruin our enjoyment of a well thought-out action film.

Summary: A strong +2. Watch it! Not as much gore as you may be expecting, but relentless suspense and action.

THE VAMPIRE LESTAT

by Anne Rice
Knopf, 1985, $17.95

A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper

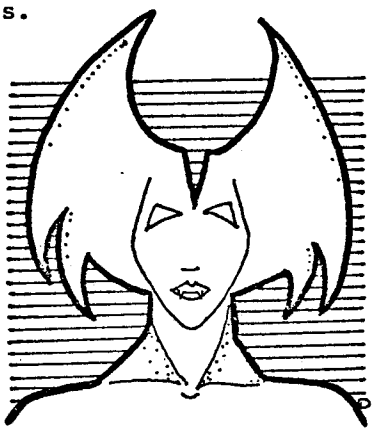
Ten years ago, Anne Rice wrote Interview with a Vampire, in which we met Louis the vampire and saw vampire life from the other side, a la Saberhagen's The Dracula Tapes. But where The Dracula Tapes was just Dracula retold from the vampire's point of view, Interview with a Vampire created a new mythology for vampires, separate from Stoker's Transylvania milieu. Rice based her vampires in New Orleans, and of French origin. Her goal was not to horrify, but to show that vampires are people too. And like normal people, they have rivals. Louis' rival was the vampire Lestat.

Now, ten years later, Rice introduces us to Lestat and we learn his side of the story, his background. And eventually we (and he) meet Marius, a yet older vampire who relates the origins of the vampire race. (I can't help but predict that the promised third novel in the series will show us the early days of the vampires firsthand. If it takes another ten years for that novel, no one reading this prediction will even remember it to point out how wrong I was.)

The framing sequence, set in modern San Francisco, is passable. It is the main body of the novel, the story of Lestat's "conversion" and existence in pre-revolutionary France and Europe, which fascinates the reader. And, of course, Marius's story of his early existence and the origin of homo vampiris is almost a novel in itself. (The Vampire Lestat is nearly twice the length of Interview with a Vampire.)

I don't want to reveal too much of the plot, since much of the enjoyment (at least for me) comes from the gradual revelations, almost like peeling off the layers of an onion. Rice is able to show us many kinds of vampires, as distinct from each other in nature as human beings are. We do not see the sameness of character that most vampire stories show us. Some of Rice's vampires are full of conscience and get their "kills" only from thieves and murderers; others are amoral and seek the young and healthy victim to gain the greatest strength and sensuality from their blood. The sensuality of vampirism is a very strong theme in Rice's novels: the seductiveness of the powers vampires have, the ecstasy of feeding, the heightened awareness of one's surroundings that their senses give vampires. This is not a child's vampire story.

I highly recommend this novel. Your appreciation will be heightened if you read Interview with a Vampire first, but that isn't necessary. I look forward to the third novel -- I just hope it doesn't take another ten years.



GOTCHA!

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

CAPSULE REVIEW: Really good beginning leads toward overly predictable and uninteresting second half.

Most films ask the viewer to sit through some build-up before they get to the meat of the film. Often the idea is that the meat of the film is in the second half but you have to see what leads up to it to follow that second half. My recommendation would be something like "stick with the film and it will be worth it." Sometimes it works the other way. Some films are very good in the first half and then die. I guess I would suggest seeing just the first half, though I never walk out on the film myself. One example of a film that might be worth seeing and walking out on is The Black Stallion, a film that wastes a beautiful first half on a cliched and dull sports film. (Realize that I am prejudiced; the only sports films I have ever liked have been It Happens Every Spring, The Natural, and perhaps Phar Lap.) Another wasted beginning is that of Coal Miner's Daughter, which turns a gritty realistic beginning into a slobbery sentimental story worthy of the newspapers on grocery checkout lines.

This month's cable brought a new example. The film is Gotcha! -- considerably more forgettable than the films mentioned above, but a film that nonetheless was still quite good at the halfway point. The basic premise is that Anthony Edwards is his school's champion Assassin player. Assassin is a real game inspired by Robert Sheckley's story "The Seventh Victim" and its film adaptation The Tenth Victim. In the story a central organization chooses at random one player to be an assassin and one to be the victim. The player who dies is the loser; the player who lives is the winner, except in the game Assassin, of course, the weapons aren't real. The premise of Gotcha! is that someone who is good at the game when it is a game might be good at the game when it is for real.

The first half of the film gets Edwards involved with an international agent and into and out of East Berlin, never really fully using his assassin talents. Still, it is an intriguing story. But all good things must come to an end and the interesting part of this film does so early. When Edwards returns home there are still agents chasing him and the story predictably climaxes with a chase around his campus and with Edwards pulling the same high-jinx that he did at the beginning of the film. The film continues at a low level until the very last scene which makes it step from mediocre right down to (arguably) offensive. My recommendation if Gotcha! runs on cable: watch it. When Edwards gets back to America, go do the laundry. Rate it +1.

THE DOOMSDAY EFFECT

by Thomas Wren
Baen Books, 1986, $2.95, 290p

A book review by Mark Owings

This is probably the best of the impending-catastrophe sub-genre to come out in the last couple of years. The plot assumption is that the Earth has captures a microscopic black hole on an orbit which takes it periodically through the outer layers of the crust, causing tremors (up to major earthquakes) every time it passes through the surface. The object, however, is slowly increasing in size and effect, and will cause the globe to collapse in a few years.

The problem is nicely thought out and the solution is plausible (though rather wild). The novel has some nice touches, as the internal political maneuvering in the U.S., and the Soviets suffering from the Not Invented Here syndrome -- but this brings up the book's only real fault. The story is set well into the next century with today's world political situation carried forward intact. This seems almost less probably than a black hole in your back yard.

Well worth reading regardless.

THE FINAL ENCYCLOPEDIA

by Gordon R. Dickson
Ace Books, 1985 [for 1984], SFBC

A book review by Clifton Amsbury

Gordon Dickson is a multi-talented writer with such varied works as The Dragon and the George, Necromancer, Naked to the Stars, and The Far Call among the many books of his on my shelves. His Childe Cycle, not all of it written yet, culminates for now in The Final Encyclopedia.

It is itself encyclopedic, a tour of the human, settled splinter-culture worlds of that same universe. I recall a letter to the editor of Analog about Cletus Graham, founder of the Dorsai family. It was full of praise for his Tactics of Mistake. Dear John Campbell replied that Dickson had cheated. "He wrote both sides." It was still a good story.

The Final Encyclopedia seems like a looser, rambling story, but actually it drives straight through a course of learning necessary to the protagonist's development and unfolding. It is also a recapitulation by means of several interludes recalling other stories in the cycle which makes it a rather large book, as well as the entire cycle in itself. For me at least, this is welcome because some of the volumes have left my shelves and have not been properly returned.

Key passages for understanding the whole may be found on pages 341-343 explaining that the world is in an Armageddon, a battle between those who would impose a stasis, so that they might rule as an elite, and those who would continue human development; on pages 384 and 385 where history is clearly being described in dialectic terms, which is what vectors are, but whether the dialectic is of Hegelian or of classical Greek inspir-

ation there is no hint; on page 411: "A last conflict," he says, the final conflict, some have called it -- Armageddon again; on page 438: "There's no present defense against them. How else could they explode, the way they have, into a position of interstellar power in just thirty standard years?"; and on page 439: "...and they're winning. Because the pattern of human society is changing, as it always has done; and the old, as always, can't resist the new."

Clearly it is also an allegory, and allegory of our times. The interstellar civilization has been set up; now it faces would-be rulers. It makes a good story even though Dickson keeps calling the separated groups Splinter-Cultures (which they obviously are) but discussing them as genetically distinct, though only one of them has engaged in an intentional breeding program.

Allegories have always run the risk of misinterpretation. The Others seeking to take over the human universe will seem different to different readers. Some undoubtedly will see the parallel to modern multi-national corporations of "the last thirty years" using psychological seduction (advertising), economic warfare to control by corruption of established authorities, and where necessary outright conquest. Such readers will see the revulsion and rebellion of decent people against the new masters who are moved only by greed and selfishness. Others will assume he is thinking in terms of Reagan's "Communist subversion" and growth of the "Evil Empire".

Those who see the allegory in terms of the transitional "Others" of our day will note that the multinational imperialists seek to send us back to what has been called a "coming feudal age", and that they do it by capturing governments, the media, the military, and positions of economic dominance, by subverting "modernized" charismatic fundamentalists to reactionary politics and repressions and by closing unionized plants and moving them to Taiwan and South Africa.

The various anti-capitalistic forces, from tribal to socialist and communist to populist military seek to resist in ways which inevitably result in reorganization and arousal of the people, but the people in those countries so far are from the "old feudal" traditions and repeatedly try to sink back into letting the leaders do all the work. And since those who seek leadership often like to keep all the power to themselves, they repeatedly accept it and become open to renewed seduction.

You have to admire the artistry of a man who can write a double-edged allegory that well. And his solution is one each side can applaud: "The Truth Shall Set You Free."

But that depends on what you accept as truth. Truth, believe it or not, is that which best suits your purposes. So in choosing one's truths, one must first decide on one's highest aims and furthest goals. That is part of what the book is about.

The Dickson of Naked to the Stars is still with us.

To make an even bigger book, we get an added attraction here. Sandra Miesel has written an analysis of the book and of the Cycle in terms of Old-World mythology with shades of Freud, Jung and Fraser. Since it's in Dickson's book, it may be that he agrees. It adds a whole new level of allegory to what I've suggested.

Given the nature of this book and of Necromancer, some may have difficulties accepting them, and hence the whole cycle, as science fiction. But Gordie has also written very fine fantasy and it is part of the nature of allegory that the mundane and the fantastic blend and reinforce each other. Hal Mayne makes a very fine pilgrim, and he does progress.

It seems, however, that it is not the final end of the cycle. The war has just begun.

GALAPAGOS

by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.
Delacorte Press, 1985, $16.95, 295p

A book review by Robert Whitaker Sirignano

I have read Galapagos by Kurt Vonnegut. It is a waste of time. This description is the best I can give it. It is the most valid type of description for a casual reader, one who is not concerned with *deeper meanings*. Of all of the Vonnegut novels I have encountered, it strives most to be simpleminded.

Kilgore Trout's son, Leon Trout, is dead. He has refused to go into the blue tunnel into the afterlife. He is condemned to wait a million years before he gets another chance to enter. He is discorporately wandering around South America entering people's heads. He is able to watch people in the last days of mankind as he knows it, and watch them kill themselves off. The time that the novel is purported to be written is one million years from now. There aren't any people left. What remains of evolved mankind are a group of seal-like critters with fur and flippers and they can't read. Since Leon trout is intangible, I don't know why he is writing this. He must be very bored. A few thousand years of seal-watching have left him unconcerned. (He is writing in the air with his fingers: Vonnegut doesn't realize his fingers are non-existent as well.)

Vonnegut's concern with present-day man is set up to be over with as soon as possible. The people of nowadays (as the book depicts them) are narrow-minded, mean, and not very nice to be around. Leon Trout doesn't have a very good eye for detail or concern (he is without passion. He is somewhat disinterested, but doesn't have anything better to do. Since he is dead, this might be understandable). While inside the heads of various people, he fails to understand the way they think or feel (and the why of thinking

and feeling). And so a cruise ship is set up to go to the Galapagos. There is some confusion as to what is going on, since a war has broken out, and most world economies have collapsed. The few people going on the cruise are ill-informed, self-deluded, deluding others, are verbally handicapped and talk in non-sequiturs. Some of them have no intuition and rely on devices to do their thinking or represent them.

Vonnegut retains the "primitive novelist" feature he has relied so heavily upon. The book does read smoothly, but is badly thought-out: its mannerisms allow the writer to skip his way over details. He tells you what is going to happen instead of showing it to you. When he telegraphs to the reader that a character is going to die within the next twenty-four hours, he is able to present the death, when it does occur in the narrative, in a flat, off-handed manner with no additional details. With this device (and it has been featured in one form or another in most of his novels) Kurt Vonnegut is able to avoid emotional involvement, passion, and concern. Vonnegut remains one of the most accessible, but most uninvolved, writers you can read. His plots and ideas are shaped in such a way that what most writers would turn into a short story, he pads out into a novel with telegraphed climaxes, useless information, redundant phraseology, and morbid speculations that have nothing to do with the plot. A lot of this is just irritating. A great deal of ignorance is displayed on misinformation about Huntington's Disease (Vonnegut seems to have studied his comic books on the disease very well) wherein the writer assumes once it hits you, you know about it. This is about as scientific as his "gravity turned off" sequences in Slapstick, and has nothing to do with the Real World.

A suspicion I've harbored for a number of years is that Vonnegut does not enjoy writing. This book backs up my belief. Kurt Vonnegut is Kilgore Trout, except that he had avoided being a low-paid hack in the pornography industry, and is currently a well-paid hack in the best-seller industry. This is also obscene, and I suspect Vonnegut knows it. Else, he would not have gotten so angry over the very funny assumptions that sprang up after the publication of Venus on the Half-Shell.**

Vonnegut has not created any real characters in this book, but a succession of funny hats with names attached. Kilgore Trout is still there, a background bogey for Vonnegut to deal with. He announces he has died (finally) and it's best to get on with the business. Except that Vonnegut has killed everyone off, no one can read and those that remain are covered with fur and flippers.

I'm probably going to be putting Vonnegut away in the future into the category of "beneath concern" and ignore the next release or two from his typewriter. Whatever passion and concern Vonnegut used to display in stories like "Harrison Bergeron" or Player Piano is gone. He refuses the intimate involvement demanded of writing. Without this involvement, his writing has lost its life. He offers no solutions, and shows only contempt. He has become an Ivory Tower writer, and much like Leon Trout, is writing with his finger into the air.

I'm not really certain what finger he is using. Not that it means much anymore.

** Most of the assumptions were that Vonnegut was Kilgore Trout, and not Philip Jose Farmer. In some newspapers, reviewers called it "Vonnegut's best novel", which probably sat well with Farmer (who is able to enjoy a good joke), but not with Vonnegut.

VENUS OF DREAMS

by Pamela Sargent
Bantam/Spectra, 1986, $3.95, 536p

A book review by Wendy Counsil

Venus of Dreams is the first novel in a trilogy about humanity's first migration off this planet. It is set on earth and space stations several centuries in the future. The trilogy is a kind of family saga, following generations of one family through the events of space colonization.

The protagonist of the first novel is Iris Liangharad. She is first introduced as a child living in an agricultural commune in the Plains (formerly Nebraska). Her home is a self-involved matriarchy where hard work and polyandry are valued highly, but education outside of farming is not valued at all.

Iris is a bright child and the heir of the leader of the commune. She could have a great future in wheat production and small town politics if only she followed a normal course.

Alas, Iris discovers the world outside of the Plains by her routine access to the world-wide data-base. Iris, in her increasingly clandestine studies through the "mind-link", learns about the Venus Project, a massive plan to terraform the second planet from the sun. Thereafter Iris wants nothing in life so mach as she wants to be a part of the project.

In the later parts of the novel, Iris defies her upbringing by marrying, having a son and going to school. She does join the Venus Project, where she develops a career, alienates her son and husband, and has unplanned adventures.

Sargent creates a complex socio-economic framework about which she weaves this story. She convinces the reader that this future is logically derived from our own world. Sargent creates future technologies and sociologies with equal aplomb. This ability makes her one of the finest women writers of science-oriented SF today.

Sargent's projections of how a Venus Project would affect the earthbound and the project participants themselves are insightful and thought-provoking. Her descriptions of the reforming of the planet's surface are detailed and believable.

While the novel is well-written, it falls short with the characterization of the adult Iris. Throughout the last chapters of the novel, Iris stagnates. I find it difficult to believe such a dynamic child could become this boring an adult. The character seems weak, manipulative, and self-pitying to an abnormal degree. While I understand that an author must strive to make her characters seem human, I felt that Sargent makes Iris a bit too fallible. Both my disbelief of Iris' development and my dislike of the personality diminished my enjoyment of the book.

The series of three novels will follow Iris' descendants through their adventures, which it seems will take place farther and farther out from Earth. Her son, Benji, is a well-drawn character, and as the protagonist for book II of the series gives me hope that the second novel will be a more enjoyable read. Venus of Dreams does stand by itself as a complete novel, a competent work from a steady author.

POLTERGEIST II: The Other Side

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

CAPSULE REVIEW: The Freeling family returns in a mixed bag of a film. Riveting performance by Julian Beck is the best thing in this film. The film at least is not an attempt to replay its predecessor, but is instead a wider context for that film.

A lot of sequels are being made these days in Hollywood's search for safe bets to fill theater seats. There are really three approaches to making sequels. One is to tell a different story with a continuing character in common. The stories may have similar styles, but the most notable element in common is the main character. This is a successful approach if you can get a character, like James Bond, to whom the public responds.

The most common approach is "more of the same." If the audience liked a story once they will like it again, is the plan. Jaws, Rocky, and Friday the 13th are series that have each entry much like the previous entry, just a bit worse.

Then there is the best approach. This is that rare case where the sequel broadens the original idea. Ideally the sequel should bear about the same relation to its predecessor that the second half of a film does to the first half. It should tell you more about why things happened as they did in the first film. My best example of what a sequel should do is [Shields up, Scotty, here come the flames!] Exorcist II: The Heretic. Admittedly it had stylistic and script problems. What Exorcist II also had was a great concept that made much of what happened in the first film more believable and should have been a set-up for a third sequel that could have pitted the forces of evil against the unknowing champions of peace, the so-called "good locusts." Exorcist II had some great fantasy ideas as I and the five other people who liked the film can attest.

All of this brings me, at last, to Poltergeist II. It is not a very good film, but it tries to follow the third approach. It tries to explain why all the strange events that happened to the Freeling family in the first film and comes up with two different reasons that don't quite gel together. One reason concerns the nature of the family itself; the other concerns the house in the first film. Both contributed an keep on contributing to the Freelings' problems. Unfortunately, neither idea or anything in Poltergeist II is as intriguing as some of the ideas in the first film.

One plus of the new film, however, is a performance by Juian Beck. This is Beck's second performance that I have seen and he was the best thing going in each film. His acting is so intense that it is hard to take my eyes off his skull-like face whenever he is in a scene. Beck played a bitter, nihilistic killer in The Cotton Club. I will not give away plot by saying much about his part in Poltergeist II, but I will say that his part seems to have grown out of an editing error in the first film. In that film, Carol Ann, talking from "the other side" is frightened to see a man. The first film leaves who that man was as a loose end. In one interpretation the second film is built around that man.

I will not go into detail about the plot but the Freelings, minus their eldest daughter (the actress died; no mention of her character is made in the second film) have fled to the house of JoBeth Williams' mother, played by Geraldine Fitzgerald. Also, there is a mysterious Indian played by Will Samson (somehow not nearly as forceful as he was in One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest). Before long the Freelings' past is catching up with them.

Poltergeist II is a big cut below Poltergeist, but it does have good moments. It gets a 0.

MASTER OF SPACE AND TIME

by Rudy Rucker
Baen, 1985, $2.95

A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper

In some ways this book is not unlike Philip K. Dick's Eye in the Sky. That is, it is the story of what happens when someone can control reality. (I suppose it's also reminiscent of Ursula K. LeGuin's Lathe of Heaven in this regard.) Rucker, a mathematician by profession, uses quantum physics to explain how Harry Gerber can become the "master of space and time", molding reality to suit his fancy. (Let's face it, if you lived in Brunswick, New Jersey, like Harry Gerber does, you'd want to change reality too!) For very complicated reasons, Gerber can only effect three changes (the three wishes of old).

The book is interesting enough while you are reading it, but I found it quite forgettable as soon as I finished it. I've read a lot of great reviews of Rucker's work, so maybe this is one of his weaker works.

THE CURRENT STATE OF ADVENTURE SCIENCE FICTION

A review of John Varley's The Gaea Trilogy

A commentary by Robert Sabella

The History of science fiction is dotted by literary movements: the development of space operas in the 20s, the Golden Age of the late 30s-early 40s, the F&SF-Galaxy movement of the early 50s, the New Wave of the late 60s, and the "cyberpunk" movement of the 80s. While all the movements were ephemeral (including, I assume, the current one), they all had lasting effects on the entire field.

The New Wave peaked from approximately 1965 (with the publication of Roger Zelazny's landmark novel This Immortal) to 1969 (Ursula K. LeGuin's The Left Hand of Darkness), but it strongly influenced science fiction of the 70s and 80s. Could you imagine Gatrway, Dying Inside, The Forever War, The Book of the New Sun, or Neuromancer without a New Wave? Most people agree that serious science fiction was altered by the New Wave movement, but how many realize how adventure science fiction was influenced by it?

Consider the following examples:

Poul Anderson was perhaps the leading writer of Adventure SF in the 50s and 60s. After 1965, he received well-deserved award nominations for Tau Zero and The Byworlder. Both are adventure novels deeply concerned with their characters' lives. Julian May's excellent tetralogy, Saga of the Pliocene Exile, was an adventure series rich in mood and characterization. C.J. Cherryh is as complete a science fiction writer as anybody in the field, yet her novels are mostly updated space operas. Roger Zelazny was the critically-acclaimed writer of the New Wave, but his 70s and 80s output have been almost exclusively adventure novels.

All of which brings us to my choice as the finest current practitioner of adventure science fiction: John Varley. The parallels between his career and that of Roger Zelazny are astounding. Both men originally achieved recognition for serious, ground-breaking, short fiction but their novels are almost exclusively adventures. Zelazny went from the pathos of "A Rose for Ecclesiastes" and "He Who Shapes" to the high adventure of This Immortal, Lord of Light and the Amber series. Varley went from "The Persistence of Vision" to Millennium and The Gaea Trilogy.

The original premise of The Gaea Trilogy is so grandiose it seems Varley was trying to outdo Dune and Ringworld: Gaea is a world that is an intelligent alien being. And what a world it is, filled with concepts typical of Varley's creative mind: a race of centaur-like beings at war with a race of angels; zombies, organic road-builders, thinking bombs; 12 diverse geophysical regions, each with their own mind that are extensions of the central Gaea mind. But Gaea is millions of years old and losing control. Hence, the regional minds are breaking away, threatening a civil war of planetwide proportions.

Sense of wonder and adventure abound, as does humor and zaniness, but there is even more. The human characters are fully-realized people who breathe and suffer and laugh and worry and die. They are as important as the wonders of Gaea and the thrill of the hunt. At the end of 1000+ pages, it is equally satisfying knowing the state of the characters' lives as knowing all is well on the world of Gaea.

The first novel Titan was the favorite to win both the Hugo and Nebula Awards. It lost largely because Arthur C. Clarke announced that Fountains of Paradise would be his last novel ever. Ironically, it is the weakest portion of the trilogy, not because it is weak in itself, but because Varley uses the potential of the trilogy to its fullest: from the first page of Titan to the last page of Demon, he is constantly building. Gaea gets richer as a world as more of it is revealed in increasing depth. And his characters grow as well. In Titan Cirocco Jones is a devil-may-care adventurer but by the end of Demon she is a fully-realized person. As are Gaby, Robin, Chris, and even the centaur-like Titanides to a large extent.

If you enjoy solid adventure fiction loaded with sense of wonder, or if you prefer rich science fiction with depth and characterization or, better yet, you want to read a thoroughly integrated combination of both, you cannot go wrong with John Varley's Gaea Trilogy. The important question is, how in the world will he ever top it?

ENDER'S GAME

by Orson Scott Card
Tor, 1086, $3.50

A book review by Mark R. Leeper

A while back I got justifiably flamed. I complained about titles and I used as an example a book I hadn't read, Ender's Game. I said that the title implied that the book had something to do with endgame strategy and that it was, in fact, a cheat. The book was instead about someone named Ender. It's true, I should not have said that until I read the book. I have now. A bunch of people who apparently like Orson Scott Card and who don't know what an endgame strategy is were at least right that I should have paid my dues and read the book before making my complaint. My statement was just a lucky guess.

Ender's Game is about the training of Ender from age five to twelve, teaching him to be a great military genius. The idea is to combine the best raw material with the best military training and end up with not just the world's best 12-year-old military commander, but with a commander who cannot lose, period. And that is Card's chief failure -- Ender's abilities are just too unbelievable for his age. Even assuming that Ender has the best training possible and that the world has a much expanded population to choose from, it is still extremely unlikely that there would be someone as young as Ender with his abilities. Ender is never convincing as a person of his supposed age.

In addition to this, though I have never seen an analysis, it seems that there are theoretical limits to how good a military commander can possibly be. Of course, superior force is a big advantage, but the commander who wields it is considered to be powerful, not good. The good commander is one who can be counted on to win a higher proportion of the time than would be expected from the size of his forces. The thing is that an army is a sufficiently complex organism that one cannot perfectly predict what it will do. This is what is wrong with Ender's Game and Gordon Dickson's "Dorsai" novels like Tactics of Mistake. A good strategy will help a lot, and some commanders might have runs of good luck and win many battles, but eventually the law of large numbers takes over. A Dorsai can figure out in advance exactly what his enemy will do, but that is only because Dickson is contriving the situation so that the enemy has only one course of action to take. In real life, commanders use whims and hunches and weigh alternatives in ways Dorsai or Ender could not psycho out. And armies are not totally obedient monolithic organisms. One can postulate that Card's insect-like Buggers will follow the commands of their queen, but Ender is victorious over humans in battle and humans are not totally predictable.

Ender's Game is a good novel, though the reader becomes impatient for something besides training to happen, then it concludes itself very quickly. Saying more than that about the structure of the novel would be giving spoiler clues as to how the novel turns out. It is worth reading, but not Hugo material.

SPEAKER FOR THE DEAD

by Orson Scott Card
Tor Hardcover, 1986, $16.95

A book review by Perry Glen Moore

1977 was a good year for science fiction. While I had been reading SF novels for several years, 1977 was the year I "discovered" the magazines. I'll never forget the first issue of Analog I read-- "Stardance" was the cover story. IASFM first published that winter. That August, Orson Scott Card was introduced for the first time through "Ender's Game". It still remains the best first story that I have ever read. Card has written many stories since, but I still rank the story of Ender as my personal favorite.

Last year, that story was rewritten and expanded into a Nebula-winning novel. As a Hugo finalist, it earned my vote as 1985's top novel. 1986 now brings its sequel, Speaker for the Dead.

Ender's Game was a disturbing novel. As one reviewer noted, it dealt in many ways with hurt -- both being hurt and hurting others. This sequel is no different. In many ways this book is about people hurting themselves: individuals who do not want to forgive themselves for something in the past.

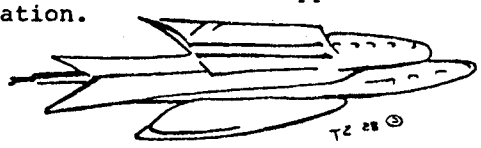
As Ender's Game ended, Ender was looking for a world where the bugger's hive queen could recreate her race. That search continues in Speaker for the Dead. Most of this book occurs on Lusitania, the planet where humans contact intelligent life for the second time. Determined not to repeat the mistakes and genocide of the first contact, Earth is very careful this time. Perhaps too careful. (I could say more here, but I do not desire to give any of the plot away.)

This is a book which must be read. Like its predecessor, it too is a disturbing novel. It is one of those rare books that really makes me think. Hurt and pain are something which we as humans like to avoid. Speaker for the Dead hurts the reader. Card has an excellent talent in making his characters come to life, forcing the reader to empathize with them as they hurt. Have you ever noticed what we do when a friend is hurting? We listen and pay attention. Card entices us to listen and pay attention. And we do!

Since a speaker for the dead tells the life story, no holds barred, of someone who has died, his job inherently deals with pain. He hurts people by his words -- the truth. He makes people see themselves as they really are. In retrospect, we see ourselves and what we do through the one who has died. Through that, those who listen will grow and mature.

Card has been a personal favorite for years. His first novelette ("Ender's Game") should have won a Hugo. He should win the Hugo this year. Speaker for the Dead is Hugo material. It is not a perfect novel. I think one reason for that is that it is painful to read it. It is disturbing. The ending is extraordinary in that it is unexpected, different, and disappointing. I was looking for something else as this book ended -- and expecting people to learn from their past mistakes. As a result I was somewhat shocked by the result. Maybe I'm disappointed because my prediction was wrong -- could that be a sign of a well-written book? Whatever, Card has once again played havoc with my emotions.

Card leaves the door open to turn these two novels into a trilogy. I eagerly await the result with both apprehension and anticipation.



BRIDGE OF BIRDS

by Barry Hughart
Del Rey, 1984, $2.95

A book review by Maia Cowan

BRIDGE OF BIRDS is fairy tale, satire, and adventure story in one, a faithful if not entirely accurate depiction of ancient China.

Lu Yu (called Number Ten Ox for his position in his family and his considerable strength) sets out on a quest to save his village from disaster. Accompanied by Li Kao, a sage with a slight flaw in his character, he encounters unlikely dangers with equally unlikely escapes, a host of colorful individuals, and divine intervention. The narrative includes brief passages of poetry and Chinese myths which enhance the atmosphere rather than distracting from the story's flow.

This terse summary doesn't begin to give the flavor of the book. But I don't want to spoil the story by giving away anything more. The introduction to Miser Shen may tell you what whimsies to expect:

> Ahead of us was an old peasant with a mule that was hauling a stone-wheeled cart that belonged in a museum.
>
> "Manure!" he shouted in a quavering melancholy voice. "Fresh manuuuuuuure!"
>
> Inside the house a rasping voice exclaimed, "Stone wheels? Stone wheels in Peking?" Shutters flew open and an extraordinarily ugly gentleman stuck his head out. "Great Buddha, they are stone wheels!" he yelled, and he vanished inside the house. A moment later I heard him scream, "Cook! Cook! Don't waste a second!" And then the front door crashed open and Miser Shen and his cook raced outside and fell in behind the ancient cart.
>
> They were carrying armloads of kitchen cutlery, which they began to sharpen against the slowly revolving stone wheels.
>
> "At least two copper coins saved, Master!" the cook cried.

If you enjoy fairy tales, history, mysteries, adventures, humor, love stories, happy endings, or inventive writing, buy this book.

INVADERS FROM MARS

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

CAPSULE REVIEW: Remake of a classic kid's SF/horror film fixes the special effects of the original and adds some really nifty aliens, but does little else for the story. See it only if you are a pre-teen.

I was 26 when I saw the original Invaders from Mars. That effectively qualifies as

missing it. For a long time I had heard how effective this SF/horror story was, but always from people who had seen it before age 10. By the time I saw it, I was too old to be drawn into the story and too much of it had been plundered by other films. I did like the almost Expressionistic sets, but I was turned off by bad costumes and the fact that it seemed a very juvenile affair.

So I was hoping that the remake would capture for me some of the feel I had missed in the original. Unfortunately, the remake is faithful enough that it too gave me the feeling that I would have liked the film as a kid, but seeing it as an adult I was really missing the punch. Much of the film is not worth seeing if you have seen the original. It is the same piece of kiddie paranoia: "I have seen something really weird and nobody will believe me the way they would if I was an adult." (Of course, that's a fallacy; anyone who tells a crackpot story is considered a crackpot.)

There are two major differences between the original and the remake. In the original, when someone was taken over by the aliens they lost the ability to act. They gave all their lines in a catatonic deadpan. In the remake, people act as if they are stoned and are desperately trying to hide it. The other major difference is that the aliens are the high point of the film. Of Close Encounters of the Third Kind, The Empire Strikes Back, Return of the Jedi, and the remake of Invaders from Mars, guess which film has the most creative concepts for their aliens? A really nice job was done on the design of the aliens and of the underground city.

The biggest disappointment is that Tobe Hooper, who made the first half of Texas Chainsaw Massacre so believable, cannot create a single empathic character here. The nightmarish feel is present only when the aliens are on the screen. A co-operation of Tobe Hooper directing, John Dykstra doing special effects, and Dan O'Bannon and Don Jacobi doing the screenplay should have resulted in a much better film. Rate this one a -1. See it for the aliens if for anything at all.

FIRE WATCH

by Connie Willis
Bantam/Spectra, 1986, $3.50

A book review by David M. Shea

Now available in mass-market paperback, the first major collection of short fiction by one of the genre's brightest new talents may miss by a small fraction being a "must read", but it's certainly a book to be recommended highly. The comparison which sprang to mind, oddly, was Mussorgsky's "Pictures at an Exhibition": a collection of charming miniatures. Willis will not blow you away with the breadth of her scope a la Varley or Palmer; she will inscribe on your soul in fine print.

In the title story, a history student from the future is sent back to 1940 London to join the volunteers who are trying to protect St. Paul's Cathedral from the German aerial blitz. Though strictly routine as a science fiction concept, the story is well written and evocative in mood; with only minor rewriting it could have been sold in a mundane market as a period piece. "Service for the Burial of the Dead" is a Victorian-gothic in which the parameters of reality become very slippery; the author admits to filching Twain's account of Tom Sawyer attending his own funeral. (There is a church sextan called "Mr. Finn", the sort of literary in-joke in which English majors delight.) "Lost and Found" is a fantastic religious allegory set in future England, when two Sunday school teachers begin finding all sorts if improbable treasures. "All my Darling Daughters" is vividly Oedipal story about sadism in an orbiting space college. The freewheeling protagonist thinks she's pretty hip, until she learns from her virginal roommate what sin is really about. A cover blurb calls this story "savagely funny"; it didn't strike me as amusing, but it's certainly savage enough -- a highlight of the book.

"The Father of the Bride", a snide sequel to "Sleeping Beauty", is probably the weakest piece in the volume; fortunately it's the shortest as well. "A Letter from the Clearys" is perhaps a little too clever for its own good; it tries to make rather too much of a thin premise, especially when a blurb at the front of the book punches a fatally large hole in the plot. "And Come from Miles Around" is an absolute joy to read, a thoroughly delightful little piece about a solar eclipse, a two-year-old, and an observant young mother. For anyone who has had the pleasure of watching small children learn, it will ring absolutely true.

"The Sidon in the Mirror" is a quicksilver tale of murder, revenge, and shifting personalities on a habitable star. (Not a planet, a star.) "Daisy, in the Sun" is absolutely one of the finest stories I've read in the last ten years. It's vivid and surreal and explosive (in a quiet sort of way), and really makes you think. It reminded me of Hilbert Schenck's excellent "Three Days at the End of the World". And I still think "Daisy" ought to have won that Hugo at NOREASCON. (Willis speaks lightly of going to George R.R. Martin's house to visit "her" Hugo; she smiles when she says this to let you know she's joking, and yet you can see she isn't, quite.) "Mail-Order Clone" is rather light and possibly a sad indictment of the American public for all its frivolous tone. "Samaritan" is, as you might guess, another religious allegory about a minister who must decide whether to baptize his orangutan servant. It struck me as a little pat, but theological shell-games are not to my taste. "Blued Moon" is about the nature of language; it makes perfect sense and is insanely funny and I laughed all the way through it.

Fire Watch contains at least four really top-notch stories, and the rest are general-

ly above average. That's a far better batting average than most anthologies can offer. I think that's more than enough reason to rate this book as one which deserves to be bought and read by any science fiction reader. Go for it.

SANTIAGO

by Mike Resnick
Tor 1986, $3.50

A book review by Maia Cowan

Mike Resnick's novels are always more than they appear to be.

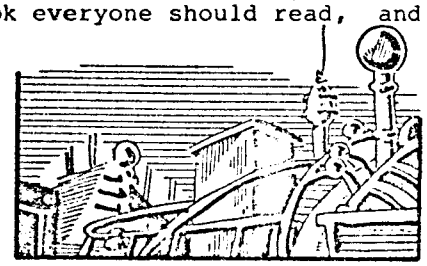
SANTIAGO can be read as "just" an adventure story; there is certainly adventure enough. But a closer look reveals layers of meaning united by the style and theme.

Santiago is the galaxy's greatest criminal, or its greatest freedom fighter, depending on whom you ask. He is certainly the greatest nuisance to the galaxy-wide government. Numerous bounty hunters have sought him and failed to return. This is the tale of one such hunter, Sebastian Nightingale Cain, following legends and rumors through the lawless Inner Frontier in a race against his ruthless rival, the Angel.

Along the way he allies with or against journalist Virtue MacKenzie, The Jolly Swagman, preacher and bounty hunter Father William, an artist called Poor Yorick, the innocent wanderer Moonripple, the deadly siren Altair of Altair, and others with equally colorful or mysterious names and pasts. Resnick fills the book with the taste of folktales, including verses from a neverending ballad by Black Orpheus, self-appointed historian of the Inner Frontier. They play out a tale of lust, greed, betrayal --and idealism-- against the vast backdrop of a galactic civilization slowly losing its war against barbarism.

The deliberate atmosphere of the Wild West is either evocative or eventually overdone, depending on the reader's tastes. The characters, though idiosyncratic in the extreme, sometimes seem to speak in the same voice as a result of the narrative style. But they each have a crucial part to play. Every scene has its separate purpose and effect, but is also a significant part of the whole story.

There is also, if you care to look, a message here --a lesson to be learned or ideas to be pondered. I suspect each reader will find something different, and each reading will reveal something new. SANTIAGO is a book everyone should read, and then re-read.



THE ENGINES OF CREATION

by K. Eric Drexler
Doubleday, 1986

A book review by Steve Bridge

I was excited to see the quote from H. G. Wells in Michael Kube-McDowell's article, "Searching for Hope", in LL #19. Just this week I finished a book by a man who sees how those successor beings will reach to the stars and elsewhere. The man is K. Eric Drexler and the book is The Engines of Creation, arguably the most important book of popular science puubished in several years. It is surely a book that must be read by every writer of science fiction (and anyone else with the slightest curiosity about the future).

Drexler's book deals with the coming revolution in molecular technology or "nanotechnology" -- the next step smaller than microtechnology. This technology would consist of tiny molecular machines which could make or repair anything an atom or a molecule at a time -- from the ground up, in a sense. Such a powerful tool could create the biggest changes in human society since the invention of printing. Every aspect of life would be altered. Manufacturing could be made non-polluting; present pollution could be quickly cleaned up. Rocket engines could be made out of diamond, if that seemed suitable, and could be made self-repairing. Computers more powerful than today's desktop models could be shrunken to a size one thousandth the volume of a human cell.

Such wonders will be possible because these devices could also be made to be self-replicating. Small factories the size of a bacterium will contain "nanomachines" attached to a molecular framework utilizing conveyor belts a few molecules wide to move parts from machine to machine. After copying themselves by the ton, they will then be able to make an incredible range of other products such as computers, skyscrapers, consumer goods, and, unfortunately, weapons of inconceivable deadliness.

Ultra-microscopic computers and cell repair devices will be able to enter aged, diseased, or damaged cells and repair damaged cell structure, eliminating old age, restoring youth, and allowing the redication of virtually all human disease and illness.

Sound wonderful? Of course. Frightening? Without a doubt. And Drexler does not ignore the fears of self-replicating nanomachines going out of control. Drexler points out that both emerging and mature molecular technology will carry with it great risks as well as great benefits. The ability to fabricate devices capable of entering living cells and reshaping them carries with it the possibliity of reshaping people and other living things against their will -- of acting as "engines of destruction" as well as engines of creation. Drexler cautions that we must begin to prepare for these developments now, or face the possibility of anni-

hilation through their misuse. Fortunately, he provides us with many, many pathways and tools for achieving a rational, balanced, and profitable control of molecular technology.

From a science fiction writer's viewpoint, there are enough fresh ideas in this book for a thousand stories. Nearly every paragraph is bursting with new thoughts about possible futures, from wonderful to disastrous. From any human being's viewpoint, it may be necessary to our own survival for us to understand this new technology. I highly recommend this book to any intelligent person (which I am sure includes most readers of this magazine). The book is clearly written in a lively style and does not demand a deep scientific background to understand the concepts. I promise that your mind will be boggled at the connections and well-reasoned projections that Drexler makes.

FOREVER AMBER

A look at the Old and New Amber series

by Ed Chambers

Roger Zelazny has written many novels and even more short stories, novelettes, and novellas. He has also won the Hugo and Nebula Awards for some of these works, but one of his most well-received works went unawarded: his infamous Amber Series (a.k.a. The Chronicles of Amber). The series consists of five novels which relate the happenings of the Royal Family of the one true city of Amber during the disappearance of its King, Oberon. The story is told through the eyes of Corwin, one of the sons of Oberon, from the time he awakens with amnesia in a private hospital. Corwin tells us, the readers, of his part in a power struggle for the throne of Amber. All other places are but shadows of the one true city. Anyone of the blood of Amber may traverse through Shadow to any place of their own design/desire. When Corwin first awakens he is on the shadow called Earth. But with the help of his brother Random, he advances toward Amber in hopes of restoring his memory. Corwin learns of the other claims on the throne and makes his own stand on the issue. Through his many brothers and sisters he learns of all the plotting and subplotting going on; but this information comes slowly and often incorrectly: no one trusts another.

One of Corwin's brothers has conspired with the strange people/creatures from the distant reaches of shadow, with people from the Courts of Chaos, the place at the ends of the world. Amber must counter these forces to save the realm and preserve peace.

The series is full of fanciful images of a wonderful fantasy world where any fantasy reader would love to be. Wyverns, manticores, a unicorn, swords and sorcery are just some of the fine fantasy elements present in the series.

The five book series consists of Nine Princes in Amber, The Guns of Avalon, Sign of the Unicorn, The Hand of Oberon, and The Courts of Chaos. The series begins with a book which can rightfully stand on its own, but this becomes less and less apparent as the series progresses, and each successive book is more and more dependent on the previous novels.

However, this is not the case with the New Amber Series, a sequel to the original five-book series. The first book is obviously only the first part of a novel. This newer series is expected to consist of three books, the first of which is entitled Trumps of Doom. The second book will be called Blood of Amber, and the title of the third book will probably be called A Rhapsody of Amber.

In Trumps of Doom we are heavily teased with a lot of little bits of information and left hanging on the loose ends of thread. We meet new characters, including a more thorough introduction to Corwin's son, Merlin, who is the protagonist. This book is more along the lines of Zelazny's Doorways in the Sand in that it is less fantasy than the Amber Series. Ghostwheel is a computer of sorts that Merlin is working on, which is beginning to get out of hand. To say too much more would be giving away the story. But Merlin is called from Amber to Earth because attempts have been made on some people's lives. Perhaps Random, the new king of Amber, thinks that if everyone is together in Amber, some control can be obtained. Everyone possible is gathered together for the funeral of one of the murdered victims. This could almost fall under the genre of murder-mystery!

It will be interesting to see the outcome of the new series and to compare it with the old one. If enough interest is generated, perhaps a rebirth of the only national (perhaps international) fan club devoted to Amber can be achieved. I am presently attempting this by obtaining information from the previous president of the club, Laurie Farkas. I assume it will keep the same name, "The Royal Family of Amber", but the nature of the organization will probably be different. Those interested can contact me:

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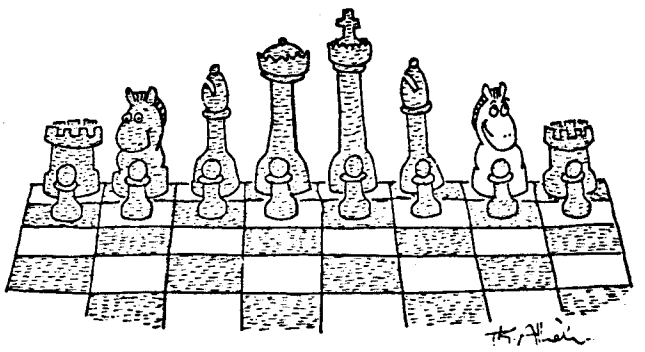


Pairs of Reviews

SPACE CAMP

CALLAHAN'S SECRET

THE FLY

SPACE CAMP

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

CAPSULE REVIEW: The old Disney formula of teens proving they can take over adult roles is resurrected in Space Camp. There are serious script problems, the worst of which is an absurd, cute, little robot, but the film does convey some sense of wonder and idealism about the space program.

Back when I was growing up, the Mickey Mouse Club showed an endless supply of stories in which teenagers did adult-like things like playing detective or learning to be airplane pilots. So they wouldn't lose the younger set they would have somebody's baby brother, Moochie, tagging along. In the end the teenagers and even Moochie would impress the adults and prove that the younger generation was going to be great when it grew up. Disney used the same formula over and over, driving it into the ground. Well, the formula is back for the new teenaged movie-goer. Producers Twentieth Century Fox and ABC-TV might call the film Space Camp, but it is really Moochie of Low-Earth Orbit.

Space Camp is about the accidental launch of high school kids into space. Now if you are like me you are probably saying that NASA has had its share of problems of late, but they all revolve around just the opposite problem: not sending into space things they intended to. How do you "accidentally" send someone into space? Well, it involves having this camp with real equipment from the real space program and plopping into the middle of it a sentient robot. The robot is not a big part of the film, but none of the rest of the plot works unless you have a robot whose capabilities are miles beyond the rest of technology in the film. So the film's credibility cannot get off the ground from the start. The robot, incidentally, was apparently based on a design in an old Chesley Bonestall painting, except that in the painting it was Bonestall's impression of a lunar lander. I am not sure if this was intended as an in-joke or not.

Once our intrepid teens get off the ground and away from Jinx the Robot, the film takes an up-turn. The story turns to engrossing, albeit cliched, space melodrama with the kids running low on -- what else? -- oxygen. They solve their problems, of course, thinking just a bit faster and clearer than a whole space agency full of adults down below.

The cast seems to be at least reasonably serious about their parts. Kate Capshaw plays the astronaut/camp-counselor. At one point she sees someone floating into a wall and urgently yells, "You'll continue to move until acted upong by an outside force." Sir Laurence Olivier couldn't deliver that line believably under the circumstances; I do hope Ms. Capshaw doesn't blame herself. Lea Thompson of Back to the Future plays a dedicated teen and the only one of any real interest.

This isn't a bad film for pre-teens and young teens but I have to give it a neutral 0.

A film review by David Yoder

I see a lot of movies, comparatively, during the summer. Local theatres offer cheap afternoon amtinees and since my house is not air-conditioned I often escape to them, as much to get away from the heat as to see the films being offered. Of course there has to be some interest in a given picture, but I am willing to take a lot more chances on movies of dubious interest or quality with the lower prices and opportunity to keep cool.

It is likely that I would have gone to see Space Camp anyway but these circumstances made it a virtual certainty. They also make it quite possible that I will see it again. This is a sort of rating system I use -- how often I am willing to see a film at half-price and full-price. There are not many movies that I feel are worth paying full-price for more than once and quite a few that I would not pay half-price for more than one viewing. Space Camp comes in at once for the former nad two or three times for the latter.

This is certainly not great cinema, but it is a pretty good "youth movie" which does not rely on titillation, slapstick, or gore for its appeal. Instead it uses an interesting story and script, a dramatic and intriguing stiuation, and believable characters going through some normal growing pains -- even if they are brought on in an extraordinary way. The idea is good drama and adequate science fiction with only the robot Jinks (Jinx?) being unbelievable and one

would assume his function is not only comic relief but also to keep the producers out of trouble with NASA.

While I said earlier that the characters were believable I do not intend to imply that the characterizations are all that great. Most of them are shallow and the kids are stereotypes. However, the stereotypes are not all that far removed from real life (except maybe for Max) and even though their expressed philosophies are simplistic and sophmoric, we are dealing with young people who can be expected to actually think this way. In fact, the mere idea of them having a personal philosophy of life and being able to verbalize it is a point on the positive side. Furthermore, despite the fact that none of the characters is very deep, most do go trhough some growth or change in that part of their personality which is shown, something I found refreshing and satisfying.

There are a lot of things one could quibble about here if you really wanted to. The kids learn to handle the lack of gravity awfully fast. They were able to handle the various shuttle tasks under that much pressure with so little training. There was a lot of time spent "gosh-wowing" under life-threatening circumstances. Some scenes were just pure hokum. So what. My only real problem was that ridiculous robot who was okay for humor but whose role in initiating the launch was ludicrous (see above comment regarding NASA) and the studied way in which the launch controllers ignored that vital flashing light.

This film was a lot of fun and very entertaining. It is well photographed and the sceince is pretty accurate. As light viewing for adults it serves quite well, and as space program and propaganda it is effective and stimulating.

CALLAHAN'S SECRET

by Spider Robinson
Berkeley, 1986, $2.95

A book review by David Yoder

Larry Niven, in response to a question on the future of his Known Worlds stories, explained that additional stories were unlikely as he had written himself into a corner. The introduction of such players as the Pak, the Ringworld Engineers, and Teela Brown had complicated and constricted things to such an extent that future explorations of that universe had become pointless if not impossible.

Perhaps Spider Robinson found himself reaching that same point and so brought Callahan's to a much more definite, and final, conclusion. It was time for the final chapter. While Spider could certainly spin out more of these tales, they would probably soon begin to seem to be parodies of themselves.

There is an essential formula to the Callahan's stories and that formula was beginning to get stale. It was possible to read through Callahan's Crosstime Saloon without a break and not have the stories' common elements obtrude too much except to give you a familiarity with the place. In Time Travellers Strictly Cash, the Callahan's material was mixed up with all the other stuff he had thrown in there in order to make a book, so once again the similarities served to settle the reader comfortably into place without much preamble. The same is true of the original appearance of the stories in the magazines.

However, by the time we get through Callahan's Secret, things are getting a bit strained. With the exception of Jake and Mickey, all the regular characters have lost a certain amount of depth. Only Mickey gets any fresh exposition and it consists of building up the non-humanness of his nature. Doc, Fast Eddie and Long Drink have all become largely cardboard cutouts on which to drape the Callahan's background. Even Callahan himself suffers, as if processing him through the fourth dimension removed a dimension from his character. Finally, the nature of Callahan's, the thing about it which makes it special, becomes sophomoric through overmuch emphasis an explanation; and somehow the final revelations about it cheapen it, makes it trite, and strip away some of the wonder which made it so appealing.

While we're at it, there were two other things that, at least for me, detracted from the enjoyment of the book. The first and most intrusive was the extensive use of computer jargon and anology. It was a dehumanizing element in the intensely human atmosphere which helps make Callahan's work. I do not say this through an aversion to computers themselves (this is being written on one) but the technology, which is important to something like Mindkiller (another very human piece of work, albeit in a different way), seems out of place in this setting.

The second is more subjective. I just do not like the cover painting. It is too alien and bizarre. Callahan's just does NOT look like that, and neither does Calahan. Who are all those strange whatevers sitting around that misshapen bar? That place cuold almost be the Draco Tavern but it ain't Callahan's. (Except for the fireplace, I would almost prefer to visualize Gavagan's Bar that way.)

While I remain a devout fan of the Callahan's stories, and fervently wish I could have found the place and met its inhabitants and will undoubtedly reread them with pleasure, some of the wonder has been tarnished.

A book review by David M. Shea

The sharing of conversation lubricated with humankind's favorite recreational chemical (alcohol) is far too universal a human behavior to be neglected by the science fiction genre; thus this field, as any other, has its share of famous bars, inns and taverns. The veteran reader has spent (metaphorically) many a happy hour in Gavagan's, the White Hart, the Silver Eel, the Tin Soldier, and Teddy's. Probably no such science

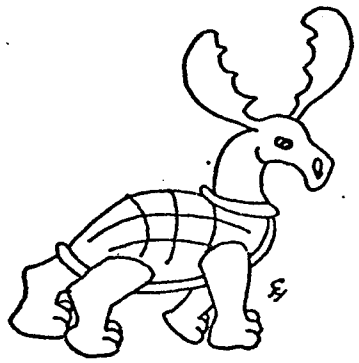
fictional bar is better known or better loved than Callahan's Place, the peculiar Long Island roadhouse where times and universes cross, an empathic band of friends solve each other's problems, and Mike Callahan dispenses Bushmill's with a generous hand as broken glass piles up in the fireplace. It is therefore at least a minor tragedy that, as Robinson emphatically states in his foreword, this will be the very last of the Callahan stories. This lends reading the book a sort of pleasant melancholy.

The book is divided into four stories, of which three are pretty good: a better than average rate. The reader who has not encountered the first two volumes (Callahan's Crosstime Saloon and Time Travellers Strictly Cash) might wish to start there; it appears both will be back in print soon. "The Blacksmith's Tale" focuses on a new difficulty encountered by and old friend, Mickey Finn, the seven-foot alien spy who is a regular at Callahan's. Not only is he seriously lonely (the last survivor of his race), but if he doesn't get some medical attention in the next two or three centuries, it's going to have a very unhealthy effect.... This story is fairly light, mainly enjoyable, and sets up some necessary background for the last story.

I'm not sure I can comment with any objectivity on "Pyotr's Story". Robinson is, in a sense, a very "private" writer: clever, witty, a good wordsmith, a topnotch technical craftsman, very skilled in manipulating the reader's emotions. Only occasionally does he bare his own soul; the Harlan Ellison mode of writing (open a spiritual vein and bleed all over the paper) is not Robinson's natural mode of expression. Such moments, when they do occur, are usually memorable ("The Law of Conservation with Pain", "Rubber Soul", and certain passages in Stardance). "Pyotr's Story" opens on such a note of shattering agony which, as it happens, was totally accessible to me. I can look back, with such impersonality as I can summon, and realize that this was only incidentally part of the actual story; but the fact is that opening scene blew me away -- to the point where very little short fiction has done for me in a long time. One hell of a story. Brace yourself.

"Involuntary Man's Laughter" is, as one might guess from the title, basically a frivolous vehicle for a bunch of bad puns (a redundant expression if ever there was one). There are times in reading Robinson's fiction that you just have to grit your teeth and wade through the pseudo-funny sludge. In this volume the story is, conspicuously, filler. Fortunately it's relatively short.

"The Mick of Time" is by way of being Robinson's grand finale and farewell to Callahan's Place. It has, by definition, to be the biggest and best of its kind. It is therefore obliged to pull in all the regular characters, set them the largest problem that Callahan's steady patrons have ever faced, and solve it. It also has to reveal Mike Callahan's final secret, tie up a vast number of loose ends, and (being a Spider Robinson story) work in a few gags along the way. Given all the constraints inflicted on the piece by all these needs, it succeeds fairly well, though a few clangingly obvious favorable coincidences are necessary to sort everything out. I would be doing both the author and any prospective reader a disservice by revealing any more of the plot -- indeed I may already have said too much. It is, however, a worthy send-off to one of science fiction's favorite watering holes; and if we can't hope for more of these stories, we can at least enjoy the ones we have. Goodbye Jake, Doc, Long Drink, Fast Eddie, et al. Lift a double Bushmill's to their memory, and especially to SF's most notable bartender, the inimitable Mike Callahan. We'll miss you all.



THE FLY

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

CAPSULE REVIEW: The remake of The Fly is more for fans of David Cronenberg films than for fans of the original story. In several ways the new film is an improvement, but overall the original is still a better film. Don't see this film after you eat.

Earlier this year we saw the release of Invaders from Mars. In my review I had said that I missed seeing the original when I was the proper age to enjoy it. I fared somewhat better with the original The Fly. I was eight years old when I saw the original at a drive-in. I was too young to be objective about the scientifically improbable plot. The script was spell-binding to an 8-year-old -- not surprising since it was written by James Clavell, who went on to write novels like Shogun and Noble House. It seemed to me that Andre Delambre has everything anyone could ever want and lost it all in a moment of carelessness -- a tragedy more affecting than anything Sophocles ever wrote. It was with a combination of expectation and fear that I heard that David Cronenberg--who made films like Scanners and Dead Zone--was going to remake one of my favorite films.

Well, apparently the original story of The Fly was put on a matter transmitter with Cronenberg and what came out was part The Fly and part Cronenberg. Cronnenberg has always been fascinated with the idea of hav-

ing physical deformity echo emotional state. Since the fusion of man and fly affects both the mind and body, it is obvious why this project appealed to him. Unlike the original, the change in the remake is gradual and the audience gets a chance to see the thought processes as a human gradually transforms into an amalgam of human and insect. This is a theme only hinted at in the original film -- Andre says that his new brain is telling him to do strange things -- but it becomes one of the main virtues of the remake.

The story, if you missed the original and haven't figured it out by now, has a scientist (Seth Brundle, played by Jeff Goldblum) go through a matter transmitter with a fly, and come out oddly mixed with the fly. In the remake a computer has reconstructed the two with mixed DNA but with a human exterior, Then slowly the fly DNA starts transforming the scientist.

The 1958 version depended for shock value on a realistic fly head for the human. This film creates a revolting-looking physical creature -- it looks like bubble gum that is still being chewed -- not at all fly-like, but more revolting. Still, it gets some of the habits of the insect.

The new The Fly is good Cronenberg, which means I cannot give it a general recommendation. If you don't mind the sort of thing Cronenberg does, The Fly is not a bad film, but not nearly as good as the original. Rate the Cronenberg a +1.

A film review by Terry L. Bohman

"A classic," a cynic once told me, "is anything older than you are." What she was perhaps trying to tell me was simply that memory is idolatrous, and the idolatry increases with age. The great classics we remember are seldom as good as our memory of them. She had a point, I suppose, but the converse must be at least as true. We remember classics precisely because they stood apart from the average, the dull, the unimaginative. Watch Cocteau's Beauty and the Beast, Scott's Legend, and Henson's Labyrinth, and marvel how magical, how alive, the 40-year-old film is. Or look at Hooper's remake of Invaders from Mars. It's not a bad film -- there are actually some delightful moments in it -- until it's seen next to the 1953 original. While Menzie's original film often looks like a production financed by garage sales, its story and direction, and its imaginative use of sets and lighting, set it quite apart from the bulk of "sci-fi" flicks of the fifties.

What then of The Fly? This 1958 film, a fairly faithful rendition of an old Playboy story by George Langelaan, sported Vincent Price in the lead role and a budget generous for a 50's horror film. Its story was a variation on a common theme: not pride, intelligence, nor the might of man's technology will prevail against the universal order. Or, as my friend might have said, the bigger they come, the harder they fall.

The story and original film concern a scientist who has perfected a matter transmitter. It works. It works perfectly, except that when the scientist tries it out, he fails to notice the fly that shares the ride. When they are reassembled in the receiving chamber, some of his atoms have been exchanged with the insect's and he finds himself with the head and the arm of the fly. What does a man with the head of a fly do? Head for the nearest cow-flop? Of course not! He tries to reprogram the transmitter to reassemble him correctly. The story and film follow his unhappy failure. The Fly was a film notable for its basic idea than for the execution. Return of the Fly in 1960 and The Curse of the Fly in 1965 were cheap, almost throwaway, sequels. And now, as one eminent critic remarked, "Ghod, they're even putting out a rehash of The Fly!!!"

So Cronenberg's film is a rehash. How good a rehash is it? Although this film is clearly a remake of the earlier one, Cronenberg has made it distinctively his own. First of all, the science is updated. We watch Seth Brundle repeatedly refine the computer program that controls how his "telepods" disassociate and reassemble molecules. After early, spectacular failures, the process works, first just with inorganic objects, finally with living creatures. When it does fail, it is a failure of the computer program to anticipate two separate creatures in the chamber. When Brundle emerges from the receiving telepod, he appears unchanged. Only much later, as he slowly, gradually, changes does he realize what has happened. The telepod has combined the two creatures, incorporating the the fly's genetic material into Brundle's.

The social context is more interesting as well. Jeff Goldblum plays the eccentric, reclusive, brilliant scientist. Geena Davis is "Ronny" Quaife, a journalist who stumbles on to Brundle's work. John Getz is Borans, the editor of Particle, a coffee-table science magazine that often employs Quaife. When Quaife tells Borans about Brundle's work, he laughs. Borans is arrogant, patronizing, and quaife's ex-lover, and his derision stimulates her interest in Brundle. And, of course, Quaife and Brundle fall in love.

What makes The Fly more than just a rehash, what makes it fresh, exciting, even touching, is Cronenberg's attention to the human relationships. Quiafe's affection for the oddball scientist, and her loyalty even as he transforms into something disgusting and repulsive, is far more interesting than the weird science. And Brundle's amused surprise at his transformation, his desperately intelligent attempts to reverse it, his wistful recollections of the way he used to be -- he saves his teeth and sloughed-off body parts in a box in the medicine cabinet -- are poignant illustrations of his character. Davis plays her character with effective force and sympathy. And Goldblum is surprising in his projection. His character is appropriately brilliant, loving, jealous, loathsome, and tenderly introspective. He is

plasible, even convincing, in an implausible role.

There is beauty in this film -- chiefly in the characters of Seth and Ronny and their feelings for each other -- but there is ugliness as well. Cronenberg is known for graphic violence, and there is considerable gore here. Brundle's slow transformation into something revoltingly inhuman clearly evokes the process of some hideous disease -- leprosy, perhaps, or AIDS, to take a more modern example. But with one brief exception, I do not consider the gore excessive. That exception concerns an unsuccessful experiment with a baboon. The scene, I think, would have worked better had we seen the blood on the telepod floor and the horror in Brundle's and Quaife's eyes, and not been shown the twitching meat inside.

Cronenberg's Fly will not likely be remembered as a great movie, but in an age of cheap, gratuitous remakes, it is a surprisingly good one. It is superior to the film that inspired it.

THE JOHN W. CAMPBELL LETTERS VOLUME ONE

Perry Chapdelaine, Sr.,
Tony Chapdelaine, George Hay,
editors
1985 AC Projects, Inc., $5.95

A book review by Maia Cowan

This book has more ideas in it per page than most have from beginning to end. Some are outrageous, some are amusing, some are inspiring. They will carry you along in a mad rush of enthusiasm until, before you know it, your own mind has picked up the momentum and is racing alongside.

I suspect that John W. Campbell himself had much that effect on people. The introductions convey a sense of the man, giving a clear picture of how extraordinary he was even while admitting his human weaknesses. These portraits are a good foundation for the letters that follow --204 of them, and this is only the first volume!

It's one thing for us young folk to hear people talk about the influence Campbell had on science fiction. It's quite another to read for ourselves, to be swept up in his vision and his personal touch: critiquing a story, asking about a writer's family, enthusing over a new theory. Yes, the man had controversial ideas, many of which could get him labeled a crackpot. Or did he espouse controversial ideas just for the response he could get?

The introduction reports that Campbell often said, "I don't care what people think, just so long as they, by God, think!" In one letter he observes, "Some while back we came to the realization that the fact people have two eyes is important --and that we must, equally, have two minds at work for basically the same reason." The letters here embody these philosophies.

You probably won't agree with many of the ideas. You may find some passages not to your interest. Just read on to the next letter; there's much here for everyone.

Readers and writers of science fiction during Campbell's lifetime will relish the reminder of what he did for all of them. The "younger generation" has almost a sacred duty to learn. You'll enjoy this book immensely whether you want to or not.

I wish I'd known the man.

WOLF OF SHADOWS

by Whitley Strieber
Sierra Club/Knopf, 1985, $9.95

A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper

This is, as unlikely as it sounds, a juvenile about nuclear winter. And it's told from the point of view of a wolf who is leading his pack from Minnesota down to Arkansas after a nuclear war. A woman (who happened to have done research on wolves the year before and so gained Wolf of Shadows' trust) flees from the city with her two daughters just after the bombs are dropped. One daughter dies from radiation burns almost immediately, but the woman and the other daughter follow, and eventually join, the wolf pack.

Strieber has co-authored (with James Kunetka) another nuclear exchange novel, War Day. In that one, only three cities were bombed, not enough to cause a nuclear winter. Apparently this novel grew out of a question he was asked by a reader of War Day: "What about the animals?" So the telling of the novel from Wolf of Shadows' point of view makes some sort of sense. Unfortunately, the result seems to be a novel that is unrelentingly depressing. While it is true that there is little to be cheerful about in a nuclear winter, the telling of the story from the wolf's point of view means that we never find out anything about why the war started, how big it was, what happened to everyone else. Yes, it's true that the average survivor wouldn't know everything, but they would have some idea of what was going on.

Perhaps I expect too much from this book. It is, after all, aimed at a younger audience. But I also think it provides too fatalistic a view -- the point-of-view character cannot do anything to influence the course of events that is destroying his world. None of his species can. For the reader to identify with the point-of-view character is to get the feeling that the reader can't either -- not just can't as a child, but can't ever. But people obviously can have an effect---people are all that can have an effect. Wolf of Shadows doesn't deal with that.

HOWARD THE DUCK

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

CAPSULE REVIEW: Pleasant re-arrangement of elements you have enjoyed in other films. This adaptation of the comic book is watchable, even good at times, but is a real disappointment for a film from Lucasfilm.

One of the most popluar comic books is Marvel Comics's Howard the Duck. Howard is a sort of adult version of Donald Duck who smokes cigars and waddles his way through a society much more like ours than anything Disney would have dared put in his comic books. Disney, in fact, sued over the similarities and the court-sanctioned compromise said that Howard had to wear pants to make him look less like Donald. Now Lucasfilm, which specializes in bringing the impossible to the screen, has done a live-action film based on the comic book.

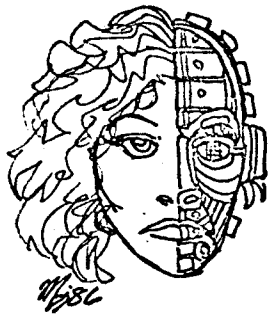
Lucas's Industrial Light & Magic special effects company developed a kitbag of standard special effects in the "Star Wars" films and some of the other films. They seem to use these standard effects like an alphabet to spell out any number of different sorts of stories. Howard is done with cable-controlled facial expressions: effect number such-and-such from Return of the Jedi. A monster here is done with "go-motion" animation: effect number so-and-so from The Empire Strikes Back. They introduce a new special effect to the alphabet of effects about as often as they start using a new letter of the English alphabet in their shooting scripts.

But not just the effects are old hat in Howard the Duck; many of the standard elements are present. There are car chases with police cars wrecked; there is a music video; the final reel has a breathless pace; the heroes of the film are college-aged; there are super-special effects, all tried and true. Other touches derive from films as recent as Ghostbusters, a film that Howard the Duck stuggles to imitate.

The story is about an alien from a world just like ours except the inhabitants evolved from ducks. An experiment catapaults one of the inhabitants instantly (sorry, Einstein!) to Earth. The first and best half of the film is about Howard's attempts to survive in our world. At the halfway point, ot thereabouts, the plot takes a sharp turn downwards as Howard and a friendly young rock singer (Lea Thompson of Back to the Future) must save the world from a threat any Saturday morning cartocn show would have been proud to have thought of.

To be fair to Howard the Duck, it is always nice to see the standard Industrial Light & Magic effects again. The scenes in space are beautiful. Howard is an enjoyable effect with marvelous cable-controlled facial expressions, even if he cannot show expression and walk in the same scene. An animated monster is of an interesting design.

If everything in Howard the Duck was something you'd never seen before -- like if you haven't seen a film since 1975 -- I could unconditionally recommend this film. Because it is such a safe collection of bankable, sure-shot, unoriginal elements, I give Howard the Duck a flat 0.



THE CYBERNETIC SAMURAI

by Victor Milan
Arbor House, 1985, $15.95

A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper

Lately, the emphasis in science fiction has been on computers. Starting with Vernor Vinge's True Names and continuing with William Gibson's Neuromancer and the cyberpunk school (or "the Neuromantics", as Norman Spinrad calls them), authors in the 80s are turning to computers the way authors in the late 40s turned to atomic energy. But most of them deal with the enhancement of one's existence through the addition of an electronic alter ego. Milan goes back to a much older idea, that of the artificially created being and applies computer technology. The result is neither an electronically enhanced human being nor an artificial intelligence, but an artificial consciousness.

In The Cybernetic Samurai, Japan has become the center of the technological world, thanks in part to a limited nuclear exchange (of which we find very little). The Japanese, though they still retain delusions of superiority over other races in general, and over Westerners in particular, like to hire Americans as engineers. Dr. Elizabeth O'Neill is one such American. Her theories about how one could create self-aware [illegible] have placed her in disgrace in the United States, but Yoshimitsu TeleCommunications thinks they may have some validity and hires her to build Tokugawa.

O'Neill has grander plans than even Yoshimitsu realizes -- she wants to instill a moral sense into Tokugawa, a personality ... in fact, to teach him the code of bushido and make him the first cybernetic samurai.

Milan does a good job of portraying the private inter-corporation battles hidden behind the public corporate alliances which are common in Japan today. He does have a major problem however -- he doesn't seem to

know the difference between Japan and China. He speaks of writing Japanese with Chinese characters and makes references to classic Chinese art and other aspects of Chinese life in such a way as to imply that the Japanese have adopted Chinese culture. This simply isn't true, and it only serves to jar the reader out of an otherwise well-drawn society.

Tokugawa himself (herself? No, I don't think so) is as fully developed as Milan's other characters. And while O'Neill at first seems drawn along the lines of Asimov's Susan Calvin, she rapidly emerges as a unique personality. Whether or not you think the scenario Milan draws is likely, his development of an electronic personality is thought-provoking. The concept of a machine evolving into sentience and perhaps even humanity is in many ways the counterpart of the cyberpunk concept of a human taking on electronic aspects. While we can identify more with the latter (as many have pointed out, eyeglasses and hearing aids are the first step toward our becoming a race of cyborgs), Milan's picture looks at the question of man versus machine from a new perspective. In fact, he shows us just how similar the two concepts are by portraying them as approaches to the same middle ground from different starting points. There is a single road connecting the human being to the machine and each one can progress toward the opposite end. Perhaps, somewhere in the middel they will meet.

Intelligent machines have been portrayed before, of course, but as logical machines (a la Asimov's positronic robots -- they are totally logical and show no initiative or personality). Tokugawa is a person in the broader sense of the term; he is one of the silicon beings that may one day be campaigning against the "Carbonists" who believe that only carbon-based life forms are entitled to rights. Read this book.

THE FLIGHT OF THE NAVIGATOR

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

CAPSULE REVIEW: Adults should enjoy this Disney-Norwegian co-production as much as the kids in the audience. It is a pleasant boy-and-his-saucer film with an acceptable high level of science fiction value.

While Disney Films' adult film of the summer, Ruthless People, is playing to sell-out audiences, they are releasing their children's film The Flight of the Navigator, a film that old Walt would have loved to make while he was alive -- uh, with some minor cleaning up of dialogue. The film has the sense of wonder he had with Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea and failed to recapture in later soft science fiction attempts.

On July 4, 1978, David hears a noise in the woods. Investigating, he falls into a ravine, picks himself up, and returns home to find perfect strangers living in his house. It seems it is now 1986 and while he hasn't changed, the world around him certainly has. A nasty government agency --unrealistically called NASA-- wants to know where a little boy can go for eight years without aging. The boy is taken to a facility for interrogation and study. This happens to be the same facility to which an odd van-sized floating object has recently been taken.

The Flight of the Navigator is no Bladerunner; it's a children's film. But it is a good children's film. It doesn't talk down to children, it doesn't have a cloying moral, it doesn't misrepresent technology. Like with Space Camp, NASA does have cute robots, but Flight's R.A.L.F. is quite within the range of current technology. It does little more than deliver mail. I am less happy with the film's making the space agency the heavy, but then so did E.T. and Starman. For a children's film, The Flight of the Navigator did a reasonable job of entertaining the adults in the audience. Give it a +1.

THE WHITE PIPES

by Nancy Kress
Berkley, 1986, $2.95

A book review by Maia Cowan

The standard features of fantasy stories are well-established: a Medieval setting, a mystic artifact, a hero/ine just discovering his or her true abilities, a villain with apparently invincible power. The trick is weaving these familiar trappings into a new and different story.

Nancy Kress manages this by centering her story not on the fantasy elements so much as on the dilemma of the poor fools caught up by them. Her heroine, Fia, is a just-adequate Storygiver, who creates something like psychic holograms for entertainment. She has spent the last ten years evading a lover, or perhaps fleeing from her own guilt at betraying him. They meet again in an obscure kingdom, and she becomes trapped in the deadly politics there and in his quest for the White Pipes, an instrument by which long-forbidden powers can again be used.

I wish that Kress had provided more background for this otherwise competent novel. What is the origin of the White Pipes? What did Brant hope to do with them once he found them? How did the queen of this unimportant land revive forbidden arts and sorceries, and how did her plotting advance so far with no one noticing? There are references to the history which determines the current events, but no clear explanation.

I can't complain about the writing, though, not at all. Kress makes her characters human, portraying the gossip of simple-minded goose girls and the conflicting desires of a devious lord with an

equal eye for detail. She didn't try to make the events or the people idealized or larger than life, as in all too many Standard Fantasy Novels. The outcome, too, is different from what readers might expect.

THE WHITE PIPES will appeal to fantasy fans who enjoy the popular themes but also like things done a little differently.

LABYRINTH

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

CAPSULE REVIEW: Labyrinth is one of finest and most imaginative pure fantasy films ever made. The story is told with wit, imagination and technical expertise that would have been impossible just a few short years ago. Take out the songs by David Bowie and you'd have a really fine film.

I missed Labyrinth on its release in my area. I had to travel about 100 miles round-trip to see it while I could still see it on a wide screen. I wouldn't do that again. No sirree! Not a mile over 85. Maybe 90. Edit out the David Bowie songs and I'd call this about the best that can be done in 1986 to put on screen a pure fantasy (as opposed to science fiction or horror). While the plot is a bit derivative of both Alice in Wonderland and The Wizard of Oz, the characters are fresh and the set design is endlessly creative.

It is historical fact that early performances of Goethe's Faust terrorized those who thought that the actors' speeches calling up Mephistopheles might be overheard by the real Mephistopheles, who might really respond. That is sort of what happens in Labyrinth. Sarah (played by Jennifer Connelly), who is a lot more fond of fairy tales than of her squalling baby brother, calls upon goblins to steal the baby. Unfortunately, goblins are real and only too willing to oblige. Now she has just 13 hours in the goblin world to rescue her brother. But to do that she must get to the castle of the Goblin King and it is protected by a huge labyrinth. The way through the labyrinth is filled with dangers, weird creatures, mechanical monsters, logic problems, and smelly bogs.

This film is the result of a co-operation between Lucasfilm and the Jim Henson Muppet people. Star Wars producer Gary Kurtz tried a similar project earlier with Dark Crystal. It was moderately good fantasy but was a bit puerile for adults and a bit slow and obscure for children. Labyrinth has enough for people of all ages but the addition of songs by David Bowie was the biggest mistake the producers made. The songs slow the film and do little to broaden the character or express any emotion. Bowie does convey the seductive evil that the Goblin King needs but when he opens his mouth to sing, the story and the film's interests are put on hold.

Labyrinth may well be the best children's fantasy ever made. Certainly no other film comes to mind that can match it at its own game. In the pure fantasy category, it's really only bested by King Kong and Dragonslayer. That's pretty good company. I had a really good time with it and have to rate it a +3.

BLOOD HERITAGE

Sheri S. Tepper
Tor 1986, $3.50

A book review by Maia Cowan

I don't read horror very often and in fact don't much like the stuff. I read this because I buy anything that Sheri Tepper writes. That in itself might tell you something.

BLOOD HERITAGE has a free-lance "problem solver" whose beautiful blonde wife died a year ago --but maybe not. A half-Polynesian graduate student who has visions, quite reluctantly. A dotty and doughty professor and his three small dogs. A half-mad old man who keeps the gates to his garden maze carefully locked. A stolid farmer, and his wife who is more than she deliberately appears to be. A demon in a bottle --or rather, quite messily out of the bottle. An even more unpleasant demon under a mountain. An ancient curse and a woman disastrously scorned. They are all brought together by inexorable but also convincing circumstances.

The necessary background is well detailed. Individual motivations, not just plot contrivances, move the story along. Hurrah for good writing!

The good people are likable --mostly-- but not without their problems. The evil people are downright nasty but ultimately pathetic. The powers are dark, the demons are unspeakable, and against all odds there is a happy ending. There's almost more chasing around than seemed reasonable, but if I had that demon after me, I'd be off in all directions, too!

I liked this book a lot, and I highly recommend it even to other people who don't normally read horror.

"Things Are Seldom What They Seem..."

An article by Sam Long

"...Skim milk masquerades as cream", as Gilbert and Sullivan have it. Everyone knows that mohair, for example, is not the hair of a mo, and that mincemeat pie is not made from the meat of minces, even chopped-up minces -- although one could invent a nomenclature, a habitat, and an ecology for both the prairie-dog-like mince and the ovine mo.

There are many things, however, that would appear to come from a certain source according to their names, but do not do so. Is the Trades Descriptions Act being violated when it comes to these? I'm afraid so. George Lanigain in his "The Amateur Orlando", writes:

> A squeek is in the orchestra,
> The leader draws across
> Th' intestines of the agile cat
> The tail of the noble hoss.

But he was misinformed: catgut does not come from cats; it is made from the intestines of cattle. (And, while we're on the subject of musical instruments, lutestring is not used for stringing lutes; it is a kind of shiny silk.) Violin bows are, however, made of horsehair.

Leather products are often misnamed. Baseballs and American footballs are commonly called the "old horsehide" and the "pigskin" -- but both have been covered with cowhide for many years. The chamois or shammy you use when washing your car does not come from the skin of the European mountain goat. Indeed not! The chamois (Rupicapra rupicapra -- scientific names like this where the generic and specific names are the same are called tautonyms; there are several hundred in the zoological nomenclature...but I digress) is an endangered species and is protected throughout its entire range. Your shammy is just a piece of ordinary sheep or goat leather. Buckskin is still often made from deerhide, since deer are commonly and widely hunted, but doeskin and moleskin are almost never doe-leather or mole-leather these days. Doeskin gloves are usually made of lambskin, or from a cloth called doeskin. Moleskin is a strong twilled cotton fabric with a soft nap, often used for work clothes. Gamekeepers like Lady Constance Chatterley's friend (and I used the word asvisedly) Mellors commonly wore moleskin breeches.

Cat's whiskers in crystal radios (remember crystal radios?) do not come from cats; they are very fine copper wires. Camel's hair brushes, well known to painters and photographers alike, are not made from the hair of camels, but rather from the hair on the tails of squirrels.

But neat's-foot oil is, in fact, made from the feet of neats. "Neat" is an old, practically obsolete word for bovine cattle -- it ought to be revived, for there is no English word for bovine cattle and such collectively: "cattle" can mean other livestock like sheep as well -- and the oil is extracted from bovine feet and hooves. But beestings is cow's colostrum, not apian armament.

The list could go on: jackrabbits are hares, not rabbits; the glass snake is a legless lizard, not a true snake, and so on. There are plastic glasses, graphite leads, lead candles formerly used in pollution measurement which aren't really candles at all; and when was the last time you saw a real sponge and not a plastic or rubber one?

That's enough. I'm going to go have a drink ... of advocaat ... which is made from distilled lawyers!*

*Advocaat is apparently so named because it was a favored drink of Dutch lawyers to relieve their aching throats after a hard and extended bout of legal eloquence; it's a sort of eggnog.

FANTASTIC VOYAGE PLANNED

by Mark R. Leeper

Some of you may have seen a book come out recently called The Jason Voyage that is about some clown who made himself a full-sized working replica of Jason's Argo. He followed the same course he thinks that the mythical Jason did. His book follows in the footsteps of Kon Tiki in which some idiot tried to prove that ancient sailing ships could have made the trip from Peru to Tahiti. Then there was The Ra Expedition, in which someone tries to show that the ancient Egyptians could have sailed to the New World.

It goes without saying that substantiating old myths can be highly lucrative. I intend to cash in on this market.

I have had made a special padded suit and helmet for myself, and I have the first two chapters written on my forthcoming book, The Dorothy Odyssey (watch for it at your local bookstore). I intend to get the material for the remaining chapters next month on my trip to Kansas.

Incidentally, if someone out there is going on vacation and would like me to take care of their small dog while they are away, I am looking for a small dog that I can use in my researches.

Long & Leeper

an interview with

FRED OLEN RAY

Conducted by Kris Gilpin

On the Sunday morning of October 20, 1985, I had the pleasure of having breakfast with filmmaker Fred Olen (Scalps, Biohazard, Prison Ship) Ray and his young son, Chris. Fred is a very personable, friendly guy, and happily gave me a good hour of his time, and this most comprehensive interview. (If any names are misspelled here, I'm sorry; it is strictly my own fault.)

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Kris Gilpin: When did you first become interested in genre films, and how did you get your filmmaking start?

Fred Olen Ray: My folks wouldn't let me watch horror movies when I was kid, and by the time they let me watch them, I OD-ed, I went overboard. Famous Monsters was a really high-quality magazine back then; I guess it was about 1964 when I got one of those, and I think that had a lot to do with it. I think I wanted to make films just because I liked monsters, and I liked monster movies. I made some regular 8mm movies -- never had any schooling -- and when Super-8 came along I made some of those. I went to school for Broadcast Electronics -- I was a TV director for a few years. I sat there and edited Alien Dead with Ed Pincus's book, Guide to Filmmaking, in my hand; I didn't even know what a Moviola [editing machine] was. My total editing set-up for that feature was two rewinds, a viewer -- and since it had "Moviola" written on it, I thought that was what a Moviola was -- and a synchronizer with a sound head on it. I never saw the film in sync until I went to do the mix in Jacksonville, Florida, which was a couple of hours away. You can't do any pacing that way; it's more of an assembly job. Alien Dead was a lot of fun because we didn't know what we were doing! We were able to fly Buster Crabbe in for a couple of days to a little swamp town outside of Orlando, Florida, and having him made a big difference to the local authorities, because they gave us police cars and unifroms; we literally got the key to the city to make this little horror movie.

KG: So Alien Dead was your first film?

FOR: Well, it wasn't the first feature, but it was the first film that looked enough like a film to call a feature. I made a thing called The Brain Leeches before that; everybody tells me that a film called Creeps is the same story. It doesn't really matter; it was a good title but a lousy movie. It was about these little aliens that looked like bugs or something, and when they're real young they're not strong enough to survive, so they get inside people's heads and turn them into zombies. Their eyes turn white and they have to wear sunglasses. A whole new society forms around them, and they go around spreading it. There's even a scene in a nightclub where there's a brain leeched-out comedian and the whole audience is wearing sunglasses; it was pretty silly. It was the cheapest feature I ever made; I think it cost about $300. It was about 70 minutes, in 16mm, but I worked at a TV station and I found all this expired black & white stock with a Mag strip [of sound] on it. They gave me the film, loaned me the camera, mikes and lights, and all I did was pay for processing. I cut it there in the studio, transferred it to video and also did the titles and sound mix on video at the station; it was really cheap.

KG: Did The Brain Leeches get a distribution?

FOR: Well, I had a nightclub comedian in it who was semi-popular and he had a company in Texas that bought the distribution rights to it. I got the impression he was going to perform live, and they were going to show the film on a big-screen TV between performances (laughs). I actually made a profit on the film selling it, but when you make a movie that bad you can't show it to anybody to raise more money for your next movie; you don't dare show it. I never showed Alien Dead to anybody to raise money, either. And Brain Leeches was just terrible. For Alien Dead I bought four rolls of film in 16mm -- it was about a $40 investment -- and, again, the station had a Bolex camera. I made a monster mask and I went out to a place in Orlando that had catwalks through a swamp, and had this guy chasing his wife; he catches her and kills her. Then, through a little group of movie-industry people in Florida called The Florida Motion Picture and Television Association, I met the producer of I Drink Your Blood, who was retired in Orlando. He came over to my house and I showed him this footage on the wall, uncut. I told him that we could probably make this movie for 15 grand, so I put up 5, he put up 5, and brought in a guy who also put up 5, and we made the movie. It actually came in for about $12,000. It took about two years, but

Alien Dead made money. We did some of the distribution ourselves; Cannon owns it now. It's on tape; I just saw it in the store the other day. We just sold out; we didn't get any profit participation from them, but we made a fairly substantial gain on the sale so it was worth not having to chase them around -- I really hate to have to chase people around for the profits they owe me. I get into that a lot nowadays with these new films I'm doing because I get a pretty hefty chunk of them now. But if you get any money, it's a windfall.

KG: What came after Alien Dead?

FOR: I made a kids' Halloween TV special which never made it on the air, never got distributed; the master tape's still sitting in my closet at home. It has Kirk Alyn in it, Ernie Ferino did some stop-motion dinosaur work, I had models -- what we didn't have was a show that anybody'd pay money to see; we had everything else. Then my brother and I came out here, and I met a guy from Florida who was out here --I met him through Alan Ormsby, who was a mutual friend of ours -- and he raised the money to make Scalps. We then made that film, in 16mm; we didn't go to 35mm until we made Biohazard. Scalps was one of those really cheap things -- we actually thought we were going to make it for four grand. We were wrong. My brother John daydreamed the story on a bus coming home from work one day, and we thought it'd be the cheapest movie ever made. 6 kids, a station wagon and a tent--you can't get much cheaper than that. We put about $9,000 into it before 21st Century [Distributors] came on the scene, and they advanced us a certain amount of money, which paid back the investors. I think the total cost of that movie was $15,000. They blew it up [to 35mm], and of course that picture really played. It played San Diego, San francisco, it played all over the South, and in Ohio, Louisiana and Texas.

KG: So Scalps made some good money.

FOR: No. That's the only film we ever made that we never made a dime on; we were dealing with 21st Century. We're supposed to get a production report every four months; it took them a year and a half to get us the first one, and even then they said we were 31 grand in the hole. We always wondered how you could be 31 grand in the hole on a movie that cost 15 grand to make! The film also sold a lot on cassette [it's on a two-for-one tape with The Slayer]. They wanted to fit two films on one tape, so they just arbitrarily cut it down -- I think they only cut about 8 minutes out of each movie. Some of the cuts were pretty good, some of them were just stupid. We also had a lot of shooting problems on Scalps. We had Director of Photography troubles, and the film had to be sent to Washington DC for developing. We'd get our dailies back after a month, so by the time we saw problems, we didn't have a chance to reshoot if we needed to. I wanted to show people that I actually could make a good picture, so I almost immediately started on Biohazard. It started out really well because we had a financial backer going for about 150 grand, which to us was a lot of money, and one of the guys who was in the film worked for Panavision, so they loaned us Panavision cameras for free; it even came with a Ford van to drive them around in! Sometimes we even had two Panavision cameras going at the same time on the set which, financially, is almost unheard of. I had a really good DP and I had a pretty good monster suit, and I had a good monster who worked for Oreos and M&Ms [Fred laughs, indicating his young son] --Chris the monster! I had Angelique Pettijohn in it, and it was going OK; we'd shot about 8 days and were waiting for the paychecks, but they never did come. We had only spent about 12 grand, had about 35 minutes of the movie done, and the company just went dead. They didn't go bust, they just had another movie of their own they were making, and when things got tight ours was the first project to get the ax. We didn't even get an official word; we never got an answer; it was like they'd just forgotten all about us! Fortunately, the negative was in our name, but there was a time of about 6 to 8 months while we were desperately looking for someone to put up the money to finish this movie. We didn't want to go back to 21st Century because they'd ripped us off on Scalps, but I finally thought that I'd rather lose money myself than to see the crew and cast not get paid on this production and look bad in town. I really couldn't go into another movie with this one hanging here. So we set up an arrangement with 21st Century, and instead of 150 grand the budget ended up being 60 grand, still in 35mm, and we were still able to have a lot of rotoscope/animation effects, and even a couple of pseudo-hack names. It shows its budget in the fact that there are a lot of driving scenes that were cheap to do to eat up time, but the picture has a very good, professional look. It's now out on Continental Video. And a new person in charge at 21st Century has called me and said that they want to "make amends" for all the bad things that had happened to me, and that they were going to release Biohazard in theaters in Spring of 1986. And I said, "Well, aren;t you gogin to change the title because it's out on Video?" They said no, that the film Warning Sign was doing them a lot of good; Warning Sign used to be called Biohazard until I stopped them.

KG: So did Prison Ship come after Biohazard?

FOR: No, that was The Tomb. Regarding Prison Ship: during Biohazard, one of the actors had built this set in his living room; we built the flats for a lab set and we knew we'd have to rent a place to put it in, so we went down to Roger Corman's and found a spaceship set there and some leftover sets from The Lost Empire. We asked someone, "How much would you rent this to us for?" They said, "How about $150 a day?" I rented it

for four days, two weekends; I only needed it for one day for Biohazard, so I ran a Drama-Logue [a publication mainly for actors] ad real fast and I found some girls; we went to Zody's and bought some Flashdance sweats for girls and doctored them with stenciled numbers, and we made these girls prisoners. We rented some guns from Spacehunter and one of the suits from Metalstorm; Aldo Ray was working for us from Biohazard, and I asked him, "Do you want to work an extra day?" He said sure, so I threw all these people together and I shot all these scenes for this women's prison/space movie, then we wrote a script around the scenes; it languished around for about a year before somebody actually came along and produced it. So we did that short promo reel at the same time we did Biohazard, but we finished it after we did The Tomb. That clip of Prison Ship that is in the video Sleazmania was fairly old.

KG: What was The Tomb about, and how did it come about?

FOR: I turned Biohazard in last August; we also distribute films too, but as far as making films go, I didn't have anything to do. A buddy of mine was a reader for New World, and he was evaluating F. Paul Wilson's novel The Tomb. I told him, "You know, there's a public domain H.P. Lovecraft story by the same title." I was thinking about the old Biohazard problem with that title, so I thought, I ought to just go shoot anything and call it The Tomb, run a big ad at the American Film Market, wait for New World to come running and screaming at me, and then I'll let them buy me off.

KG: (Laughing) That's great!

FOR: 20th Century Fox tried to buy me off from the Biohazard title, but it wasn't enough money for me, but I thought I'd take that amount of money to change this title because I'm doing it specifically for that purpose. I was plotting this out (laughs), and I was going to use the money they'd pay me not to use the title to make my movie! Meanwhile, one of the guys who worked for me -- Bob Tenell; he used to have a fanzine of his own called DEMONS OF THE MIND, and he also worked for Questar magazine---calls me, very excited, because he's making a student film and some set company was going to loan him the temple set from that Indiana Jones/blue jeans commercial. And he was singing the blues because the Comlumbia College of School wouldn't let him on their stage for more than 8 hours a day. I said, "I'll pay the transportation to get the set up to the Valley in a studio, and you can have it from 7 in the morning to 7 at night Saturday and Sunday, and I'll take it from 7 PM to 7 AM on the same nights; then we'll take it back. So we got this tomb set and it looked great, so I went out and rented a mummy case and some big cat statues, and typed up twenty pages of a script, which basically dealt with these guys coming into a tomb and opening this mummy case where a vampire girl from 1000 years ago is, and she kills some of them. It's really tough because you're trying to film the opening of the movie and the closing of the movie without knowing what goes in between. So we did fifteen pages the first night, which is a lot; we did 5 pages the next night, which were just full of special effects. We made a promo reel and had some artwork done and took it to a friend of mine (who produced The Wizard of Speed and Time, Mike Jittlov's new movie), and in a couple of days he had a deal: 180 grand. It actually went up to $188,000 before the film was over, but we made this movie. It wasn't really the kind of movie that we were looking to make; I don't even know why we made it.

KG: So what happened on the distribution of Biohazard and The Tomb?

FOR: Well, they say that Biohazard the film will be in theaters in Spring of '85, and Biohazard the tape is in stores now; you can get it anywhere. It's sold 10,000 copies, which is a lot. If it doesn't come out in theaters I will be disappointed, because it's our first film in 35mm and we put a lot of time and effort into it; and The Tomb is going theatrical overseas but it's going straight to cassette in the U.S., and I'm real disappointed. If I'd known that I wouldn't have worked so hard on this thing. When you look at The Tomb, you see it's got a great cast and great effects; it's an action/suspense/horror film and has a lot else going for it. It has about 7 rock & roll songs, and a real weird, comedic feel about it. So I'm kind of bummed out about this because I don't make films for videocassettes; I make films, I don't make videos. That Prison Ship is going theatrically and will do really well is some consolation -- that and the fact that I'm doing another film this year, which will be my third feature for the year. I think that's the most films directed by anybody, outside of porno, in maybe 20 years, since Corman did it in the 50s. I didn't get started until March, so maybe next year I can do four; I'd rather just do two pictures a year, and make what I would off of four.

KG: Who is distributing Prison Ship?

FOR: Well, I don't know yet. I'm working with Jack Harris and he's produced a lot of movies like this. He's going to market it to sombody much larger than himself for distribution, and I think we're going to make a lot of money. It took a lot of time and effort before anyone liked The Tomb. It took a lot of cuts and it took all the effects and music before anybody said, "I like this. This is OK." Prison Ship is one of those movies which, in its rough cut stage, gets applause, gets laughter -- and that's a good indication of success. Jack thinks it's Warner Bros./Paramount material. I don't think it's that kind of material, but I think we can look at a solid, modest profit out of

the picture. I don't think it's a blockbuster, but we're already working on the sequel -- we were working on it before we started the first one. It's really silly because this is how anxious people were to get this project going. They're not going to call it Prison Ship anymore, though; they're going to call it Star Slammer (laughs). There were a whole bunch of titles like Space Angels in Cages; the main thing they were trying to do was how to make the picture cheap by giving it a cheap title, such as Galaxy in Chains. I think everybody's gonna reluctantly agree on Star Slammer because nobody reall hates it; only a few really love the title and everybody else says it's OK. It's really a crackerjack movie because of the actors and the costumes and the sets. Ross Hagen's in it, and he's also a producer and director, and he's just wonderful as the lead villain. Susan Stokey, from Jeff Obrow's The Power, is also in the film, and she's excellent. And Dawn Wildsmith plays Muffin, the real evil warden's pet-type character with the eyepatch -- these people really made this movie come alive. John Dodds did a giant rat, and again we had costumes from Metalstorm, Android, Galaxy of Terror; we had the Logan's Run hovercraft for our Bantor ship on the planet. We filmed at Iverson movie ranch, or what's left of it now.

KG: What came after Prison Ship?

FOR: That's where we are right now: The Tomb and Prison Ship.

KG: So how many movies does that make in how many years?

FOR: Well, if you count The Brain Leeches, it's been seven features in about eight years [Fred is only 31 years old]. I've been in L.A. for four years now and I've done five features here; I did three of them this year, though. It was like pulling teeth to raise money for movies back in Florida, and if you live in Florida you are not in a good position to visit all the distributors to find the best deal. You have to rush to Hollywood or New York, and you have three days to pick out who you can hit in that amount of time; then you have to go back. And we really had a lot of respect from the people in Orlando for making features, and that's the state of that place---that people who make crappy little movies like those can be thought of as important because there's so little going on in Florida. It was a good move to come out here, and I worked for a lot of places before I caught on. I worked for Sterovision, a 3D movie company, and I worked as a special effects prop builder, and I did some make-up out here -- on Earl Owensby's The Dogs of Hell -- Rotweiller, which is on tape now. And I sliced the shit out of my hand on a sickle while working on Friday the 13th--3D, and I don't even think they used it. I was cleaning this sickle and somebody hit my hand; my hand went along the edge of the sickly and cut it right to the bone -- there was so much blood. It was the closest I've ever come to passing out. I just said, "Whoa, catch me!" (laughs) That was the end of my special effects/prop-building days, but I'd done a lot of it on a lot of movies up to that point, such as for Beastmaster.

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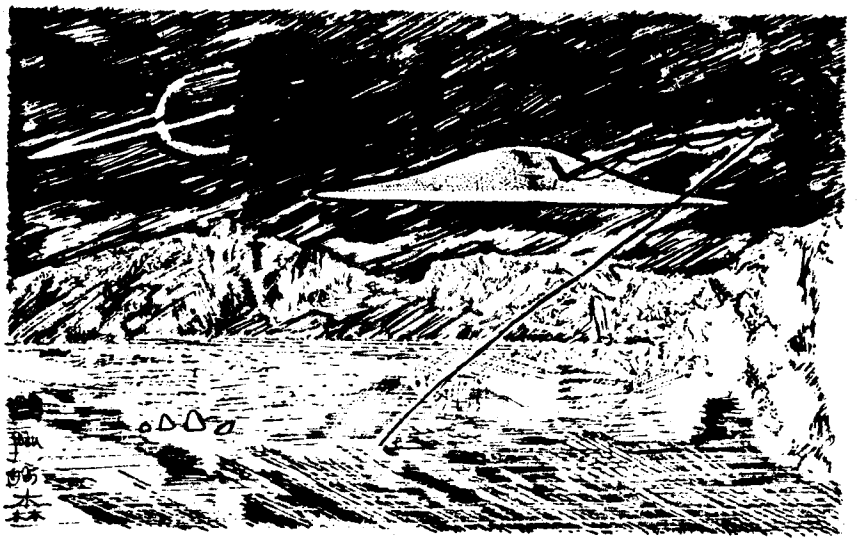
Many thanks to Fred Olen Ray for such a complete and candid interview! It was a pleasure, and fascinating for me to hear the story of his career. His new movie is The Jade Jungle.

Gilpin & Ray

ASK DOCTOR SCIENCE FICTION



by Doctor Science Fiction, Ph.D.*

Yes, friends, it's time once again to Ask Doctor Science Fiction. All those apparent scientific improbabilities, literary anomalies, plot contrivances, and fascinating but unlikely inventions can be made as clear as a Denebian sklat-groveller by Doctor Science Fiction's hubristic elucidations. Remember, he or she knows more than you do, or at least puts on a better show of it.

[*Purely hypothetical Degree]

"Why can nothing in the universe ever exceed the speed of light?"

It isn't true that nothing can exceed the speed of light. In fact, the only thing that can't exceed it, is light.

The reason that all light moves at the speed it does is that no single photon can stand the thought of another photon showing it up. So they all whiz about at their absolute limit of endurance, all the time.

Everyone and everything in the universe recognizes that light is terribly insecure but also fiercely competitive. Since it is also necessary to life as we know it, we all have to be very careful to avoid further disturbing its already precarious self-image. If anything outraced the photons, the trauma might cause them a total emotional breakdown, with consequences too horrible to contemplate. So, by mutual agreement, all matter in the universe moves at a speed which will not threaten light's ego.

When we finally achieve faster-than-light travel it will be thanks not to cold-hearted engineers and machinery, but to a skillful and compassionate cosmic psychotherapist.

Ask Doctor Science Fiction

"What did all those Bug-Eyed Monsters on the covers of old SF pulps do with all those beautiful human women they were carrying off? Given the anatomical differences, they couldn't be interested in them... well, you know, that way."

Doctor Science Fiction, being a person of breeding and refinement, does not know what you mean by "that way," but that is of little consequence since Doctor Science Fiction does know what the Bug-Eyed Monsters, or BEMs, wanted with the women.

Those galactic species which have achieved interstellar space flight have also overcome their aggressive tendencies. Instead of fighting wars, they solve their differences by competing in party games.

The BEMs depicted on those covers are finalists in a galaxy-wide scavenger hunt which will determine who has exclusive trade rights in the Q!art'kGxim galaxy. The challenge round requires them to follow vague instructions for the needed items. They will be judged on imagination and initiative rather than on ability to follow specific instructions.

The human women were seized for item #12, "Bring back the most repulsive thing you can find from an obscure barbaric planet." The apparently lascivious looks which the BEMs are bestowing on their captives are actually triumphant grins, so confident are they of winning.

Unfortunately for them, the plethora of BEMs who brought back human women cancelled each other out. The contest was won by *"?"# of the Clumbis sector, who brought back an Egg McMuffin.

If there is anything in the known, or especially the unknown, universe that you want to know, send your questions to Doctor Science Fiction c/o This Publication. Remember, he or she is a real doctor, in a different time continuum!

CARRYING COALS TO GREATER NEWCASTLE

An article by Mary Long

Rather like history, at times my mother's life seems to be one darn thing after another. And I don't mean toeless socks.

She's taken flight from an enemy bomber*, opened the front door to a purple man**, and was once, due to a misunderstanding, thought to have gone out into the garden one bitterly cold night to shin up a ladder in order to get into her own bedroom -- all this, mark you, at a house situated on a well-lit and frequented main bus route. And we're talking about a woman who, once abed on a cold night, will not get up again for any reason -- nay, not if Gabriel himself were to sound the Last Trump on the landing outside. As a matter of fact, she did once break into the house via the kitchen window, but that was because she had forgotten her keys. Nowadays duplicate keys are held by family members; the busfares involved in fetching them are cheaper than the cost of having to install new glass.

In my mother's case, travel boggles, rather than broadens, the mind. Whilst she has not, to my knowledge, ever emulated G.K. Chesterton's itinerary of going to Birmingham via Beachy Head, she has had many eventful journeys. One of the more eventful was by bus (as the railwaymen were on strike) from Newcastle to Camberly in Surrey by way of Buckingham and London. In the course of her peregrinations, the bus broke its back axle and had to be towed into Tring by breakdown lorry. It was, of course, raining at the time. The resulting delays caused her to miss her connection in London, where, at the Victoria Bus Station, there were huge queues (that particularly -- or perhaps peculiarly, in both senses of the word -- British custom, would be a more apt adverb) snaking around the hall in great loops around the bus-bays. Despite the crush, she managed to catch the next bus south. As it finally neared her destination, two men began to fight in the aisle. The driver broke up the contretemps in time to prevent a third man from joining in. I like to think that one of the pugilists thought the other to be a railwayman....

Now, wouldn't you think that this would be enough excitement in 24 hours for anyone? Not so! Next day she was off to Reading to purchase a stewpan. Well, she got there all right, but on her return the bus doors stuck and passengers who wished to alight or board had to exit or enter via the emergency door. This door, on English buses at least, always seem to me to be set so high that in the event of, say, the bus catching fire, I've often wondered if passengers would be able to escape without breaking limbs. Indeed, it was not a limb which got broken on this particular journey: it was Mum's seat, which collapsed when she sat down in it.

Now that I think on it, she <u>has</u> done part of the Chesterton tour to which I refer above. It was on a Birmingham train that she found herself sharing a compartment with a young man and a very young boy. Suddenly, into the compartment rushed another young man -- and shot the first one! With a cry the corpse fell to the floor, its head on her feet. Needless to say, the young boy was terrified almost out of his wits, and cried, as English urchins will, "Eeee, missus, is he OK?" Mum moved her feet from under the corpse, primmed her lips -- a trait I have inherited from her and display when annoyed; I'm told the sight of it makes strong men faint -- and summoned the guard. The corpse and his friend, somewhat shamefaced over the backfiring (no pun intended) of their practical joke, were both ejected from the train

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* A couple of years before I was born, she was in a small Oxfordshire town when a German plane, making the only raid on that town during the entire war, made a low pass over the crowded market-place in which my mother and older sister stood at the time. Miraculously, the plane did not strafe the packed humanity below it; Mum said later that she didn't think at the time how silly it was to take cover under a <u>car</u>.

** Keith Bridges, on his way to a con, had dyed himself (to the waist, as it turned out) with a gentian violet for his entry -- as a Sirian dustman, as I recall -- in the Fancy Dress. When I asked her later what she had thought (she having pooh-poohed my nephew's and niece's reports of "a purple man in the garden" just before she answered the doorbell), she said, "I'm used to your odd friends." However, she welcomed Keith, his wife Jill, and the baby cordially enough, and gave them tea. A very English reaction, that. Keith, incidentally, won first prize; and the nephew and niece didn't stop talking about him for months....

at the next stop. I can't, however, recall if it was that train or another when the window suddenly shattered -- from either a rock dropped from an overpass or a pellet from a pellet-gun.

To get back to the main seam of my article... (just a little pitman's joke there -- and with some coal seams, they need very little pitmen indeed!). A few years ago, Mum decided to return to Tyneside from Oxfordshire town where she had been living. As a family, we have moved almost as many times as fen are traditionally supposed to do. The first move I made with her was as a child of four. On that occasion, Dad being away on a job, she had to go with the furniture on the lorry, because the driver did not know the whereabouts of the new house. My older sister went in style -- on a bus -- whilst my brother pushed my younger sister and me in the pram, walking all the way across the city. But the move to which I refer was for a greater distance, and there were more goods and chattels involved (though no children, as we had by then all flown the nest); more careful planning was therefore required. My brother-in-law hired a pantechnicon for the move, and we all went round to help load it up. Mum had pretty well completed the packing when we arrived, to the extent of having removed a sort of glass-fronted mini-stove which had been installed in the original open fireplace in the house. How she managed this on her own I know not, because it took two strong men to shift it when it came time to get it into the lorry. Even then, it almost gave both of them hernias, and what it did to the springs on the lorry, I shudder to think. We carried furniture out in relays. The more we loaded, the more there seemed to be. One almost felt the stuff was breeding. The three bedroom house yielded, among other things, several armchairs, a couple of couches, a double bed and three or four single beds, not to mention four wardrobes.

These wardrobes are something of a family joke. Ever since she was first married, wardrobes have proliferated in Mum's household. The house she was leaving did in fact have two built-in closets, also, but she was moving into a one-bedroom flat. One of the first things she bought when she arrived was ...another wardrobe (because, she said, she needed the storage space). However, I'm getting ahead of myself. Back to the story.

The last items to be loaded were a lawn-mower -- an item we found rather comical, since there wasn't a blade of grass within ten streets of where she would be living -- and several sacks of coal. (Now, don't jump to conclusions!) She had got one of the neighbor's sons to sack the coal remaining in the coalhouse so she could take it with her. As she said, "Well, I wasn't going to leave it."

These bags of coal were, of course, extremely heavy, and the men took them out one by one to pile them by the back of the lorry to awat loading last of all. We women left them to it and went inside. Mum made tea. It was getting cold, night having long since fallen. Most people on the street were long abed. I carefully packed the budgie (parakeet) into a large box with airholes punched in before I put the bird into it -as I said, we thought of everything -- and then went to perch myself on the windowsill to wait for the men to finish locking up the lorry and come in for their tea before the cavalcade set off for the North.

They arrived rather suddenly, chanting numbers in sequence. Blood trickled down one face. "What happened?" we shrieked in chorus.

What had happened was that two men had just arrived by and either seen or hit one of the coal-sacks lying by the side of the pantechnicon. They were somewhat the worse for drink, and likely thought they had killed somebody, because of course the bag was lying in the shadow of the van and looked rather like a crumpled body. They got out, very aggressive, and demanded (with some sort of tortuous intoxicated logic) that the van be opened so they could see what was inside it. Naturally enough our chaps refused. Fisticuffs resulted, hence the blood. The chanted numbers were those of the car's license-plate, noted as the men roared off. The police were summoned and arrived very quickly, lights and siren going. As the police tore along the road, all along the street lights came on, and I could see people in dressing-gowns standing in the doorways, evidently having gotten out of bed to see what was going on at our house. It had hit midnight by then, and I believe some of them thought Mum had been trying to do a moonlight flit and had been caught at it! After the police took statements -- one of the constables who responded was the son of the man next door, funnily enough -- they departed. (The men in the car were eventually traced and the case got to court, but no conviction was made.)

Anyhow, after the fuss had died down, Mum, the budgie (squawking indignantly in its box), my sister, and brother-in-law set off on the two-hundred-mile journey ahead of them. When they arrived several hours later, the rest of the family were waiting. The travellers laid down to rest, whilst the other two brothers-in-law, being fresh and raring to go, began to unload. First out of the lorry was the mini-stove. With much effort they wrestled it off the tailboard and, staggering under its weight, hauled it up the stairs to the flat, which was on the first floor (or second floor, as it would be in this country). The stairs, old as they were, creaked and groaned alarmingly under the weight of the mini-stove, and one of the men struggling with it later swore that the steps actually bent. When they got to the top they put it down.

And then they discovered that the ashpan, in all the excitement, had not been emptied.

So when Bob Tucker tells you he knows someone who carried coals to Newcastle***, you better believe it. There are certainly witnesses to the fact, even if the stairs have straightened out again by now....

***Actually, it was to Gateshead, but that's only on the other side of the Tyne. One could, if one didn't fear the wrath of Geordies in general, call it Greater Newcastle ...but I wouldn't advise it.

THE ECKLAR TAPES

A review and commentary by Lan

Genesis and Horse-Tamer's Daughter: Off Centaur Publications, PO Box 424, El Cerrito, CA 94530. $9.00 + postage

Divine Intervention: Air Craft Recording Studios, Dormont Square, Pittsburgh, PA 15216. $8.00 + postage

Back at my first big convention, CHAMBANACON, I had a taste of filksinging. Most of the songs I heard then were to tunes I knew, but, of course, the words were changed to reflect SF and fantasy themes. Bob Asprin, Al Frank, Bob and Ann Passovoy, Moonwolf, Murray Porath -- all had some interesting songs to sing...and play up. I suppose I would have continued to go to filksings regularly had I not gotten seduced into other aspects of fandom. I still drop in to hear a song or two, but I'm usually busy party-hopping or looking for someone to stay very long.

Jump six years later. I began hearing almost totally original material being produced from various filkers. Murray Porath, Mike Stein, Steve Simmons, Clif Flint, Mark Bernstein, and many others started to write and perform their own composition (following in the steps of Leslie Fish, who seemed to have been the only well-known filker to compose her one material). And from Pittsburgh I heard of a singer named Julia Ecklar. She had a good voice, so I was told, and wrote some very good songs.

I first heard her sing at the wedding of Naomi Konoff and Randy Pardue. She sounded all right, but the outdoor setting wasn't exactly conducive to appreciating her voice. In the months and years that followed I heard more and more about her, and from her. As the Guest of Honor at CONFUSION and CONTRAPTION Julia made a big impression on me. Maia and I picked up her tape Genesis, and didn't get a chance to play it until we were on our weekly sojourn to the comic store. The songs on the tape were fun, delightful, didn't really do her voice justice, but we enjoyed them very much. Then came the end of the first side.

The last song was "God Lives on Terra". Misty-eyed I turned into the parking lot at the comics store and waited until the song finished. Maia was affected similarly. After a few minutes, we were able to go into the store. That was one powerful song, and decided for me that Julia Ecklar was the best filker in fandom. Since then I have been anxious to get her tapes.

Other songs on the Genesis tape included several based on themes from the Star Trek movie, The Wrath of Khan. "Born Again Trek" is a humorous piece about the initial release of that movie. "Rest Stop", written in collaboration with Leslie Fish, has been advertized as a "future trucker's song." "Lost", the only other collaborative piece (written with Pat Beese), is a lovely, sensitive, lover's lament. Also included is "Daddy's Little Girl", Julia's chilling song based on Stephen King's novel Firestarter. Back-up vocals were provided by Leslie Fish.

Horse-Tamer's Daughter was the next tape we purchased, though it actually predates Genesis. Again, it did not do justice to Julia's voice, but all the songs were well done (though I have fewer favorites on this tape than on Genesis). Only three songs here were written totally by Julia: "Temper of Vengence", a rather blood-thirsty song of revenge; "A Rose for Emily"; and "Miracle Worker", based on the movie of the same name. Except for "The Bait", which was written by Lackey and Ecklar, the rest of the pieces were composed by other filkers, most notably Leslie Fish. From the very humorous "Black Widows in the Privy" to the serious (and almost too long) "The Horse-Tamer's Daughter", based on the Darkover books of Marion Zimmer Bradley, Julia shows off her vocal range and talent. Of special note is "Signy Mallory", written by Lackey and Fish, which is based on C. J. Cherryh's Downbelow Station.

Aside from Julia's voice, other vocalists were heard as back-up: Leslie Fish, Bill Boyd, and Joey Shoji (who is becoming one of the best male singers in fandom).

Then came the 1986 Worldcon and Divine Intervention.

As a nominee for the Best Fanzine Hugo, I did want to have something ready to say if I should actually win (which I did). On Saturday afternoon before the evening Hugo ceremony I retired to my room alone to think about it and make some notes. I was keyed up, but tried not to think too hard about really winning (I would get very excited anytime I did, so I didn't let myself get carried away by those thoughts). Since I had bought Divine Intervention the day before, but had not had time to listen to any of it, I put it on. It wasn't a mistake, but I could only listen to the first two cuts before I had to turn off the player.

The orchestral overture blending into "Ladyhawke!" demanded that I listen. The music flowed from the small tape player and gripped me in a spell of joy and excitement. Several times before I had heard Julia sing the song she had written for the movie Ladyhawke, but it never sounded like this, or this good. The second cut, "Crimson and Crystal", started out simply with Julia and her guitar, which built into a good rock arrangement that would top most of what passes for music on the radio. With tears streaming, I turned off the player.

In our separate ways, Julia and I had reached high points in our fannish careers. Julia now had a good chance to capitalize on her talent. I didn't envy her one bit; she deserved this, and other people had to hear her and her voice, experience her talent. My tears were joyful, and a release of pent-up emotions. I could not listen to the rest of the tape until after the ceremony that evening, when I would really appreciate it.

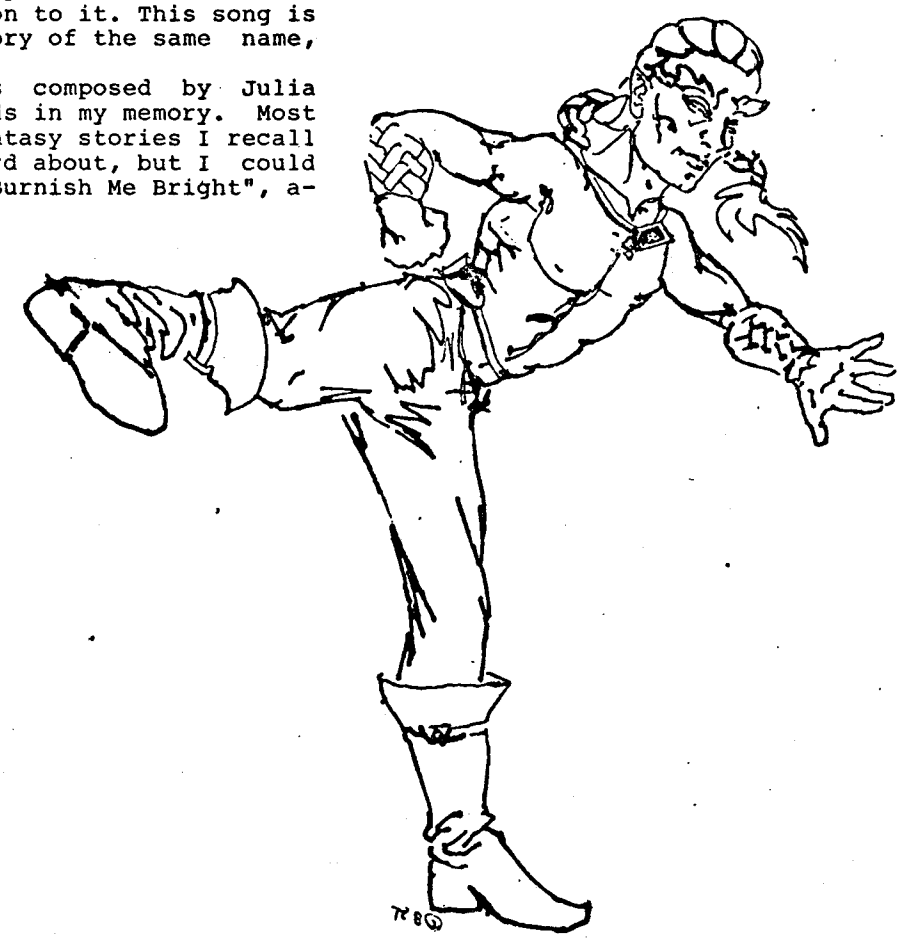
Indeed, I have listened to Divine Intervention, probably about 50 times already. I haven't tired of it yet. All the songs were written by Julia except the "Overture" (by Michael Moricz, who also arranged all the music), "Crimson and Crystal" (by Cynthia McQuillin), and "Lullaby for a Weary World" (by T.J. Burnside). A couple of the songs are a bit over-orchestrated, but that doesn't detract from appreciating them. I heard Julia sing "Temper of Revenge" in person and on the Off Centaur tape, but this version added a larger dimension to it. This song is based on the short story of the same name, also written by Julia.

Most of the songs composed by Julia struck responsive chords in my memory. Most are based on SF or fantasy stories I recall reading or having heard about, but I could not place them all. "Burnish Me Bright", about mute whose life is changed by a "wizard" who teaches him mime, is one I can't place; nor "The Hand of God", about a man leaving for the outside against the wishes of the religious leader of a shelter. "Survivor's Song" could be related to any nuclear disaster film.

Based on Gene Wolfe's Tetralogy, The Book of the New Sun, "Terminus Est" is better in this rock version than hearing Julia alone with her guitar, and would also probably be a hit on commercial radio. "Fallen Angel" relates Kirk's (and Julia's) feelings on the death of the Enterprise in Star Trek III. "Crane Dance" is from The Karate Kid.

"One Man Magical Show", done in a honky-tonk style is a nice fun piece, in contrast to the seriousness of the others. In "Silver" a singer warns a young woman away from him and his guitar-playing talent, and "Lullaby for a Weary World" is a sensitive plea for peace. Its effect on me was similar to that of "God Lives on Terra".

I could say more about each one of the pieces, but they should first be experienced then talked about. Divine Intervention is a polished jewel among the uncut gems of Julia Ecklar's previous tapes. Get it. And get the others too. You won't be sorry.



The Ecklar Tapes

CONREPORTS

by Lan

RAMBLINGS 21.1

School was much easier to deal with after CONTRAPTION. The convention had left me with a pleasant glow because of the comments I had received from the fans. They were very supportive of my Hugo nomination, and I was flattered when asked to autograph the chapbook which had my story in it.

It was a short week between the high of CONTRAPTION and the low of CINCLAVE. Maia and I gathered our things together, I armed myself with aditional copies of LAN'S LANTERN #19, and we headed for downtown Cincinnati as soon as I got away from school on Friday afternoon.

CINCLAVE I

CINCLAVE was a lousy convention but I had a good time. Joan D. Vinge, Ed Bryant, Chip Delany, Mike Kube-McDowell, Mike Banks and a few local authors were there, along with Jim Frenkel. The Dorsai Irregulars were hired for "crowd control", a much needed group for the 200 or so attendees! What the hey--they got free room and memberships. The filksing was great -- both nights, even if there were mundanes dropping in.

One other good thing about the con was that I got to see some people I hadn't seen for a long time. Aside from Joan D. Vinge and Chip Delany, there was Jim Odbert, Murray Porath, Ted Reynolds, and Paula Robinson. Anna Zahn was also there, without Tim and Corwin. All these people made the con worthwhile, but if there is a CINCLAVE II, I won't be going to it (unless I win the lottery or something).

RAMBLINGS 21.2

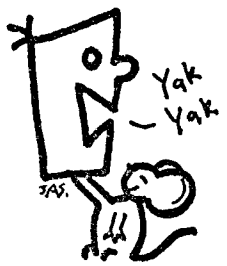
The early part of May was filled with the usual school activities. Charlie Brown's editorial in the May LOCUS gave LL a big boost, and some people sent requests for a copy. I applied for and got money for faculty summer studies. I would be using the money to do two things: to observe math teaching methods in Canada (specifically talking to and attending Humberside Collegiate with Mike Glicksohn); to go to cons and talk to writers who will be celebrating their golden anniversaries in the next three years, and to fans who remember them from "way back when". The money I asked for was to cover transportation, room and board for the short trip to Canada and three conventions. The money they gave me was merely the amount I had asked for to cover the convention hotel fees, and I was supposed to use it for both projects. I was rather put out by that, but it was better than no money at all. I did make some contacts and had a wonderful time exploring both projects.

I also put together and mailed out copies of LAN'S LANTERN #19, and worked to get #20 finished. Since I had so much material, and a backlog of conreports to cover, I wanted to have the issue out as soon a possible. I set MIDWESTCON as the date for distribution, and worked hard to finish the issue by then.

MARCON XXI

I missed MARCON last year because of the wedding of Michelle Fisher and John Donat, so I was glad to attend this year. Although the hotel had put in a new air conditioner, it didn't work, so the convention facilities were extremely warm. Even our room which had an individual air conditioner wasn't powerful enough to cool the room sufficiently when there were more than a half-dozen people in it. Maia and I threw a Michigan Convention Trilogy party (for CONCLAVE, CONFUSION and CONTRAPTION---instead of giving individual parties, and since there is so much cross-over in the concoms, they have all banded together to hold one party). Even though we had the unit set on high with the temperature on low since the early morning on Saturday, a half hour after the party started it was very warm in the room. We bought supplies early on Saturday, and iced everything down during the day which was a wise thing to do--by the time evening rolled around, all the ice machines were empty and the other parties had lots of trouble.

The party was a huge success. Our room was just off the main hallway to the elevaters, so lots of people stopped in. Charlie



Sweety-fan's hand puppet

Terry and Ann Cecil from Pittsburgh had come to the con for one day but enjoyed themselves so much that they took a room and stayed until Sunday. They were at the party, and Charley stayed and helped us close at 4 AM. One surprise visitor was Caryl Thompson from Texas who showed up at the convention. Caryl said that she wanted to sample other cons around the country. I think she likes Midwestern conventions; she said she has lots of fun at them.

The Pro Guest was Roger Zelazny, Kelly Freas the Artist Guest, and Andy Offutt the toastmaster. Roger is very quiet and unassuming, but once you get him talking, he's hilarious. Andy was his usual self, and Kelly was his stately self. Pete Fergusson was there, and we swapped lies on one panel, and spent several hours talking over the course of the con. Mike Kube-McDowell had a party on Friday night to promote his new novel Enigma, and I found out several other people connected with writing were there: Shelley Frier (editorial assistant to Stan Schmidt at Analog), Dean Lambe, Michael Banks, Rebecca Meluch, John DeChancie, Lois McMaster Brujold, Somtow Sucharitkal, and others.

Aside from the panels I was on (fanzines, convention horror stories, creative lies), I sat in on a couple of others. Shelley Frier and Pete Fergusson were on together with a couple of anthology editors, talking about how bad some submissions can be. Pete mentioned that from some stories he's seen it is very apparent that the writers had never seen a thesaurus. Everyone laughed, and Shelley nodded, then shook her head and said, "Or has seen one." We laughed harder.

Maia was on a panel about series books along with Roger Zelazny, Mike Kube-McDowell, and Robert Adams. Roger tries to do something different in each book of a series so that the sum total is unified, but all the ideas are not contained in any one book. Mike said that he has felt more and more confined with his trilogy; each book stands on its own, but restricts what he can do in the next one. He sees more things that could happen now than he thought of at the beginning the Trigon Disunity trilogy. He can't wait to finish it all so he can pursue other projects. Robert just signed on for more of his Horseclans novels. As long as he's paid, he said he will produce 78,000 word novels to fulfill the 80,000-word-per-novel contract. Nothing about art or story, just the money. (He also had a bad habit of talking while others had the floor.)

Conversation was the one thing available at any con, and MARCON was no exception. The main lounging area of the hotels the committee has used lent themselves wonderfully to that. Talking with Bruce Burdick, Rebecca Meluch, Somtow, Charley Terry (and Sasha, her daughter), Pete and Pat Fergusson, Mike and Karla Kube-McDowell, and many, many others, were individual high points.

The convention was a pleasure for Maia and myself, and we look forward to returning next year.

MIKECON

The following weekend we went to Toronto to celebrate Mike Glicksohn's and Mike Harper's birthday. It was Memorial Weekend so we didn't have to rush back home on Sunday evening, but took our time on Monday (it was fairly clear at the border too). I did some shopping in the many bookstores around Toronto, and finally found the last volume of the Files Magazine The Avengers I needed to complete the collection. I also picked up a copy of Vercours' You Shall Know Them, which might be the basis for H. Beam Piper's Little Fuzzy (as contended several years ago by Mark R. Leeper, one of the regular reviewers for the LANTERN).

The weekend was filled with parties and good conversation. Mike Glicksohn had the unfortunate duty of getting up and going to work on Monday morning, so he went to bed early on Sunday night, while the rest of us continued to party.

RAMBLINGS 21.3

During the following week I prepared my kids for the final exam. Most of them did pretty well, and no one failed for the year (although a couple of kids came close). Graduation happened, and I will be sad not to see some of the graduates back next year. There were several parties and functions of that sort at the end of the year, and I was invited to a Graduation Party for one of the students. Kathleen has been a student of mine for the past two years. She suffered through Algebra IIB and Geometry with me, and although not a really good student, she worked hard and passed.

There were also the inevitable end-of-the-year meetings, many of which I found a waste of time, except that I did get some reading done. By the time that all was over, I really needed a vacation, but of course I didn't get one. I was busy working on LL #20 and getting ready for the summer conventions. I also tried to work when I could in the garden, but was continuously frustrated -- whenever I had some free moments, it was raining; whenever it was nice out, I had other things more important that had to be taken care of.

As the school year came to an end, the number of people leaving climbed 23. By the end of the summer, that number reached 26,

the same as the year before. Some of those who left I am going to miss terribly, but life goes on.

Last year I helped 13 people move on, off, or within campus. I didn't help that many this year, but before June was over I had helped four people (one of them three times). Other people tagged me for transportation assistance later; in spite of my lack of support for the sports program (which too many faculty have equated with strength and "manliness"), I am stronger than most. I amazed many faculty last year by carrying things (like washing machines) with one other person (usually the wrestling coach). This year they know to call on me. If I'm around, I'll help.

Of course, the more I help people move, the more reluctant I am to have to pack and move. But that doesn't mean I won't if I think it necessary.

I also received a letter from Mike Glicksohn about an ad that was going to appear in SF CHRONICLE about voting "No Award" for the Best Fanzine Hugo. He was asked if he wanted his name to appear on it, and he said yes, then wrote me to let me know why he was doing so. I thought about his reasons, which were really more far-reaching than just the Fanzine Hugo, wrote him back saying that if he wanted my editorial slot to air his views it was his. He took me up on the offer, and when we went to stay with him and Doris for Ad ASTRA, he gave me his guest editorial.

AD ASTRA

Maia and I went to AD ASTRA a day early so that I could go to school with Mike, pick up some exams, look though textbooks, visit his classroom, and even met the principal of Humberside Collegiate. It was an interesting day and I did learn a lot about how the Canadian school system approaches Math. Instead of breaking up the subject into Algebra, Geometry, Pre-calculus, and so on, math is taught as an integrated subject. There are many advantages to this, especially seeing how all the parts work together. The main disadvantage is having to keep everything they know active as they continue through the course. One particularly good approach in the grade 11 book is on graphing functions. The Canadian system follows closely some of the things I do on this topic. Nice to know that I am doing things differently, but correctly...somewhere.

And, of course, we attended AD ASTRA.

The pre-con party on Thursday evening was interesting. I talked for a while to Bev Rose about my little project, and about school in general. We eventually got around to the topic of Canadian history, and I was stunned to find that except for the early grades, and an elective course in grade 12, Canadian history is actually American history. I could see the history of the two countries being the same until about 1800, but after that there is a lot that went on in Canada which had nothing to do with the US. I wonder now just how strong American

influence is on our Northern Neighbor, and how much it has interfered in their growth and development.

AD ASTRA, the convention, was delightful. It was good to see so many Toronto friends again so soon after the last time (two weeks previously). Heather Ashby and Peter Roberts ran the consuite and did a marvelous job with it. They had food as well as beer and soft drinks. Roger Zelazny, Steve Brust and Kelly Freas were GoHs. I met some new people (new to me), and expanded my mailing list for LL a bit, and was on a couple of panels. Maia also conducted an interview with Roger Zelazny, much the same as she did at MARCON, and we were both on a panel for neofans. Mike Glicksohn, Doris Bercarich, Maia and I formed a team for the Trivia contest, and won--a $40 gift certificate from Bakka Books (Bakka is Toronto's only bookstore devoted totally to SF and Fantasy), and some first edition paperbacks (which I already had in my collection). We split the gift certificate four ways.

Both Friday and Satruday evenings were filled with lots of parties. I met Jo Anselm who came up from Buffalo to help throw a CONTRADICTION party on Saturday night and we spent some time talking about her work (Xerox) and my work, and fandom and all sorts of things. I also talked to many Canadian fans new to me, including Keith Soltys, Laurie Farkas and Juanne Michaud, and many other friends -- Tanya Huff, Jack Brooks, Mike Wallis, and others.

Sunday we left in the early afternoon, and after a fairly uneventful ride arrived home with enough time for me to play in the garden, and do more work on the fanzine.

RAMBLINGS 21.4

I did finish LAN'S LANTERN in time for MIDWESTCON. Aside from wanting to hand it out at that con and INCONJUNCTION to save postage costs, there were other reasons why I wanted it out by the end of June. Mike's editorial was in it, and I wanted to have that out before the final Hugo ballots were due. Also, as I have done for the past three or four years, I wanted to publish MY choices for the Hugo ballot. This shows people how I voted, and why. It has helped me put into words the reasons behind my choices and has clarify my own thinking. And I wanted another issue out to help other people see what I am capable of doing with my fanzine.

But, 106 pages?

I have to admit that I really pushed myself to get it done in the two months since LL #19 came out. I decided then that LAN'S LANTERN #21 would not be published until after Worldcon. I considered trying to get one done for Worldcon, (and I probably could have -- I had enough material) but I thought I would give people a chance to catch up with me (especially those fans outside the US who get theirs late anyway), and I really didn't want to carry a couple of cases of them on the plane to Atlanta.

MIDWESTCON

MIDWESTCON was very pleasant. We arrived in time to talk with Stan Schmidt who was only to be there for about an hour and a half. He was asked to speak to a group of high School physics teachers at Ohio State University on that Friday, and had already scheduled his return flight before he realized that MIDWESTCON was the same weekend. (I think he also had appointments back in New York which was why he didn't reschedule his flight.) Since Bruce Stanley Burdick (who taught at OSU, and is moving out to Belfast, Maine, to take up a position there) was coming to the convention, he took Stan along. When we met them in the lobby of the hotel right after we checked in, Stan said he had about an hour an a half before he had to leave, so we moved the car around to the door closest to our room, carried one load up, and spent the rest of the time Stan would be there with him.

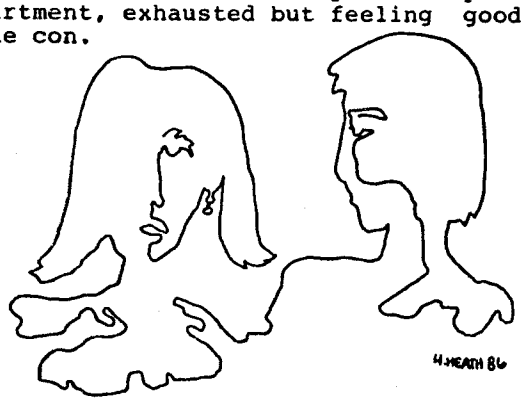
We congratulated each other on our respective Hugo nominations, and I handed him a copy of the latest LANTERN. As with most people to whom I gave copies, he expressed surprise at how soon it came out since the last one. We talked about all sorts of things -- writing and the whole publishing field, cons, trips, and what he might contribute to LL. After Stan made his departure, Maia and I unloaded the rest of the car, and relaxed in the pool before preparing our room for the Michigan Convention Trilogy party that evening. Since the tradition has arisen that most of the parties occur on Saturday evening at MIDWESTCON, Maia and I decided to hold our party on Friday night. With the party, and me walking around carrying many copies of LL, I did manage to hand out copies to most of the people on my mailing list who were there. I finished up on Saturday. And the party was quite a success.

Most of the conversations I had with people dealt with my nomination, and Mike Glicksohn's editorial in LL. Many told me that I had a lot of class for running it; several told Mike that they read it, thought about it, but still voted for me. Mike was not upset: "As long as it made you stop and think!" Josh Grosse, with whom I had several long conversations about writing and criticism, said that I must have a successful fanzine, since everyone seemed to have sat down to read it as soon as I gave it to them, rather than saving it for later. Pat Sims said that she had a few minutes before meeting someone and started to read LL; about an hour later she realized she was late.

On Saturday morning we had breakfast with Rick and Paula Morgan. Paula was the Latin teacher from Cranbrook Kingswood who left in the middle of the school year. She had four preparations, three Latin and one English (which was outside her major/minor fields), worked in the dormitory as a House Advisor (which meant that she had to be around every other weekend, and alternated being on duty (i.e., in charge of the dorm) with being back-up (available for emergencies during the night)). Paula also had other assignments, which she managed to get out of, claiming that as a first year teacher she was swamped with preparations, and the other extra meetings she had as a House Advisor. She asked to be relieved of the English class, and pick up a coaching position, but this was refused. So she left after the first semester. Her husband started a consulting business for scientific research in the Cincinnati area, and thus we were able to get together with them for breakfast. Our conversation ranged from school news to personal news, from seriousness to silliness.

Back at the convention, I talked with several more people, including Bob Tucker, Roger Sims, Lynn Hickman, Howard DeVore, Ray Beam and Rusty Hevelin. Asked them about doing something for the Golden Anniversary issues of LL coming up in the next three years. Other people in different conversations included Marie Miesel, Hania Wojtowicz, John and Lynn Harris, Bruce Schneier, Lee Pelton, John Stanley, Joy King, Perry Chapdelaine (who had copies of his book, The John W. Campbell Letters, for sale), Dick Spelman, Mike Resnick (he and I talked about his coming books, and a couple of articles he may do for me) and many others.

In spite of staying up until 3 AM, we got up early to go to my nephew's birthday party on the way back home (a hundred miles out of our way), and eventually ended up at our apartment, exhausted but feeling good about the con.



RAMBLINGS 21.5
The "Vote No Award for Best Fanzine" Ad

The ad which encouraged fans to vote "No Award" for the Hugo in the Best Fanzine category appeared in the July and August issues of SCIENCE FICTION CHRONICLE. The wording made it sound like a pronouncement from "on

high." It became the center of topic at fan gatherings and conventions. From MIDWESTCON to the Worldcon I talked with the various fans who had put their names on the ad. I talked with Moshe Feder (who initiated the ad) and Ben Yallow at MIDWESTCON; Fred Haskell at INCONJUNCTION; Brian Earl Brown, Patrick and Teresa Nielsen Hayden, Lucy Huntzinger, Tom Whitmore and several others at the Worldcon. They were all sincere about expressing their opinion that they thought none of the nominees deserved the award. All of them to whom I talked said that there was nothing personal against me or the other editors. In fact, after seeing what I had been producing the past year, some apologized and said they wished they had known how much I had improved.

I must admit that I was a bit miffed at the ad initially. Recalling Jan Story's letter which appeared in #20 (that if the old-time fans want their zines on the ballot, they should join the Worldcon, nominate and vote), I checked the CONFEDERATION progress reports. As of PR #3 (February '86), 15 of the 31 were registered. Something like 9 people were on my mailing list, although a few others had received LL in the past.

If they really cared about "excellence in fanpubbing", I thought, they would join, NOMINATE, and vote. I knew a few of the people on the list who have complained for years about the quality of fanzines, but their names have not appeared in the membership rosters for Worldcons. I can understand their opinions, but they should try to back up their opinions with action. They could at least have given us some alternatives -- which zines in their opinion were worthy of the nomination? I recognized the names of a couple that Mike Glicksohn gave me but they are personalzines with low circulation.

After extensive talks with so many fans, particularly the ad-signers, I did gain a better perspective and understanding of the situation. In particular, some still find Worldcon membership a budgetary strain, and that is a crucial fact I had forgotten.

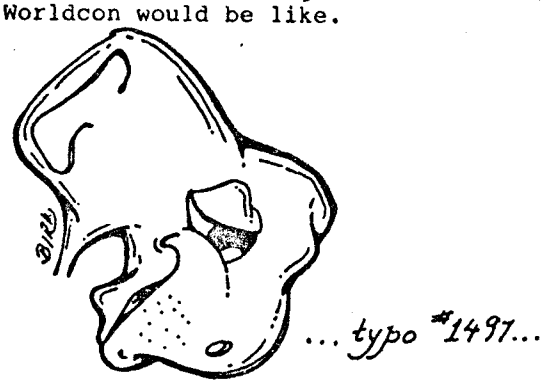
INCONJUNCTION

INCONJUNCTION was much the same as MIDWESTCON in terms of conversation. Several thought Mike Glicksohn was out of line with his comments, but I defended his right to air his views. Maia and I were on a panel about the Hugos, and Michael Whelan (who was the artist GoH) asked a lot of questions about politics involved with them. He said that he understood that it went on, but was not overtly aware of it. Other questions asked concerned whether or not publishers thought either Hugo or Nebula awards affected sales. Tim Zahn said that his agent uses Tim's Hugo as a bargaining point, and publishers do use them as advertising points. One fan asked about giving Hugos to people who don't really care about them, like the film industry for best Dramatic Presentation. Most studios do send representatives now -- Maia was wondering if Michael J Fox would come to represent Back to the Future. I'm sure the Rutger Hauer fans would LOVE to have him represent Ladyhawke. At the end of the panel Mick Hamblen, the moderator, asked us to give our choices for the entire ballot, which we did.

Another Michigan Trilogy Party was thrown that night, but in another fan's room. We brought the supplies we had left over to the con, and Tom Barber had the party. I did some party-hopping and had some interesting conversations with Renee Seiber, Karla Kube-McDowell, Fred Haskell (who looked amazingly "clean-cut" -- still bearded, but neat and trim), Mick Hamblin, Steve Bridge, Alan Dormire, Cathy Gallagher and many others.

The next morning I was on a Fanzine panel (Surprise! Surprise!) and a lot of people showed up, including the Pro GoH Orson Scott Card, who was taking notes. He is preparing to put out a short fiction reviewzine, and was asking about cost, mailing, and so forth. I had brought copies of earlier issues of LL that I had in the basement (#9 (the Williamson Special), #10 (regular genzine) and #11 (the Simak Special -- of which I had produced many copies for DENVENTION II, at which Cliff was the GoH)) and handed them out to whoever wanted them.

Other highlights include Card's "Secular Humanist Revival Meeting", his "1001 Story Ideas in an Hour", the panel on getting published (with 12 people on it), and these strange buttons which started appearing on several people: "Analog Mafia" and "Lan Fan". Pete Fergusson was behind the first one, and Maia instigated the second. I think the most embarassing thing about the "Lan Fan" button was that those wearing them were people like Mike Resnick, Michael Banks, Tim Zahn, Michael Kube-McDowell, Pete Fergusson, and their spouses. The jacuzzi was also wonderful, and as usual, had some marvelous conversations there. Friday dinner and Saturday lunch with the Zahns was fun. And Tim Zahn also let me wear his LACon "Hugo Nominee" ribbon for the convention. Mike Banks loaned me the one he found at NOREASCON II. They both wanted me to get a taste of what the Worldcon would be like.



We left on Sunday afternnon, expecting a lot of heavy traffic (because it was the end of the 4th of July weekend), but the travelling went quite smoothly. Apparently it was such a nice weekend that most people stayed out late.

RAMBLINGS 21.6

In mid-June there was a notice about helping out one of the summer activities on campus, Horizons-Upward Bound. HUB is a federally funded program which takes inner-city high school kids and gives them extra help for school in the fall. The students must have a desire for going on in education (i.e., going to college), and want that extra help.

The job involved monitoring the students as they came out of the kitchen with their trays. The food is subsidized by the US Department of Agriculture and there were certain guidelines that the kitchen had to follow in preparing and serving meals to these kids. Most everything that they were supposed to have was put on the plates they took -- meat/fish and vegetables. Desert was optional, but most of the students took that. Getting them to take fruit and milk was the problem. My job, for three weeks (which was extended to three and a half weeks) was to check the trays to make sure that they took fruit, and I placed a carton of milk on the tray.

Now the kids didn't have to drink the milk or eat the fruit. There were bins on the salad table outside in the dining area where the HUB students could put their milk and fruit if they didn't want it. It was then recycled for the next meal. When I took over after the first week and a half (the other person doing this with me had scheduled a vacation in the middle, and I said I could take the middle three weeks of the six week program), we started having trouble with spoiled milk. Within two days that problem was taken care of. I took charge of packing the milk refrigerator so I knew where the recycled milk was, and watched the expiration dates on the cartons, getting rid of all the containers with the earliest dates on them (and throwing a few out just to be safe).

This job became boring rather quickly, so I started to help out the kitchen staff with little things to make the meals flow more smoothly. They loved it, and said that if I decide to stop teaching I should come and work with them. I COULD do that for a while, but I know that a kitchen job would become boring quickly. I also got to know several of the HUB staff, and some of the kids. That in itself made the work more palatable.

The job was not difficult, but it cut up the day in such a way that I had trouble getting a lot of things done that I wanted to do. I had to be there for all three meals, and lunch was served in two sessions. To split my time to work in the garden, work at the computer (fanzine, apazines, locs, general correspondance, and some possible articles), shop, read books and comics, go to meetings and parties, and help people move, was not easy. I fell behind in what I had wanted to do, but the extra money helped at Worldcon. And it also enabled us to go to RIVERCON.

RIVERCON

Maia and I did not originally think we could afford RIVERCON, and we told everyone at all the conventions we had attended not to expect us. After INCONJUNCTION we assessed our resources and found out that we indeed could go. Ruth Woodring, a very good friend of ours was going to stay with us for a few days as part of her vacation, and she planned to attend a wedding on RIVERCON weekend. The Wedding was cancelled. She was willing to share a room with us, and she asked Sion Ingle, a friend of hers and ours, to share the room and costs as well. That weekend was also one that I was free from the dining hall duty; all the kids were to go home then, so that problem was taken care of. So many things conspired to make it possible for us to go that we did. And we had a good time.

Since we were going to have a Michigan Trilogy Convention party, we decided to use a bell hop to carry all the supplies up to the room. (We did the same for loading up the car, and it saved us some time and worry.) In addition, there was a parking space right across from the door to the hotel from the parking garage. Once in the room, we registered and started conventioning.

I stopped off at the FOSFA party, and everyone treated me well there. The Falls of Ohio Science Fiction Association puts out a fanzine called FOSFAX. They sent me a copy and asked for a trade with LL, and I sent them #19 and #20. The next issue they sent me said that they would be at RIVERCON, so I sent off a loc and added that I would see them there. I had a great time, and after an hour or so I left to pursue other parties.

The meet-the-authors party was still going on, so I stopped to see who was there (besides GoH C.J. Cherryh). I saw Toastmaster Sharon Webb and she got her copy of LL #20. Michael Banks, Mike Kube-McDowell, Mike Resnick, and Sandra Miesel were also there. I had several talks about LL, particularly the latest issue which most of them had already received through the mail.

Moving from there to other parties, I encountered Mike Weber and Susan Phillips, Anita Williams, Penny Frierson, David Henninger, Buck and Juanita Coulson, Pat and

Roger Sims, Carol Resnick, Bill Cavin, Mark Evans, Bob Hilles, Liz Gross, Naomi Pardue, Ben Yallow, Lisa Frietag and many others. I have several nice conversations with varying groups of people.

On Saturday morning I hit the hucksters room where I spent a bit of money on Avengers' material and bought some back issues of Interzone, Fantasy and one issue of Thrust. It took me about two hours to get through since I stopped to talk to a lot of fans who were also wandering the room. Later I hit the art show which could be described as cute with flashes of real talent.

I also conversed at some length with Arlan Keith Andrews who said that he is working on something for the LANTERN. Mike Kube-McDowell and I talked about another of his Tales from the Darkside episodes that I saw ("Effect and Cause", with Susan Strassberg), and how much I enjoyed his latest novel Enigma. At present, this book heads my list for next years Hugo nominations.

I attended one panel, though I did want to get to more. Mike Resnick, Sharon Webb and Michael Kube-McDowell talked about the future of SF and Fantasy. There were no new real insights, but it was nice to have the ideas I've had organized much better by these authors. Some up-and-coming cross-genre books include science fiction mixed with mystery, military adventure, and romance. The cyberpunk movement is still going strong, but there is a limited market for it, so it will probably die soon. Mike Resnick says that in a genre market where there are upper and lower bounds for sales, it's unwise to try to put further limitations within it, as the cyberpunk people are doing. Yes, it will die by the authors going broke.

One aspect of the market coming more into prominence is the shared worlds. A writer doesn't really have to do much work if asked to participate in one (since the background is supplied), and it's a sure sale.

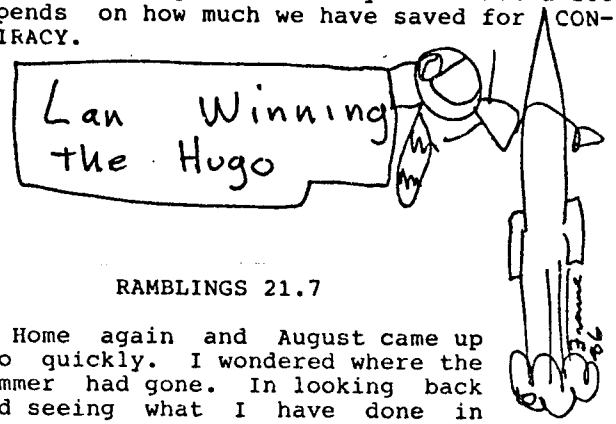
Re-entering the huckster's room I encountered Sharon Porath and we walked and talked together for about two hours, catching up on news about friends and family. We had been trying to arrange for such time for 3/4 of a year, and we finally managed to converse with little interruption. Still, it was not long enough, and we hope to continue our discussion at CHAMBANACON this fall.

In celebration of our anniversary and Maia's birthday, we dressed up for dinner and ate in the Galt House restaurant. The meal was somewhat of a disappointment, but the company was wonderful. (Maia says that Doris Bercarich's Derby Pie is far superior to the one she was served.) After dinner we started preparing for the party, and I missed the speeches. I did particularly want to hear Dick and Nicki Lynch's speech. They were the fan GoHs, and honor well overdue them.

Because of our own party, I did not do much wandering that evening. Charley Terry (a Pittsburgh fan) spent most of her time in our room and kept things from getting dull. She's a marvelous conversationalist, and I was delighted to hear that she decided to join MISHAP.

I did manage to get out on Saturday night after we closed down our party, but there was little else happening. I wandered into the filksing and heard C.J. Cherryh singing some wonderful songs (she has some trouble with projecting her voice, but she is clear and enunciates well). And there was Mitchell, the fan from New Zealand, who sings some very humorous songs, particularly one about Bob Dylan and not wanting to sing any of his songs, nor any song written to his tunes.

On Sunday, we had time to pack and load the car, run through the hucksters room one last time, and say goodbye to fewer people than we had wanted. We had hit construction on the way down from Detroit, so we wanted to allow some extra time in getting back and still arrive home at a reasonable hour. We also had a narrow "window" in Dayton: there was the annual international air show at Wright Patterson Air Force Base, so we wanted to get through there after people arrived and everyone got out. Besides, Dayton was one place where there was some construction. We mad it through all right, and once home we thought how nice a con it really was. Maybe we'll go back next year -- but a lot depends on how much we have saved for CONSPIRACY.



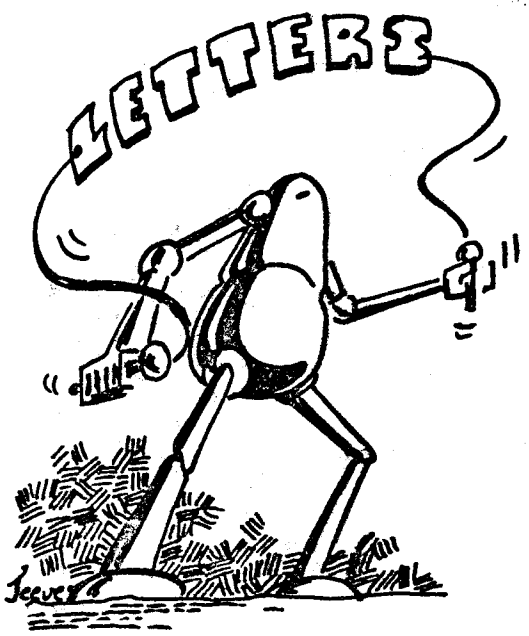
RAMBLINGS 21.7

Home again and August came up too quickly. I wondered where the summer had gone. In looking back and seeing what I have done in terms of fanac, it has been a lot. In the weeks before Worldcon I could have put together an issue of LL to hand out there, but decided to stick to my original schedule and wait until October. I got a lot finished before I left for CONFEDERATION and before the school meetings which started after Labor Day. But there was still a lot to do.

I also thought about doing a Worldcon report for this issue, but decided that this issue was already too long, and I still had the lettercol to finish. Suffice it to say that I did win the Hugo, that I had a great time at CONFEDERATION, that Julia Ecklar is a wonderful, marvelous singer and you should all get her new tape Divine Intervention, and look for a full Worldcon Report next issue (which will be out for CONFUSION, January, 1987).

Post Scriptings

[[I've received lots of letters this time. I tried to avoid too much duplication of comments, but this section still turned out to be over 30 pages. My comments are in the double square brackets.]] --Lan



GENERAL COMMENTS ON LAN'S LANTERN

T. Kevin Atherton: Either your LAN'S LANTERN just keeps getting better or my judgment keeps getting worse; LL #19 seemed to me to be the best of the 4 or 5 or 6 that you've been generous enough to send me, and thanks for all of them. #19 was certainly the best looking of all the LANTERNs I've been checking out over the past 2 or 3 years -- I would say that for prettiness (or "aesthetic appeal", if you prefer a little pretentiousness) only WARHOON gets higher marks in my estimation, though for clear layout and ease-of-reading, LL stands as an example for us all. I hate to think of the amount of effort you squander on LL and on us, your readership -- but squander away, please!

Nola Frame: I wish to thank you for sending me LL #20, though I've done absolutely nothing to deserve it. I know you check that little box that I was getting this because you and I were in the same APA, but I know that that can't possibly be true because I haven't been a member of LASFAPA for what, Three years? [[Neither have I!]] I can only conclude that your sending me #20 was a device on your part to make me feel so guilty that I would have to write.

It worked...this time.

Mike Glicksohn: Sincere thanks for the flattering and undeserved dedication! I'm embarrassed that I never spotted it when you handed me the issue and so didn't thank you personally. I must be getting old if I can't even egoscan the first page of a fanzine anymore!

My experience as both a faned and a letterhack has always proven to me that 100+ page fanzines never garner the response/egoboo they deserve. They're too damn intimidating for most of us. However, if you don't get the long detailed locs you might like after all the work and time you must have spent to produce such a mammoth, jam-packed issue I hope you at least get a quantity of shorter responses to make it all seem worthwhile. I can certainly send you one of those, especially considering how much of the issue consists of reviews of books I haven't read and films I haven't seen. (I'm not anti-sercon, as you know, but I tend not to read reviews of material I'm unfamiliar with in case they spoil my eventual enjoyment when I finally get around to the material under scrutiny. This enabled me to skip several sections of #20....but it still took me a chunk of time to finish the ish. This is a meaty fanzine!)

Mark Owings: There are more people in your WAHF than a lot of Hugo-winning fanzines had in total circulation years ago. And your circulation is certainly a tiny fraction of Hugo voters. On the other hand, Lan's Lantern is roughly (more reviews) what a standard fanzine was when I got into fandom over 25 years ago, so maybe we are heading back to the 60s anyway....

Jack Williamson: Altogether, #20 is nothing less than monumental. Handsome, enormous, edited and produced to a remarkably high level of excellence. I hope you can carry it on.

I was happy to see the special issues announced for the next several years. Naturally -- having been honored with one of them -- I think they are a fine idea.

[[And I would be happy if you could contribute to any of them, Jack.]]

Jodie Offutt: Ten years. Wow! I'm impressed. Do you know why Mike Glicksohn carries that swirly-shaped bag around with him? He began carrying it so he wouldn't lose fanzines that people gave him at conventions. Really. Now (as I told you the last time I saw you), you're the only fan-ed I know who still hand-delivers his zine.

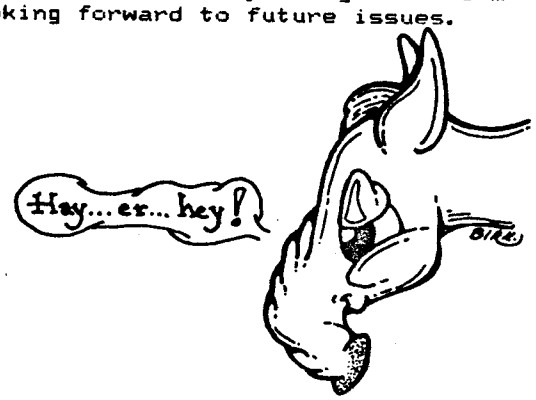
[[It's just to save postage!]]

I've always been very much in awe of fanzine editors. I have a lot of resepct for their talent. For a number of years I wrote

locs and a few articles. I was always most proud of myself when a letter or article was printed by Mike Glicksohn or Bill Bowers, since I consider them the real pros among fan editors. You are approaching that high rank in my book. I also witnessed Jackie Causgrove's rise and progress in the publishing field, another whose work I admire.

[[Thanks for your kind words! I too admire Mike and Bill and Jackie for what they've done.]]

Roger Reus: LL #20 is the first issue of your zine that I've had a chance to see, and I must say that I'm stunned at how damn good the whole package is. You've got what I consider to be an ideal fanzine without limiting yourself to any one genre. I'm really looking forward to future issues.



MIKE GLICKSOHN'S GUEST EDITORIAL
"Is Good Good Enough?"

Buck Coulson: I notice Glicksohn doesn't mention a few past Hugo winners in saying this crop doesn't stack up. Remember, Warhoon and Science Fiction Review and Energumen weren't the only winners; Erb-dom won one year. I don't think any of the present nominees need to hang their heads in shame. As it happens, I voted for Anvil first, for the same reason I do a column for it; I like it. It won't win, of course, but Lan's Lantern was my second choice and has a much better chance of making it.

Lee Hoffman: I found Mike Glicksohn's "Is Good Good Enough?" well-reasoned. A good argument if one accepts his premise that Hugos should be given not merely to the cream of the year's crop but only to products that are outstanding over all. Annual awards always present problems such as he suggests. One year's runner-ups can be far better than the next year's winners (as happens with Oscars, etc.) because there are good and bad years. So it becomes a question of the premise -- are Hugos awarded for *excellence* or for being the best of a crop? It'd be far easier to vote on a basis of excellence. With the size of today's crops, I question how many voters have actually had enough experience of them all to make valid comparisons as to which are "best."

Andy Andruschak: Thanks for sending the LL #20, the Hugo-nominated (and voted by me for) fanzine. Hope you win. I'm not sure why you bothered to print Glicksohn's article or editorial or sour grapes or whatever it is. Not that I don't understand....I used to be of that snobbish outlook on life.

Nowadays, though, I doubt if I can make the automatic ranking of fanzines that Mike does, with "faanish" on the top, and sercon in the middle, and anything else on the bottom, like he does on page 105. Mike can, because he won his Hugo by the standards of when he won his Hugo. Naturally he cannot help think those [are] absolute standards, without which fandom will go down in ruin.

Martin Morse Wooster: I was a bit bothered by Mike Glicksohn's editorial. Even though Glicksohn makes a very strong case, the problem with his argument is that he has not produced a major fanzine in many years. (This is also true of most of the fans who signed the "No Award" ad in SF Chronicle.) I wish the fans who have produced quality fanzines in the past would produce better fanzines today, instead of moaning and bitching. The only solution to the Hugo Fanzine problem is more and better fanzines. Glicksohn should explain why he's too busy to produce one.

Esther Friesner: I thought you showed a great deal of class in running that guest editorial in #20, and were likewise correct in your letter to Locus. I wish you the best of luck with the Hugos.

[[Thank you. Actually, it appeared in SF Chronicle.]]

Ed Chambers: Mike's point of view is something I am glad to see in print. I just wish that I had thought of it. But I suppose it is better coming from someone like him: someone with more experience to say it. My personal opinion is that one should try their best to obtain each of the books, stories, and fanzines nominated, to survey a good amount of material from each artist nominated, etc. In other words (actually Mike's words), THINK! Now if anyone has a complete list of all the people who vote for Hugos, s/he would notice that my name isn't on the list. I do not vote for them. I can't! As far as I'm concerned, I am not qualified. Of all the items nominated this year, only a handful of the nominees were witnessed by my eyes. I saw only two of the movies, I read only one of the magazines regularly, I read only one of the fanzines regularly, and I haven't seen enough of the other items to warrant a valid vote in any of the categories. Sure, I would love to vote for them, but until the time comes when I can devote more time to the nominees, I will have to disqualify myself from voting.

Dave Yoder: I very much appreciated Mike's guest editorial. (Did he request the cover color?) It is a point of view that needs to be aired and you are to be commended for running it even though it seems to run counter to your interests. Generally

speaking, I don't vote for many of the Hugos because I am seldom familiar with most of the nominees in any given category. In some cases I try to catch up but, unless I have experience with most of the nominees, I just don't feel qualified to express an opinion. While I seldom vote "No Award" in the first place it frequently comes in second or third on my ballot --my standards may not be quite as high as Mike's. However, I am in full agreement that "good is not good enough," so it may be that our differences in taste determine the line between very good and excellent.

The question of whether we are rewarding excellence in the field or the best of the year is the hinge of the debate. In practice it is quite often the latter, I think. At least, I don't remember any year when a Hugo was not awarded if anything passable was nominated. The problem, it seems to me, is in the nominations: a lot of dreck gets nominated and once in a while makes it onto the ballot and since it's there gets serious consideration from people who think they have to give all the entries a ranking.

Lan's Lantern is certainly the best of the year this year. Whether or not it rates a Hugo by the highest standards I'm not sure but I kinda don't think so (typos, Mr. Rico, zillions of 'em). I am willing to bet, though, that by the time you get around to the Clarke or Van Vogt Golden Anniversary issues there will no longer be any question in the matter.

Dick Napoli: I have a lot of respect for your integrity after seeing you give up your editorial space to Mike Glicksohn in the last LL for his letter stating that LL was good but not great and not worthy of a Hugo. I understand his position but I think that yearly achievement must be recognized.

Don D'Ammassa: Let me start off by thanking you for the kind words about the fanwriter Hugo Award in LL this time. [[You're welcome -- they are well deserved.]] While I understand Mike Glicksohn's point about the fanzine Hugo, that's not the same reason that I agreed to have my name listed in the ad. I just don't like fan awards period, even though at one time I was involved in the FAAN Award program. Somewhere along the line I'm going to have to organize my thoughts more coherently, but in a capsule, I think the whole institution is counter to the reasons I'm involved in fandom. If I faunched after a Hugo, I'd have to consider the political implications of what I say and do, and I just don't want to do that. I've been nominated seven times now, so I don't think it's sour grapes, and despite the arguments expressed in SFC's letter column, I don't think my lack of voting is germane. I didn't vote for myself either. I tink the category should be abolished. (As a purely theoretical matter, though, if I were going to vote, LL would be my choice this year.)

Cy Chauvin: Unlike Mike Glicksohn, I don't think of LL as a sercon fanzine but as

a genzine, with a little something for everyone. Well, everyone has been predicting the death of large genzines for years. When someone says sercon fanzines, I think of those Bruce Gillespie publishes, or VECTOR, etc.

Allen Salyer: Congrats on your Hugo Nomination. I also think you to be kinda gutsy to print Mike Glicksohn's editorial not to vote for Best fanzine in your fanzine.

Craig Ledbetter: Lan's Lantern #20 is excellent and that's a fact. It's the best one I've seen (and I only started with #17). Glicksohn's editorial seemed as redundant as hell. He goes on and on and on about something even a moron like me knows. Lan's Lantern represents excellence to me as far as a fanzine goes so obviously I'd vote for it. Jeez, that seems so goddam simple to me. Perhaps I'm missing something in my life.

Mike Rogers: I'm afraid I can't agree with Mike Glicksohn's sentiments about the Best Fanzine Hugo award. The WSFS Constitution does not specify what if any standards should be applied to the award. My own sentiment is that the Hugos are basically for the best efforts of that year. By that standard, the only possible justification for voting for No Award is is all the nominees in a particular category suck rotten eggs. Every once in a while No Award may be justified, but I certainly don't see that as being the case this year. The infamous ad left me very cold. Frankly I don't think I could have been as selfless as you were in letting Mike have space for his view, but you are certainly to be congratulated for your action.

[[Thank you.]]

David D'Ammassa: Lan's Lantern is a Hugo nominee (congratulations!), and even though you really want that award to help decorate your home (not to mention the tremendous egoboo), you have managed to remain objective enough to publish an editorial that suggests to your readers that they shouldn't vote for Lan's Lantern on the Hugo ballot. What Mike Glicksohn said about you in his opening paragraph is absolutely correct, and you certainly made a good impression on this young man.

Speaking of Mike's essay, its arrival is well-timed. My father is one of the fans who contributed to an ad in SF CHRONICLE about the fanzine Hugo issue. He is also of the belief that no fanzine nominated this year deserved the award (even though it might look like sour grapes on his part, since Mythologies was not nominated this year as it has been before, he told me that if Myth WERE on the ballot, he wouldn't vote for it this year), and has talked a lot about it. It set me to thinking about the Hugo Award.

Different people might look at the importance of the Hugo in many ways. Some may regard the Hugo award for fanzines as sort of an annual check-in, which was the best of the crop of the year, folks? Others, like Mike Glicksohn and so many others, feel that the Hugo stands for excellence and should only be awarded for excellence. These are two entirely different ways of looking at an award, and I've thought about it often. I've decided that if Hugos were supposed to be an annual checkpoint, there wouldn't be a "No Award" option at all. I am of the opinion that Hugos should only stand for excellence, as well.

In the end, though, it doesn't matter. I don't vote for Hugos anyway. I only know about movies and fanzines. I don't consider it enough o get a whole ballot when I'm only going to vote on two things. However, I believe I have read every fanzine nominated: the ones I know of are Lan's Lantern, Holier Than Thou, and Anvil, Others?

I really enjoy both HTT and LL, but I'm not experienced enough in fanzine-reading yet to be able to feel good about actually voting on whether one is good enough to be honored or not.

Do you fell that a fanzine has to be tied to SF? I know that fanzines originally were for discussions of fandom, but don't you think that a fanzine can be completely ignorant of SF? I have read very little SF, and don't mention it much in my fanzine, DAWN OF NEUROSIS (soon to be retitled, I think). In my own unimportant opinion, I think it is an okay, entertaining fanzine without articles on SF. I'm not against SF in fanzines, but I can enjoy fanzines that avoid it as well.

[[One of the criteria I use in judging fanzines is whether or not they acknowledge their "roots" by referring to SF. I too have enjoyed fanzines which make no mention of science fiction, but for purposes of nominating and voting for a SF award, I think the fanzines in questions should have something to do with SF.]]

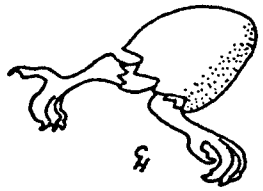
Perry Glenn Moore: I disagree with Mike Glicksohn in his editorial. I know that I have not been reading fanzines as long as he has, but give me a break. Two of those nominated this year are among the best I have seen since I got into fandom almost ten years ago. I have used the "No Award" category in the past, and I used it again this year. However I did not vote it first in the fanzine category. I seriously wonder if Mike can be objective? He's looking at something published in 1985 and comparing it to something published twenty or more years ago. Fandom grows and changes. For me, it is very hard to measure the lasting worth of something recent. I do not know how well it will stand up over time. Certainly several past-Hugo winners were NOT deserving of their award. I think there were some fanzines worthy of the award this year and voted that way. Some of us do not remember fanzines of 10, 15, 20 years ago. I wonder if I even want to remember them! Fanzines are much different today, and I like the changes.

Paula Gold Franke: Since the Worldcon and the Hugos are now history, any observation would be academic at this point. Since I am now outside of the "mainstream" of fandom, I have no idea who the winners are. But I should think that Mike's editorial could only have a good effect on getting a few "spite" votes for LL. (I could just hear the response: "What a bunch of elitist crap" or "Who the hell does he think he is anyway?" or...well, you get the picture. What a politically shrewd move that was to print that editorial!) Anyways, I do hope that the voting went well for you.

[[It certainly did. The rocket is sitting in my living room!]]

Milt Stevens: Congratulations on winning the Hugo. The subject of the Fanzine Hugo brings me immediately to Mike Glicksohn's editorial in LL #20. I'm going to be one of those to disagree with Mike. I think the fundamental question is: what are we doing by giving out fan Hugos at all? In my opinion, we're giving out egoboo. The idea that nobody in a given year is worthy of getting any egoboo impresses me as being downright silly. The award is not an award for Godlike Excellence; it is an award for being best. There are no vast financial rewards attached to the fanzine Hugo; it's simply a big atta-boy. Giving the award makes at least one person happy, while not giving the award benefits absolutely nobody.

The campaign for No Award comes at a particularly odd time. After years of trying, the semiprozine was finally split off from the fanzine category. I am under the impression that the intent of this split was to allow some of the honest-to-goshwow amateurs to have a shot at the awards. Charlie Brown and Dick Geis do outstanding jobs with their publications, but they've received lots of awards and lots of egoboo. The idea of letting some other people have a chance still seems like a good one. (I was halfway expecting Mike to say that this year's Hugo nominees just weren't professional like SFR and LOCUS. At that point I'd have screamed.)



ARTWORK AND ILLUSTRATIONS

T. Kevin Atherton: My only complaint with issue #19 of LAN'S LANTERN is that it didn't have an illo by me in it, but then whose fault is that, eh? I'll make amends for that by sending you some stats of toons from which you can select something suitable for pubbing...or not: you're the editor.

David Yoder: I enjoyed joan hanke-woods contributions to an artist's panel at the most recent HEXACON very much, and appreciated ne comments here as well.

John Thiel: The art [in #20] was still better, and I especially liked the spaceship drawings. I am surprised by the names I see turning up in your Lantern, people I've known of for a long time but hadn't been noticing for awhile, who seem to have gotten off into other fan activities (convention arranging is a possible example of this). I always like seeing people again, I must say. It's been happening in a few other fanzines I receive, too, mostly the thick ones. They make room for them.

You have a raccoon on your back cover, where you might rather have featured a beaver, particularly as it holds a sword of a magical nature. However, a beaver would be a deceptive thing to draw, what with a tail that requires strict delineation.

Dave Yoder: The cover is great. The concept is apt, entertaining and well executed. I am curious as to whether it was your idea or Diana's --whose other work I also thought quite good (I especially liked the fillo on p. 12).

[[I gave Diana an idea, which she then transformed into what became the cover. I like it too.]]

Cy Chauvin: Paul Lambo's artwork in #18 and #19 is very good. I like the small boxed illos used as headings for the reviews as well as the large ones. Is he a new artist? New talent is still coming to fanzines, thankfully.

[[Paul submitted some art for the Norton Special Issue, and has continued to contribute. I'm glad he has.]]

Angela Varesano: I keep watching for Diana Stein's artistic contributions -- she has developed a graceful, recognizable style that's quite pleasing. I especially enjoyed the illo on page 33 of LL #20 -- the figure and framing device for "Pulp and Celluloid".

Comments on David Shea's
BALTICON REPORT

Jeanne Mealy: A fan of con reports, I enenjoyed David Shea's "BALTICON Report". I'm awed by people who manage such detail -- are they making some of it up, later, or do they take notes? How do you do it?

Wow, you were writing about last October? No complaints, just noticing how time has passed....I got tired reading about all of the cons you attended!

[[I have a fairly good memory, so I don't takes notes. I also keep the program book so I can refer to panels I attended and other activities, many of which trigger other memories fo that con.]]

Buck Coulson: David Shea doesn't know much about filking, does he? But then, East Coast cons don't seem to do it very well; maybe they're still performing all the old-hat stuff he mentions.

Esther Friesner: I contend that the BYF (Beefy Young Fen) incident at BALTICON was scholarly research, as will become evident when The Witchwood Cradle appears next year from Avon. Truly.

THE AVENGERS

Craig Ledbetter: I gather from your "Ramblings" that you are an Avengers TV series fan. Well join the club! I proudly have all the Emma Peel and Tara King episodes on tape. It's still a favorite of mine. Although The New Avengers was nowhere near as well done, I still enjoyed it also. Have you seen a British fanzine called ON TARGET devoted to The Avengers? [[Yes, I have several issues.]] Written by Dave Rogers, it's not bad. How about a fanzine called Top Secret (it used to be called With Umbrella, Cane and Bowler and was devoted exclusively to the old show)? [[I have some of those too, though it is suspending publication, then resuming under a new publisher in a few months.]]

LETTERS AND COMMENTS ON
LL #18 & 19

Gerri Balter's "CLARION WEST" Article

David Yoder: I enjoyed Gerri Balter's recounting of her experiences at Clarion West; one gets a sense of what it was like. Her personal reactions and feelings, as well as the changes she went through, come through very well.

David Palter: Gerri Balter's article on Clarion is quite fascinating. Certainly it is well written enough to lend plausibility to the idea that Gerri is, indeed, becoming a writer. Well, I will hope to see her fiction appearing in magazines and/or books. Personally, while I can always write letters of comment, I have a lot harder time writing fiction. Still, I would probably enjoy attending the workshop myself.

Cy Chauvin: I enjoyed Gerri Balter's article on Clarion West the most, although I have read quite a few articles about the Clarion Experience. What none of them have yet made clear is exactly why the writers involved thought they had improved. Is it the teachers? The environment? Certain techniques taught? A change in the writers' own attitude? Maybe none of the participants know, and that's why no one has set that part of the experience down in words. Or maybe Gerri does know but neglected to mention it. Maybe the significant fact is what she writes at the end: "[I] found my reading tastes had changed. Authors I had previously enjoyed I no longer liked. I could no longer tolerate poor writing." Could it be a change in perception? I would also like to read an article by someone who found the Clarion workshops unhelpful or even harmful. Or has everyone found it good? (Maybe the people it hurt just can't write any more, so that's why they haven't written articles about it!)

[[I willing to publish it if anyone will write it.]]

DENNIS FISCHER'S "Heinlein" Articles

David Yoder: Part Two of Dennis Fischer's piece on Heinlein is a good bit of work -- well thought out and written. Generally speaking I do not think a lot about the things I read. I either do like 'em or I don't; with Heinlein it is almost always "do". A critical evaluation of an author's work is usually interesting and often fun in the sense that you can argue with it to yourself and almost always win, but only very seldom does it have any influence on the ultimate question--do I like it or not.

Mark Blackman: Dennis Fischer's article on Heinlein was thorough and well-balanced. (Look for a lot of articles on RAH next year when he turns 80.) A though occurred to me, wouldn't Heinlein's new obsession with parallel universes (three of his last four novels use the concept) contradict the immutable time theory of "Life-Line," his first Future History -- indeed, his first published -- story? As for Double Star, the plot is little more than an updating of The Prisoner of Zenda, the original Ruritanian novel.

Ed CHambers: Altogether, "The Rise and Decline of Robert A. Heinlein" was a very good article. It is good to see how another person views Heinlein's works. Like many other people, I suppose, I like a lot of his older works (Tunnel in the Sky, The Moon is a Harsh Mistress, etc.), as opposed to his more current stuff (Job, Number of the Beast).

Don D'Ammassa: I have to call David Shea to task for his comment about Dennis Fischer's article on Heinlein. Of course, literary criticism of this sort is subjective. It has to be. There's nothing more boring than constant repetitions of "I think" and "in my opinion" and "it could be argued" and such qualifiers. Feel free to disagree, but don't fault the man for expressing an opinion.

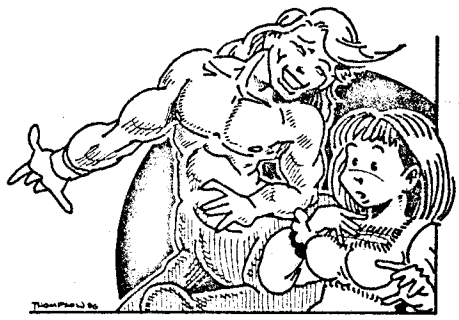
Cy Chauvin: Dennis Fsicher's article is certainly ambitious, and although I have read most of the historical commentary about Heinlein's novels, I'm sure there are many other newer fanzine readers who haven't. It also made me actually go out and read two older Heinlein novels I've been wanting to read for a number of years: The Door into Summer and Double Star. Because of its title, I always imagined that The Door into Summer would be a lyrical and poetic novel (like Engine Summer, perhaps). Of course it's not, but I've forgotten how energetic and lively prime Heinlein can be, although Double Star is even better in that respect. I think that novel also taught me that a writer can have a wisecrackin' and humorous style and yet have a serious story to tell (serious, at least, in comparison to Ron Goulart, *ugh*). I also found appealing the 50s view of the future present in both novels. But it is funny to read a novel about

Post Sctiptings / Comments on earlier LLs

the future in a dated vernacular (which describes future objects by often making references to or comparisons with things from the 50s) which suddenly stops and "explains" a term from the past mentioned in conversation -- in order to remind us that the novel is set in the future! (The terms are obvious to the reader, but would not be to someone in the future, apparently.) I don't know if any book can escape from being made obsolete by the references it makes to its own time, and near-future SF is particularly susceptible -- but explanations of "Future-dated" terms or ideas that every reader knows are a flaw that could have been avoided. Assuming one is shooting for something other than humor.

DAVID YODER'S
"Alice in Wonderland"

Mark Blackman: There are deeper aspects to the Alice books than David Yoder may realize: the stories behind jokes like what mock turtle soup is, why March hares seem to be mad and how use of mercury affected the brain/nervous system of hatters...the parodic aspects of the poetry (take-offs on Wordsworth and Isaac Watts)...even Tenniel's caricature of Disraeli and of course the field day the shrinks have with Lewis Carroll's fondness for little girls.



LYNN HICKMAN'S
"The Wonderful World of Yesterday"

Dave Yoder: The star of LL #19 has got to be Lynn Hickman. Let me go on record as being in favor of his continuing this column in future issues of LL. I have spent many happy hours at conventions talking with (or, more correctly, listening to) Lynn on his favorite subject and never fail to be impressed by how well he knows it. The presentation of his material in fictional fashion made it quite pleasant to read and helped his natural humor to come through. I am eagerly awaiting the resurrection of THE PULP ERA which he has been promising to start doing again for the past few years.

Mark Blackman: Lynn Hickman's article on the pulps does indeed sound like a lost manuscript -- from about 16 years ago, I'd say. Anyone who's been near a campus in the past ten years knows the student rebels long ago gave way to materialistic yuppies. As for his thesis, he contradicts himself several times. Pulps' readers weren't escapists, he says, but wanted to enjoy history to its fullest --by reading hackwork about a West that never existed? The first decades of this century are usually portrayed as a time of optimism, overall probably an accurate picture. But the 1930s were the Escapist Decade...from Hollywood romanticism and romanticization to the larger-than-life -- and darker -- pulp heroes and villains like Doc Savage, The Shadow, and Fu Manchu, and the beginnings of the Golden Age of SF. Whether escapism is good or bad is a different topic, and what forms of escapism are better than others is a value judgment. (Is not choosing to debate that the Dogma of Otherness in action?)

David Palter: "The Pulps' Forgotten People" by Lynn Hickman does reveal some interesting information about the old pulps. However, the relevance of this information to the failures of contemporary public education is a point which, for me, never quite came into focus. Besides, I can't believe that anyone would willingly hand out batches of rare, valuable, and fragile old pulp magazines to a gang of juvenile delinquents, in hopes of furthering their education. Microfiche facsimiles, maybe.

[[Remember who had the gun, though. If anyone had tried to abuse one of those magazines....]]

CLIFTON AMSBURY
"Joe and I and The U.S.S.R:

Mark Blackman: I'm coming in on this without seeing Clifton Amsbury's article on the U.S.S.R., though I have read an interview with a colleague of yours who's lived there, that appeared in your school journal. The Soviets are, in the final analysis, Russians (yes, I know Stalin was Georgian); Soviet abuses are Russian ones made more effective by 20th century technology. The Tsar also locked dissidents away in mental institutions or sent them to Siberia. Still, I'm amazed by all the paranoia in so many current books (Bova's Privateers, reviewed in LL #19, is just one -- and here I thought paranoia was a Russian characteristic) about Soviet takeovers of the U.S. or our space program. Totalitarianism does not inherently mean world conquest. And considering the state of Soviet computer technology and their nuclear power and space programs, the idea seems like it should be relegated to fantasy, not SF. (I call such visions "poli sci fi.") I mean, what are they going to do, threaten us with radioactive cabbages from Chernobyl?

MICHAEL KUBE-MCDOWELL'S
"Searching For Hope"

T. Kevin Atherton: It would be hard to single out a favorite bit from an issue that contained such gems as Kube-McDowell's essay (well, speech anyways) on optimism, which, in turn, contained that great quote from H.

G. Wells: "...beings which are now latent in our thoughts..." That phrase -- and indeed the whole quote -- had a power for me such as prayers must hold for the religious.

MAIA'S "The Best of the Magazines"

David Yoder: Every time I read something Maia has written I am again impressed by her ability and insight. From having talked and played Boggle with her I already had an appreciation of her brains, but her writing just seems to get better. I still do not read the magazines (with the exception of F&SF, and not much of that), but whenever an article like this comes along I get the feeling that I am missing something. However, until I get more reading time, I am just going to have to keep missing it I guess.

Ed Chambers: Admittedly, I am behind in my magazine reading. I subscribe to F&SF and read Isaac Asimov's SF Magazine whenever possible. Unfortunately, I have not been able to obtain any current copies of IASFM, so if anyone could possibly provide me with this magazine's address, I will subscribe.

[[IASFM, P.O. Box 1933, Marion OH 43305. $19.50 for 13 copies.]]

THE SCIENCE FICTION BOOK CLUB

T. Kevin Atherton: Thanks to Evelyn C. Leeper for sharing some of what she heard about the Science Fiction Book Club with the rest of us. I was particularly surprised to learn that the SFBC books were printed on acid-free paper (as are those of Bluejay Books, for example) and in that one, at least, way are superior to many $16 and $17 books you'll find at the bookstore. Why then, I wonder, is it so hard to get a decent price for them when you dump them at such used bookstores that will even accept them?

[[The bindings are terrible, and the Book CLub editions are worth less because very few are first editions, and they come from a "club", and not from the book publisher directly.]]

David Yoder: While the piece on the Science Fiction Book Club was informative and fun, it was far too short. SFBC is one of those things that I have belonged to without thinking too much about and it surprised me a bit to realize that it really does not exist on some metaphysical plane, materializing its mailings directly into my mailbox. Perhaps, Lan, you could get Ms. Asher to do you an article on the Club: its background, philosophy, plans, etc.

[[That sounds like a good idea. I will pursue it.]]

R Laurraine Tutihasi: I enjoyed the article about the Science Fiction Book Club. I was especially interested to read about the acid-free paper. I've felt reluctant lately to buy their books, but this fact changes the picture for me. Possibly the general public doesn't care about this sort of thing, but I believe quite a few of us are more discriminating.

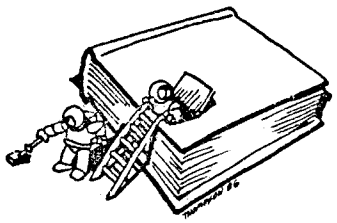
THE WORLDCON
and the
HIGH COST OF VOTING

David M. Shea: To Mr. Bernstein, who accused the Baltimore Worldcon committee of "Horrendously bad management": Come, sir, let us be sure we have all the facts before we go bandying purple adverbs. I would hardly deny that significant errors were made; but not all of CONSTELLATION's problems were the committee's fault. Consider the case of a major downtown hotel which had committed a block of several hundred rooms to the convention. In February, scant weeks before hotel information was to go out, the hotel's management decided to close for "renovations" with no advanced warning to the con, the Baltimore business community, or anyone else. This forced the committee to scramble for rooms in outlying facilities, which necessitated the shuttle bus system, which cost a lot of unbugeted money. Other examples could be cited.

Second: Anyone who reads the LANTERN or other news & comment zines knows that many fen have limited finances. In consideration of this, the CONSTELLATION committee made a deliberate attempt to hold down prices. Had the committee been willing to jack up the tariff---not just memberships, but for dealers' tables, program books ad space, etc.---much of the financial shortfall would have been avoided. And many deserving fen would have been priced out of attending.

Third: In spite of its financial problems, CONSTELLATION was a good Worldcon. People enjoyed it. Surely this is at least one of the criteria on which a Worldcon should be judged? It may have been underfinanced, but it was not badly organized: everything ran pretty much on schedule, there were few or no major logjams, events were well attended and well received. (As a final note, my department did an excellent job, and was within its budget.)

Cy Chauvin: The suggestion of separating the Hugo voting from the Worldcon has been around for at least 10 years. I was particularly concerned about it myself when I was a neo and only read fanzines and never went to cons. Now I go to the Worldcon, but I'm much less conscientious than I should be about nominating and voting for Hugo awards. *sigh*



A NEO'S READING LIST

Val Meyers: I very much liked the "Neo's Reading List". Many of my favorite books were listed, and all of my favorite authors were included. I'll be interested in seeing what alternatives your readers offer.

Buck Coulson: I frequently get asked by neofans to recommend books --they have to be neos if they'll take a huckster's word-- and my immediate rejoined is, "What kind do you like: mythic fantasy, swords and sorcery, hard science, space adventure, alternate worlds?" There are classics in all those fields, and I defy anyone to like every book on Shea's list --I certainly don't.

Robert Sabella: Why didn't David Shea include a single collection on his list? His groundrules did not specify single-author volumes only. What could be a better introduction to Science Fiction than any of The Hugo Winners or The Science Fiction Hall of Fame? After all, short Science Fiction is a least as important as novels.

My real complaint was that Shea did not include a single work by Roger Zelazny, Robert Silverberg, Philip K. Dick or Theodore Sturgeon on his top 24, yet he somehow found the room for F.M. Busby, Alan Dean Foster, Jacqueline Lichtenberg and Thomas Monteleone! How about replacing the latter four authors with This Immortal, Dying Inside, The Man in the High Castle and More Than Human?

Dave Yoder: As soon as I saw the title of David Shea's article in the table of contents, I started salivating. It is just the sort of thing that begs for disagreement, redoing your own way, etc. I am sure he realized this when he presented it and it will be interesting to see the lists compiled by other people. I have tried to do this sort of thing before with short stories; holding the list to around 25 with only one story per author and it sure as hell ain't easy. Anyway, here is my list, it agrees with his at some points and there are titles in his that could well be here if I was more familiar with the book or did not rate something else a bit higher:

I, Robot, Isaac Asimov - The foundation for most modern robots and a classic in its own right.

Decision at Doona, Anne McCaffrey - In my opinion her best work and a good first-contact novel.

The Left Hand of Darkness, Ursula LeGuin - Great human/alien interface with insights into both.

The Hobbit, J. R. R. Tolkien - No, you don't need to say more.

Nor Crystal Tears, Alan Dean Foster - A great storyteller and the best first contact novel I have read, with a truly alien viewpoint well presented.

The Compleat Enchanter, L. Sprague de Camp & Fletcher Pratt - Funny, good fantasy (this could have been Tales from Gavagan's Bar).

The Faded Sun: Kesrith, C. J. Cherryh - Again, my favorite work by the author and another good picture of an alien culture.

The Complete Venus Equilateral, George O. Smith - Some of the science is a bit dated and gets pretty far-out toward the end, but a good example of this style and period.

R Is for Rocket, Ray Bradbury - Perhaps not one of the recognized classics he has written, but I like his short stories better than the novels and these are superb (and my own enjoyment of the Chronicles was very uneven).

The Day of Their Return, Poul Anderson - A favorite author I had to include, and this excellent book gives a taste of his universe without bogging you down with some of the main series characters who are unfamiliar.

Stardreamer, Cordwainer Smith - A good sampling of the work of an often-overlooked author who tells enchanting stories.

Dune, Frank Herbert - The best and most complete detailing of an alien ecology.

Dorsai!, Gordon R. Dickson - An excellent SF war story by one of our best adventure writers, which provides some introduction to the Childe Cycle.

Nightwings, Robert Silverberg - A strange view of a far future Earth with archetypal characters one can get involved with.

The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress, Robert A. Heinlein - I opted for the "adult" work.

Rissa and Tregare, F. M. Busby - I agree with David on Busby but happen to have a different favorite.

Pilgrimage to Earth, Robert Sheckley - Some of the best from one of the field's best humorous writers.

Time and Again (First He Died), Clifford D. Simak - Once again, see David's comments on his Simak selection.

Convergent Series, Larry Niven - One of the best "tech" writers and a very representative collection.

The Weapon Shops of Isher, A.E. van Vogt - My own first choice would be The World of Null-A, but it is not for everyone.

Infinite Dreams, Joe Haldeman - I think these stories show off the range of Joe's talent better than any one novel can.

Driftglass, Samuel R. Delany, Jr. - I am not a big Delany fan, but this is some good stuff in a style which should be represented.

Holding Wonder, Zenna Henderson - The People and more.

Tales of Ten Worlds, Arthur C. Clarke - A master storyteller takes you into space and shows you its wonders.

The above is unabashedly subjective but in looking back over it I see I have left out a number of favorite authors (e.g. Zelazny, Chandler, Piper, Leinster, Vance, Laumer, Saberhagen, et al.), not to mention stories. While there are some obvious holes

in my list, some important and well-known names missing, any such list is going to have to reflect the compiler's taste to some extent -- who would recommend a book they didn't like?-- but that is one of the things that makes the results of this sort of challenge fun and interesting.

I notice also that there are quite a few collections in there, although not as many as there could have been. Science Fiction lends itself to the short form so well and so much really good short stuff has been written that it would be equally possible to do anintroductory list like this using only anthologies. Just about any "Best of..." book would be eligible and if one started including multiple author anthologies the choices would rapidly become almost impossible. However, I do recognize that the novel length must be represented if for no other reason than the depth of background and characterization it allows. Still, I think I would like to be able to add such things as Judith Merril's Year's Best series, Amis & Conquest's Spectrums, the Orbits, most of Conklin's work, the first three volumes of The Science Fiction Hall of Fame, [sigh...]

Mark Owings: Dave Shea's list is interesting. I think I would have refused the ground rules myself, but here's my list:

The Left Hand of Darkness and Robots Have no Tails I would agree on. Then The Day of their Return by Poul Anderson, Monument by Lloyd Biggle, Nightmares and Geezenstacks by Fredric Brown, A fall of Moondust by Arthur C. Clarke, Iceworld by Hal Clement (much more approachable than Mission of Gravity), Lest Darkness Fall by L. Sprague DeCamp, Morning Star by H. Rider Haggard, Citizen of the Galaxy by Robert A. Heinlein, Death's Deputy by L. Ron Hubbard, Conjure Wife by Fritz Leiber, The Helix and the Sword by John C. McLoughlin, Star Man's Son (aka Daybreak: 2250 AD) by Andre Norton, Space Viking by H. Beam Piper (the ground rules keep Little Fuzzy out), Wasp by Eric Frank Russell, Children of the Atom by Wilmar Shiras, Time and Again by Clifford Simak, Sirius by Olaf Stapeldon, Seeds of Life by John Taine, The Lincoln Hunters by Wilson Tucker, Slan by A. E. Van Vogt, A Martian Odyssey (the Fantasy Press or the Hyperion editions -- the Lancer is a bad selection, I think), The Complete short stories of H. G. Wells (even if it is only half SF), and Many Dimensions by Charles Williams. Many of David's selections do not seem proper for a beginner, really.

Don D'Ammassa: Like David Shea, I have sometimes cme up with basic reading lists. There's only one book he included that I consider dreadful (House of Zeor), but how can he include Foster, Busby, Monteleone, and Lichtenberg, then leave off Aldiss, Sturgeon, Blish, Anderson, Clarke, Dick, Farmer, SIlverberg, Sheckley, Vance, Pohl, and Zelazny? And A Canticle for Leibowitz has to be on any basic reading list; it's the most important book the field ever produced.

Paula Gold Franke: The "Neo's Reading List" was interesting, and I'm sure you've gotten a large response to what should or should not be on the list. I do agree with almost every book that David Shea includes. I would probably have added A Canticle for Leibowitz, mostly because that's the first SF book I ever read and it sent me searching for more. I would also add Brin's The Postman since that's the one book I've been recommending this year.

Perry Glen Moore: I am sure that you will get MANY comments on the Neo Reading List. A few minor observations:

* Cherryh has done better work than Gate of Ivrel. Maybe this year's Cuckoo's Egg, or The Pride of Chanur, for example.
* Babel-17. A turn off to any neo. Why encourage them to leave fandom forever?
* Tunnel in the Sky as Heinlein's best? Good question. I liked the alternative selection better, as well as Have Spacesuit -- Will Travel. A better selection might be his short story anthology which chronicles most of his future history series.
* McCaffrey has a much better novel in Crystal Singer. I agree that the Pern novels are good, but only if you read them as a whole.
* The Wirches of Karres remains one of the funniest novels I have ever read. I never stopped laughing.
* No Frank Herbert, Larry Niven, or Arthur C. Clarke? One common 'fault' was the inclusion of many fairly recent novels or collections. I agree that the past few years have seen some exceptional works, but I question if we are being truly objective to past works. We read the newer works as they are published, and they imprint themselves on our minds.

Dennis Fischer: Everyone probably has their list in mind of top 25 science fiction books which would be appropriate to give a neo, works which are tantalizing but not too difficult for those unversed in science fiction. I found Shea's list interesting, though I would definitely disagree with some of his choices. I for one think that Ellison Wonderland should be permanently put out to pasture for the sheer number of truly awful stories it contains and see it largely as a measuring stick of how much Harlan Ellison has grown as a writer over the years. (But then, my favorite Ellison collection is the decidedly unfantastic Love Ain't Nothing But Sex Misspelled.) I think that Tunnel in the Sky, while not a bad book, is one of Heinlein's weaker Juveniles. I've have good luck turning people on to SF with the first of McCaffrey's Dragon books as well as the unmentioned A Wrinkle in Time (depending on the age of the reader). And John Varley is a good writer and Persistence of Vision a stunning collection. I have some problems with what he passes for story logic. For example, regarding "Persistence", I have known a number of blind people, and while

some of their other senses do grow more acute, there is no reason to pre-suppose the development of telepathy will naturally occur more readily in a blind person. Additionally, you can too lie with body language, and that's one of the first things any actor learns. So much for a deaf and blind utopia.

Milt Stevens: David Shea brings up the subject of SF books to recommend to neos. A list of Hugo winning novels wouldn't be too bad. They'd Rather Be Right is the only Hugo winning novel that I regard as a total ringer. The various "Best of" anthologies that have been devoted to individual authors are generally excellent collectins of shorter fiction. By comparison, the "Best of the Year" anthologies are much more uneven. The SF Book of Lists has a couple of lists of the most popular SF novels of all time. Those lists are a little bit dated. If someone compiled all the recommended reading lists that have appeared in LOCUS over the years, you could keep a neo busy until he was Old and Tired.

THE RASPBERRY AWARDS
"The Razzies"

Brad Foster: While the Golden Raspberry awards were funny, afater I finished reading the article it struck me as ust more beating the dead horse type stuff -- we all know these things stink, and we are reminded again and again. Let 'em slide into obscurity for crying out loud! Awards such as Golden Turkeys I can appreciate on the level of their pointing out bad films that are worth looking at for that badness, but the Raspberrys don't do a lot for me. On the other hand, the various presentation ploys were wonderful, need to get the folks who organize this in to give a hand on the movie and TV award shows and maybe I'd find a reason to tune in to one of those again. (It's probably been ten or more years since I watched an award show, they are so embarrassing to sit through with all those folks who come across so powerfully in films showing how normally awkward they are without a script. I just read the winners in the paper the next day, which is the main point of the whole mess anyway, isn't it?)

Mike Glicksohn: Another written highlight of #20 was Kris Gilpin's description of the Golden Raspberry ceremony. I don't happen to be familiar with some of the films mentioned and I'm tasteless enough to have enjoyed Rambo II but Kris' rendition of the presentations and the performances make the entire evening sound like a hell of a lot of fun. (Did he tape it or take copious notes for all those clever one-liners and put-downs?)

[[I don't know. Maybe he just remembers what happened.]]

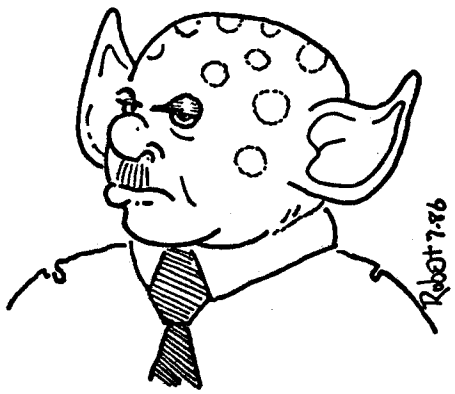
Dennis Fischer: Enjoyed the report on the "Golden Raspberyy Awards". Kris Gilpin almost made me wish I'd been able to go myself. Though I might comment that while I found its politics reprehensible and ideas of combat ludicrous, Rambo on the whole was a well-made action film and far from the worst film last year. I attribute its sweeping of the awards to blatant favoritism on the part of the judges (who they would most like to get...).

Craig Ledbetter: I was very happy to see Kris Gilpin make an appearance in LL. His style is so easy-going and informative that I drool with envy. It sounded like the Razzie awards were a lot of fun and I hope that Kris can cover them again next year.

[[Me too!]]

Roger Reus: Gilpin is a fantastic obscure film reviewer and contributes to many of the filmzines. His report on the "6th Annual Razzie Awards" was another great piece. The films nominated for the "Worst Achievement" Awards were all rightly so: all but one, that is.

How the hell did Michael Cimino's Year of the Dragon be considered as worst picture? Though this is hardly a "great" film, it is one of the most unfairly criticized flicks of the past five years. It got a lot of shitty reviews when it was released, which killed it at the box office. Most reviewers rightly felt that the film made Chinatown out to be much too rough, much too vicious. But for me the entire film had a certain dream-like quality to it, as if it was purposely exaggerating to show how violent Chinatown is. I'm probably alone on this one, but I thought Year of the Dragon was a good three-star flick. Glad to hear that Rambo was chosen as the shittiest flick of 1985. Boy, that Sly Stallone is a versatile actor, isn't he! Whatta guy!



ANDY OFFUTT
"Uncle Andy's Advice"

Buck Coulson: A few comments on LANTERN 20. I'll start with Offutt and fan letters. I've never been behindhand at telling stf authors and editors what I think, but only in the last few years have I started writing to non-stf people. Except for the big names, they get fewer comments than the average stf author, and are correspondingly happier to hear from you. I don't recall who-all (if I may be southern for a moment) I've written to, but in the past year or so it's been John McPhee, Peggy Seeger, Joan Smith, and Barbara Mertz under her nom de plume of Elizabeth Peters. All of them responded; Seeger and McPhee both commented on what a nice letter it was. (You see how hard up they are.) In all these cases I had to write in care of the publiser; in all cases the letter was promptly forwarded. What the hell; I enjoy these people's work, so it's only fair to let them know it. Of course, with non-stf people, it's hardly worthwhile to write scathing letters to publishers of bad material. For just one reason, the postage costs would be astronomical; for another, I don't really care if literature in general is improved.

Gee, Andy, you mean people actually dress up for convention banquets? I dunno; I suppose it's all right if they enjoy it, but it seems faintly perverted to me....

Clifton Amsbury: The Andy Offutt speech was interesting and its best advice was the final line. The operative word is "careful." (For many years I've been saying that what I hate most about advice is that folks usually advise you to do what you were going to do anyway -- and then try to take credit when that's what you do.) Careful. For instance: "Root for the Reds." There are many kinds of "Reds" and some only claim to be. Check them out "carefully." But does he mean a baseball team? [[I think so.]]

"Don't wear your politics on your sleeve." And especially not on your shoulder, which is what he here seems to do. He does bring up one question that needs more discussion than it's had, and which indeed touches on some concerns of science fiction.

Carter was a founding member of the Trilateral Commission and somewhere in there Mondale joined also. The first two years Carter was a good President. He continued the good things Nixon and Ford had done and reversed many of the bad. (Like cleaning up all those niggling and meaningless OSHA regulations which only harassed employers without advancing workers' health and safety.

Then suddenly at mid-term he fired the half of his cabinet who were not Trilateral Commission members and the next two years were in a different universe. They were a preview for Reagan. Those were the years of "The Notch" in Social Security, the sidetracking of SALT II and especially "deregulation." Deregulation is the best definition I know of for reactionary. It's why the "Reds" say we can't reform capitalists, so let's just get rid of them.

But it does raise questions of how we wound up in an alternate universe right after the 1978 elections.

"Increase your volume if she doesn't thank you." (The referent for that "she" was someone.) I've never been denounced for such courtesy. Now and then I've been complimented for such rare old-fashioned gallantry. My response is, "I do it for men, too."

I begin to understand why the second Offutt story I read was the last.

"Avoid eating fish on Friday." I've done that ever since I got out of the Army. (In the Army I had no choice except to go hungry.)

Jessica Amanda Salmanson: Monsieur Offutt's various advices are sometimes mutually exclusive, i.e.: "Say 'you're welcome when you step aside or hold a door for someone. Increase your volume if she doesn't thank you." And "Vow never to buy from anyone who shouts at you."

It seems to me that in the scenario where a woman, whose hands are not full of anything and is perfectly capable of opening her own doors, has practiced the better part of valor by not saying anything about it, it takes a first-class jerk to shout YOU'RE WELCOME! at her as she passed through the door.

And he follows up his "vow never to buy from anyone who shouts" with "Buy my books."

Another contradiction is, "Don't wear your politics on your sleeve." M. Offutt's sleeves are dragging on the ground with weighty politics.

Now my advice would be, "Never buy from an avowed pornographer," but "Always defend his rights to write it."

Mike Glicksohn: Pretty good speech by Uncle Andy, with some serious suggestions nicely sugared up with the humorous coating. (But in future I'll scrutinize his con conversation carefully because I don't think Andy's completely free of knee jerk reactions either.) I particularly related to his point about never drinking alone since I've been looking for some justification for Doris' two cats for some time! Now each time I kick them in passing I'll say, "Thank you for your company."

Val Meyers: Thanks very much for printing Andy Offutt's GoH Speech. Mr. Offutt is one of my favortie people in SF (totally separate from whether or not he's a favorite author). One of the reasons is evident in this

speech which is a mixture of funny and serious, but all honest. A good thing to reread, and I'll be doing so often.

Paula Gold Franke: I did enjoy the Andy Offutt GoH speech. The one thing I miss about going to cons is getting together with my favorite people. So it was fun to read Andy's speech. (Not quite the same as hearing it in person, but a decent second best.)

David D'Ammassa: Offutt's "Uncle Andy's Advice" will provoke a lot of response, I think. Advice always provokes response, whether it's agreement or a slap in the face. Politics in a bad topic of conversation, unless you are very good at talking politics. Political conversations can get very boring very fast, and eight out of ten people will bray half-thought-out ideas and tired cliches to cover up the fact that they don't know what they're talking about. I do not know much about politics, so I don't talk much about them. If more people were the same way, maybe they'd learn something and could later talk about them intelligently.

I stopped writing fan letters after I wrote to Stephen King a year ago. King has been forced to make up a printed response, and the little card explains -- in King's easy, likeable and loose style -- why he has to send cold xeroxed replies instead of handwritten answers. I felt very sorry; I can't think of a higher price of fame than not being able to go out in public, but not being able to answer all of your mail personally is a close second. If millions of people could just appreciate talent, maybe people like King could answer mail; what I'm saying is, if we could just let the fact that his book is a best-seller prove to him that we like his stuff, the mail would slow down. And he could respond to the better letters (if he liked your stationary). Unless I have something interesting to say, I won't write to someone. Why waste postage?

I have a habit of occasionally going into a "I don't think that..." sentence. Reading it later makes me grit my teeth. It's one of those things about my writing that really bugs me, and imagine what other people reading it think.

Jeanne Mealy: Andy offutt's speech was wonderful. I liked his encouragement for people to send cards/letters to authors; I'm all for letting people know, even if they're published. I probably won't take the advice about Long John Silver restaurants; not being subjected to the commercials, I can only steer clear. (I ate at one once. That was enough.) Neat advice about hotel room extensions. We may need to try it some time. (I can imagine that the desk is really busy, and wouldn't mind if one less problem presented itself -- waited an hour or two, maybe.)

Thom Digby: Regarding "hands-on experience", in the engineering field it indicates actually doing something as opposed to merely theorizing about it. Whatever redundancy there is in the term can be thought of as emphasis. Imagine, for example, setting out to hire a lifeguard and getting a candidate who has studied all about bouyancy and hydrodynamic forces and such, but who has never actually been in the water. He has all the theory he could possibly use and then some, but he lacks hands-on experience.

About people at banquets not staying dressed up afterwards: many people are not comfortable in dress-up clothes. Perhaps it's because such attire is designed for looks first and comfort second. Also, many fans wear suits only on special occasions and therefore do not feel at home in them. While many masquerade costumes are even more uncomfortable, there it's the individual's own creation/character rather than a uniform one is sort of socially pressured into.

Milt Stevens: I agree with Andrew Offutt on the value of information in general. What is sometimes annoying is when a college professor will take a general course and fill it with information that could only be of use to a specialist. I'll never forget the Biology I class I had in college. The entire three unit course took the basic high school equations for respiration and photosynthesis and expanded them into all of their sub-processes. By the day after the final exam, I not only didn't remember the sub-processes, I'd also manage to forget the basic equations which I had known previously. It's not every day you take a course that results in a net loss of knowledge.

COMMENTS TO LETTERS

Brad Foster: In response to Ben Indick's letter, yes, I was especially upset to find out that Holier Than Thou #20 didn't make it into the listing of the Meese report --and I worked so hard to get it up to their level of down! (Say, has anyone else wondered why, if exposure to so-called "pornographic" material leads to crime, why is it the members of this commission, who did little else for an entire year but wallow around in the

worst possible examples of filth they could find, aren't out there on the streets right now humping everything that moves? Maybe... maybe it doesn't lead to crime! Personally I've discovered that 99.7% of all convicted felons ate mashed potatoes when growing up. Why isn't anyone doing something about this clear-cut potato menace in our midst?)

[[Actually there should be a counter-balance study on those who watch and enjoy pornographic materials and haven't commited sex crimes.]]

Mark Blackman: In answer to Ruth Berman, Barbi Johnson had some cartoons published in The I Hate Unicorns Book, ed. Kevin Duane, 1984. Cartoons with a touch of malice. In fact, I was wearing her name tag when I helped a group schlep a batch of the books over to the ABA convention (held in DC DISCLAVE weekend; there were a good number of fans there).

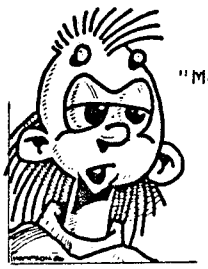
Mike Glicksohn: As I sit here rubbing my shins I'll refrain from arguing subjective taste with T.K. Atherton save to observe that while he may be a professional layout artist, I'm an amateur fanzine fan. As such I've seen a few thousand more fanzines than T.K., and for me the telling comment in an otherwise admirable response is "LL looks as good as a fanzine needs to look." This sounds far too close to "It's only a fanzine" for me to believe that T.K. and I think about fanzines in the same way. So I guess we'll just mosey along with our different opinions. (Not that I disagree about LL's readability, as my last letter indicated. You've improved enormously -- and this issue continues the upward trend -- but to these old and tired fannish eyes there is still room for other changes for the better. But as long as you're happy with things, that's what really counts.)

I'd have thought Rob Gregg would have seen enough fanzines by now to realize that they are published for their editors, not for their readers. If he doesn't like the material in many of the fanzines he gets that's hardly the fault of the faned who is simply publishing the type of fanzine he or she wants to produce, regardless of how the Rob Greggs of fandom feel about it.

Don D'Ammassa: VCRs. We bought one just over a year ago, and I have slightly over 700 films on tape, plus dozens of short subjects -- a complete Monty Python and Fawlty Towers among other things. Ben Indick might be interested to know I have ten Marx Brothers films. The VCR more than anything else I have bought or used (even more than minicomputers) makes me believe I'm living in the future I imagined as a teenager. Being able to shift time, to watch things when I want to, even if I can't be home when they're on, impresses the hell out of me.

Tim Ryan: Was the reader who wanted to tell you about the new Hugo (Yugo) car, also the one to point out the Volkswagon Jedi (Jetta)?

Thom Digby: If people want to lower-case their names I suppose that's their right most of the time, but I was taught the first word of a sentence gets capitalized no matter what. Violating this can make a sentence appear to be a continuation of the one preceeding.



KEITH ALLAN HUNTER
"Momentary Demonic Possession"

Jeanne Mealy: Now I know -- I can blame my recent decisions (to quit my job, move in with John [Stanley], go to Atlanta, and heaven knows what else) on M.D.P.! (Family and friends are cruelly inclined to change that to Lifelong D.P., but they're not writing this.)

Lee Hoffman: Re Keith Allan Hunter's article "New Findings Confound Old Science!", the same sources he researched offer -- if not a solution to the problem of MDP-a means of relief from the aggravating symptoms of guilt that follow an attack. Namely, you send a generous Free Will offering to the F.T.E.S.

Mike Glicksohn: As I see it, MDP could well explain much of what happens in fandom. I mean, would any normal sane high school math teacher sit down and say, "Well, I think I'll type up and lay out 106 pages of teeny tiny print then I'll make 500 or more copies of each page then I'll collate them into issues which my stapler will barely go through and after that I'll roam around the country handing them out for free to people who'll write and tell me all the words I didn't spell correctly and maybe I'll impoverish myself by mailing a few hundred out at exorbitant cost just so I can sit down and start the whole cycle over again."? Of course not! It has to be MDP! (Afterwards, of course, when saner heads might prevail and prevent the actual carrying through of the decision we have a clear case of SDP: Sustained Demonic Possession!) (And let us not confuse this with MDG, which refers to Momentary Demonic Guzzling and explains much of one's conventional behaviour...at least if one happens to be named Michael David Glicksohn.)

TERRORISM

Thom Digby: I note a lack of imagination on the part of whoever is contaminating medicines. Rather than try to kill people, if I were into that sort of thing I'd do relatively harmless things like leaving "Had this been a real poisoning you would be dead now" notes in the bottles.

MIKE RESNICK
"What I Did on My Winter Vacation"

Jeanne Mealy: Mike Resnick's article was great. He sure writes well, and covers a wide range of experiences -- from describing the scenery, to discussing the emotional reactions to the good and bad elements of the trip. I got the travel itch again...though I'm not adventurous enough to try Africa, there are plenty of other places I'd like to go. I'm starting with Atlanta--the Worldcon weekend. I've never been there, and hope seeing a few sights is possible (considering the summer weather, I'm not getting my hopes up too much.

Martin Morse Wooster: Mike Resnick's article was quite a lot of fun. I love reading travel diaries, and Resnick is a very engaging writer. I wish he had spent more time interviewing the various people he encountered; there were several times in his narrative where he kept running into reformed white hunters (in the Carnivore Lounge -- what a name!) telling fascinating stories -- and he never tells us what the stories were about. I don't run into any white hunters in the Washington suburbs [[Are you sure?]], and I would love to know what they are like. I also wish you could have printed some of his photos.

[[Mike is probably saving those fascinating stories to include in those novels he plans to write.]]

Mike Glicksohn: The absolute highlight of the issue, for me, was Mike's report on his trip to Africa. Fascinating reading and damn good insight into Mike himself. I don't really think I'd be interested in taking such a holiday myself (even assuming I could ever afford it!), but I really enjoyed reading about it. Mike struck a good balance of factual and anecdotal material and conveyed the impact the trip had on him very well. Damn good stuff and sharp of you to get it and use it to start things off. (I really like Mike's novels and I enjoy chatting with Mike himself so I mean no disrespect when I say that I have the impression that if Mike were one of ten people in a washroom who found themselves with green piss nine of us would assume we'd been eating asparagus while Mike would have a new trilogy plotted by the time he zipped his fly! The casual way he came up with new ideas for novels was mind-boggling.)

I often wondered what had happened to Perry Mason after his show was cancelled but somehow I never though of him becoming an African safari guide. All knowledge is contained in fanzines! (It must be tiresome to be stuck with a name like that, though. When I was in high school I had two classmates named Michael Anthony and Lionel Train and I always felt sorry for both of them.)

Dave Yoder: Mike Resnick's travelogue is an outstanding bit of work, as, I suppose, is only to be expected from a writer of Mike's ability. He and Carol were quite fortunate, or clever, or well-informed in their choice of a guide and wise in their decision to let him direct their sightseeing rather than follow the standard tourist regimen; it certainly seems to have heightened their enjoyment of the trip. The anecdote about Clyde the crested crane was priceless, just the sort of thing that highlights a vacation and provides those nuances of pleasure that can be the difference between a good trip and an unforgettable one. Being a bird-watcher myself, I really enjoyed all the attention he paid to the birds he saw. I am certainly looking forward to an opportunity to see his videotape (I'd happily sit through the whole uncut version) and to reading the books inspired by his adventures.

David D'Ammassa: Mike Resnick romps through the veldts of the dark continent. Very amusing article indeed. If I would make the effort to read to read his books, I'd probably look forward to the projects he mentions in the article. His vacation tale is a fine example of entertaining writing.

Craig Ledbetter: Enjoyed Resnick's piece on his African vacation very much. I liked the daily diary approach; for me it's much easier to follow and keep my interest up. Ever since high school and my first college degree (Wildlife Biology), I fantasized about going to Africa or South America. That seems like a pipe-dream nowadays. Bottomline is the fact that Mike Resnick was motivated to write more novels and stories. Now that's good news.

Sophie Laskowski: I really enjoyed Mike Resnick's report of his trip to Africa. It was one of the best things in LL #20.

BLADE RUNNER
"Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?"

Allen Salyer: I liked the Harvey/Rudas articles concerning Bladerunner.

I always felt part of Deckard's problem was, maybe, he was a replicant himself. Now this theory works for the movie version only, but consider: Tyrell Corp, has a problem dealing with runaway replicants. How best to track them down than use a higher grade replicantt equivalent to or better than Rachel's status? (Keeps the problem "in the family", too.)

Some clues to support this: Start right at the beginning of the film. Leon's interviewer has the same appearance, speaking manner, gestures and style as Deckard. Deckard's own obsession of photos and pictures of the past (on his piano) seems equal to the replicants.

Rachel's question about the Voight-Kampff test, "Have you (Deckard) ever taken the test yourself?"

Deckard's own self-questioning: "Replicants weren't suppose to have feelings -- but neither are Bladerunners." And after retiring Joanna Cassidy's character, Zhora, "There it is again. Feeling -- for a replicant -- for Rachel."

Deckard's emotional reaction to killing a replicant is identical to Rachel's reaction after shooting Leon.

Even if I'm wrong, it's still fun to think about.

Questions: Do replicants have a soul? Could Nexus 6 models acquire one? If you believe in heaven, hell, and God, would replicants be the same in God's eyes as human beings, or like that of animals? Why are we here? (Oh, sorry, got carried away.)

[[Interesting thoughts -- I'll let the readers ponder them. Also, check out Dennis Fischer's comments below.]]

Jim Meadows: I enjoyed Harvey's and Rudas' examinations of Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep and Bladerunner. My impressions of the novel and the movie, colored by the years since I read and saw them, are somewhat different. The lasting impression from the novel is that it asked the question, What makes a "human being"? Dick asks the question in the novel, but does not answer it, at least I don't remember any clear answer. At that point, perhaps asking the question is enough. It certainly was for me. There is something very compelling in that question, a question that most science fiction about artificial intelligence doesn't have the strength to confront. The novel is, I think, also rather hastily written. Years ago, in one of Richard Geis' fanzines, I think, I read Dick confessing that while he had never written anything under the influence of hallucenogenics (as some have believed), he did write some novels while taking amphetamines, in order to be able to grind them out all the quicker, and pay the bills. My sister and I once came to the conclusion that Androids was one of those novels. It seems to show some effects of the drug, in its lack of structure, and inconclusiveness. On the other hand, if Dick did write the novel while on uppers, he was showing marvelous control considering the effects of the drug. At any rate, Bladerunner is not inconclusive in dealing with the question it asks. Of course, it doesn't ask the question of what makes a human being. It merely asks, are androids human? The answer is a romantic one: yes. It is assumed we all know what being human is. I suspect we do not. Our inability to find a common definition has led to a lot of social problems. At any rate, by its overall style, and by coming to a romantic conclusion in the midst of a decaying society, Bladerunner reminded me not of Philip K. Dick but of Raymond Chandler. I think it was all those rainy city nights, and the voice-over narration by Deckard, in Harrison Ford's tough-guy voice that added to the feeling.

(By the way, Rudas writes that Dick's reaction to the film is unknown. I remember reading that Dick did see a version of the film before his death, and generally approved. However, this source stated that a change was made concerning the ending after he saw it, and that the voice-over narration was also added later. I think Ted White wrote this, but I'm not sure.)

If I were to pick out a film that does evoke Philip K. Dick for me, it would be another movie reviewed in your 20th issue, Brazil. All the notices for the film that I have seen, including Mark Leeper's, compare the movie to 1984, a sort of Orwell + Monty Python. I disagree. 1984 is essentially a political novel, an if-this-goes-on approach to Stalinism. It is a novel that does not attack communism, but communism's corruption. The Novel talks to many people in many different contexts, but Orwell was making a fairly specific political point. Terry Gilliam and his collaborators (Leeper fails to mention a third co-author, cast member Ian McKeown) are not making a political point so much as they are making an emotional or psychological one. Their major theme is something of a minor one in 1984, the conflict between a person's ideal dreams and the real world. In 1984, Winston Smith's ideal dreams are dreams of the world we live in today; his feeling that the world he lives in is somehow all wrong, a cheat, leads him to his rebellion against Big Brother. In Brazil, Sam Lowry's ideal dreams are just that -- dreams. They are hopeless fantasies typified by the old pop song that runs through the movie's soundtrack and gives it its title. Leeper writes that Lowry becomes a rebel when he finds his dream-woman in real life. But the thing is, he doesn't. He finds a woman who bears an amazing resemblance to his dream-figure, and seems to be a rebellious figure herself. But her rebellion is only situational, a product of her general alienation from society, and her outrage that a neighbor's husband has been cruelly and totally unjustly snatched away, all because of a bureaucratic slipup. The same is true for the renegade heating engineer who slips down one night to fix Lowry's monstrous home heating system. This man is simply a craftsman who has slipped out of organized society so he can do his job unobstructed. But he doesn't see any further than that. He just sees the pleasure of doing his work, and an obstacle -- the state-- that by its cumbersome and ill-willed inefficiency, keeps him from his pleasure.

Later in the film there is a big climactic sequence in which Lowry's dream-girl and the heating engineer are shown to be part of a vast underground rebellion, and take part in rescuing Lowry in several action-packed

scenes. It is all quick-moving romantic-adventure stuff straight out of movies like Star Wars, and goes totally against the mood of the rest of the film. It goes against that mood, because it isn't really happening. Rather, the whole sequence is another fantasy of Lowry, whose mind has cracked when faced with the prospect of the state's torture chamber. Lowry, like Winston Smith, has a dream, but Lowry really has no concept of how to smash the state. Smith has a strong enough concept of doing so that the state takes the effort of smashing him. With Lowry, they barely have to life a finger.

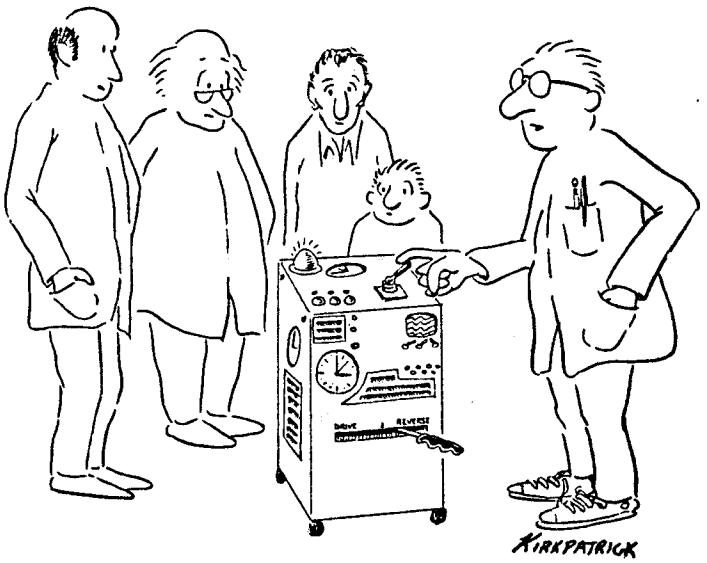
Lowry, after all, is such an ordinary person. It is his ordinariness that reminds me so much of characters from a Dick novel. Sam Lowry is no hero, no great intellect. He is caught up in his fantasies, his family life, his immediate world and its social blinders and obstacles. But still, he does have this dream, and given certain circumstances he acts upon them. He acts blindly and foolishly, selfishly, instead of for the common good, because there is no way he can imagine a common good the way Winston Smith can. But his willingness to follow his heart, in spite of himself, makes him endearing. It is this unheroic, rather ordinary, doomed attempt at being noble that reminded me of so many ordinary, confused, ignorant, sympathetic protagonists in Dick's novels.

As for the society and state Lowry lives in, I can't see it as being anything like the totalitarian state described in 1984. Orwell wrote of something that could happen, given a starting point of the late 1940s. If the world of Brazil were to happen, one would have to take, say, the year 1930 as a starting point, and introduce a cancerous growth into society, I think that Gilliam and his co-authors were not trying to warn of some dismal future; rather, they were painting an exaggerated larger-than-life picture of 20th century Western society as a whole, with its bureaucracy, its obstacles, its social blinders and vanities. Our world, like Lowry's world, is full of ugly things that we agree to pretend are beautiful, and unworkable social systems that we agree to pretend are workable. And while this pretense is kept up, there is a second standard, the private, sometimes infantile dream world, of a hopelessly blissful life. We can make our present lives better, but we cannot achiever those dream-worlds, and a lot of political and social blundering is done by people who think they can. In that sense, Brazil might not be science fiction in a technical sense at all, although it is a speculative work, and by my lights, a very fine film.

Dennis Fischer: Enjoyed the two Bladerunner articles. I really liked both the book and the film, though the film has the problem that it is somewhat of two minds. Part of what makes it work is the contrast between what is truly human (Deckard, the inhuman replicant killer) and what is synthetically human (the replicants that seem more human than the human beings). If the replicants have more poetry, more compassion, more empathy, then wherein does humanity lie? Yet at the same time, director Ridley Scott wanted to include the surprise revelation that Deckard himself was an android, remnants of which are still left in the film (the orange glow to Deckard's eyes in certain light, the correlation between replicants and photographs, which provide proof of memories they never had, and finally the origami unicorn at the end, which would have been understood more if a scene showing that Deckard had unicorns on his mind hadn't been cut). Still, reading the book does help one understand the design behind the movie better and so, while divergent, they also complement one another.

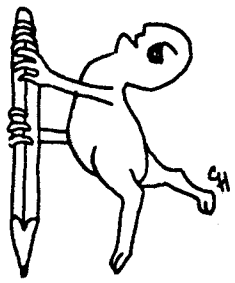
I also like the way the movie plays with fairness (Deckard shoots a woman in the back; Batty breaks Deckard's fingers as a punishment for the lives he's taken, but then incapacitates one of his own hands to make the "even", and so on). The film was worhty of the Hugo Award it received and despite its shortcomings (largely its awful narration which "explains" things), remains one of the best SF films ever made.

Craig Ledbetter: The Bladerunner comparison was a nice touch. A correction to Michael Rudas' piece; it's Douglas Trumbull, not Richard. Both writers, in their own ways, did a good job of looking at the written end of Dick's story. I hated Harrison Ford's narration in the film, but overall really liked it. Rutger Hauer has never been better.



NOW, I'LL HIT THE SWITCH AND WE'LL GO BACK 5 SECONDS IN TIME! :CLICK:... NOW, I'LL HIT THE SWITCH AND WE'LL GO BACK 5 SECONDS IN TIME! :CLICK:... NOW, I'LL HIT...

P.M. FERGUSSON
"Working to Write"



David M. Shea: I agree with everything you say, up to a point. Certainly all of us have encountered amateur (and professional!) fiction in which the writers simply don't know the basic rules of grammar. However, grammar and punctuation alone do not make a story. As Picasso said, you must know what the rules are -- then you break them, but you must know them first. However, I fancy that you have missed two things: Firstly, telling a horror writer not to repeat what has been done before is both useless and misguided advice, since the whole point of the horror genre is to repeat the same two and a half, possibly three, plots forever. Horror is as much a formula genre as romances. Secondly, with all due respect to the revered Hal Clement, you really don't have to know much about science to write modern science fiction. The day of the clunky post-Victorian high-low-medium-tech problem-solving story is long gone, and I for one say, good riddance.

To Mr. Moore, who stated that a story being "not SF and barely fantasy" is no bar to getting published: Of course. Consider "The Persistence of Vision"; a judgment as expert as Donald Wollheim's only included it in his World's Best as "bowing to the popular taste". The same could be said of Dhalgren. However, I am at a loss to see how anyone could class Bertram Chandler's Grimes novels as being "not SF", nor as being fantasy of any sort. Perhaps you could clarify this?

Paul Skelton: Who is this P.M. Fergusson? Surely, when it comes to writing the first two rules are:

A. Have something to say, and...
B. Say it.

Even if you get these two the wrong way round, the worst you get is a bit of writing practice. But what does good old P. M. Fergusson tell us is most important? Read what is and has been written so you don't repeat. You must be joking, Squire! What is and has been written fills about 15,000 decent-sized libraries. Try reading that lot before you start and two things are virtually guaranteed:

A. You'll die before you've hardly gotten started, and...
B. You won't write a word.

Now, if your name is Piers Anthony, please ignore all I've said. So what's next most important? Know 'Strunk & White' and "Rules of Grammar' by heart, or at least have copies of both handy for reference. Whoops! Please do not consider publishing any of this letter because...guess what? That's right, I never even heard of them. Now of course Mr. Fergusson leaves no doubt that he is talking about professional-type writing. Fine, but there's no reason for fanwriting to be less well conceived and executed than material intended for professional submission, so those of us who don't have a 'Funk & Wagnalls' or whatever it is had better just fold up our tents and steal away into the night. Ideally we should do this before we realize that we don't have 'Bartlett's Familiar Quotations' or 'Roget's Thesaurus' either. Of course I actually have seen copies of the latter, but unfortunately these were always in bookshops, where the mercenary owners seemed to think that giving books away was very non-U. I once mentioned to Cas that I wouldn't mind owning a Roget's Thesaurus and she said, "Don't be silly, dear, the dinosaurs are all extinct." I pointed out that it was a book, and I also pointed out how much it cost. Cas in turn explained how that much money would keep a normal family in food for several days or alternatively our Nicholas in cornflakes for almost as many minutes. You can't buck arguments like that.

Then there's this piffle about using the best dictionary you can afford. Look, I don't want to gasconade, but I know a few things about dictionaries. This however is by-the-by. You are not in competition with your reader (I use the singular noun there because if you insist on sticking into your material words like 'furgle', then one reader is all you'll have, and lucky to get that). Your reader is probably not going to splash out on such an expensive dictionary just for the pleasure of reading your prose, so why confuse the poor bugger? I mean, dictionaries are not all they are cracked up to be. Well, do you think you have a good dictionary? A good, one-volume dictionary? OK, so look up the word 'twee.' It's not a big, or obscure word, and we all have a rough idea of what it means. Found the word? If you said yes then either:

A. I don't believe you, or...
B. You're lying.

I've never yet found it in a single-volume dictionary. Mike Glicksohn found it in a two-volume Oxford -- one that you have to read with a magnifying glass-but that is the closest anyone's yet come. And yet it's such a common word --the root of dle-dum and dle-dee. How could any reference work omit it?

[[So, what does 'twee' mean?

Okay, how many fan fiction stories have you read that are good in terms of writing? Or, how many mainstream writers have tried writing SF and failed miserably at it because:

A. They had something to say, and...
B. Said it, but...
C. Didn't know what had already been written and repeated it, or didn't research enough and made obvious logical and scientific errors.

I have read a few stories like that, and it is sad that so many mainstream writers

try to break into SF without doing the research necessary, thinking that they can do anything and it'll fly. After all, it's only sci-fi.

Peter Fergusson was pointing out to this "writer" that you don't just need something to say in a particular genre; you need to know the field in order to write a good story.]]

Peter Fergusson: I am enclosing an additional bit of advice for aspiring writers. The ditty is anonymous but was probably written by an editor of the Journal of Parasitology many moons ago ("many moons" may be defined as lying somewhere between "older than god" and "since Methuselah was a pup"). Whatever, it applies to writing fiction as well as technical articles.

Boil It Down
(Anonymous)

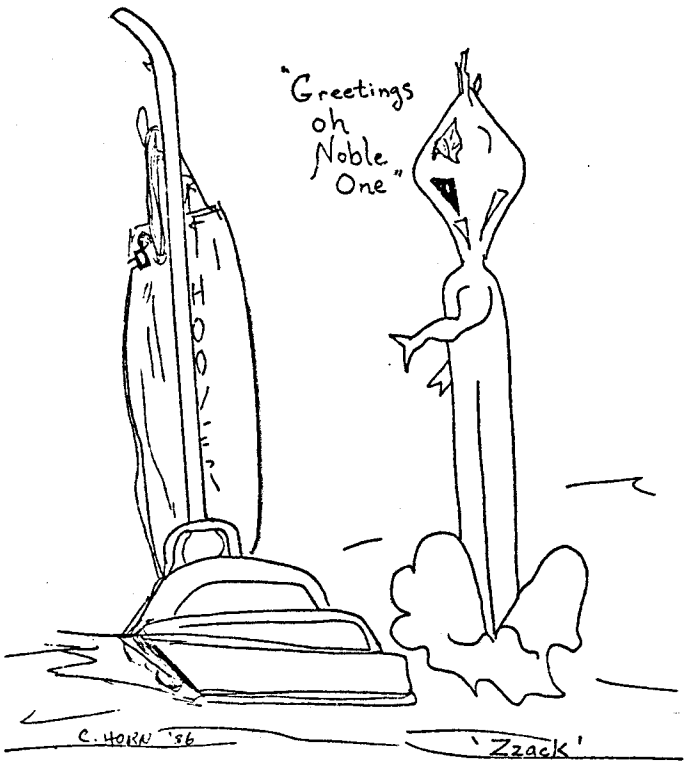
If you've got a thought that's happy, boil it down.
Make it short and crisp and snappy. Boil it down.
When your brain its coin has minted,
Down the page your pen has printed'
If you want your effort printed, boil it down.

Take out every surplus letter. Boil it down.
Fewer syllables the better. Boil it down.
Make your meaning plain; express it
So we'll really know, not merely guess it.
Then, my friend, ere you address it, boil it down.

Skim it well, then skim the skimmings. Boil it down.
Trim it, then retrim the trimmings. Boil it down.
When you're sure 'twould be a sin to
Cut another sentence in two,
Send it in, and we'll begin to -- boil it down.

Also along the same lines, I include a quote from Marion Zimmer Bradley in her guidelines for submission to Sword and Sorceress 4. "No beautifully written strings of adjectives; if I can tell you have a 'style' I probably don't want it."

Cy Chauvin: Who repeated the old saw, "I have some great ideas for stories, but I need someone to write them down for me," and then repeated what should be an old saw (or at least an anvil) by now on how it's the writing that counts more than the ideas. Was it Gerri Balter? In any case, it struck me that the ideas in recent SF haven't been that good (mostly trivial, vapid and silly), and maybe someone should take up that offer the next time it's voiced. Of course, it's also my opinion that these people who say they have good ideas but no time to write probably have only the most obvious and trivial ideas -- most SF suffers from bad thinking more than bad writing. Can Clarion improve that?



DAVID STEIN
"Same Bat-Time, Same Bat-Channel"

Jeanne Mealy: Robert Hayes as Starman??? Weird casting! I'll watch it, but am agreeing with David Stein as to its chances of survival. I recently saw two new shows, Condor and Northstar. Where'd they come from? Northstar is about an astronaut who acquired odd powers, thanks to a beam of solar radiation while on a space walk. Back on earth, he sort of hulks out when exposed to UV radiation -- but he can't do it much, because it burns out his body. (A particularly dumb example was given: a model of him was revved up to an equivalent state, and the cutaway part of the head showed a pulsing brain that eventually blew up -- flames shooting out around the neck. Gosh, better take it easy, huh?) I also went "Ho, hum" at seeing him race for a helicopter while trying to escape from someone chasing him, knowing that he probably didn't know how to fly it -- but he'd flip through the instruction manual, and learn it instantly. Yup. Gosh, wow. Maybe my reaction is because I have an SF-reading background; its all old hat to me, and over-acted to boot. The same thing with Condor -- international cop with new, female android partner. Lots of "humor" regardsing females and androids ("Sure you can risk your neck. You can probably just order a new one, huh?) The things I liked the most were the small touches from both shows: riding in a car programmed to follow a certain route, it warns the driver when it is approaching the "manual control" part of the route. The dirver orders lunch while on the road, and picks it up at a drive-through. The counter clerk flirts with him; he gently rebuffs her, saying she's not his

type. We learn what he means when we see a back view of the clerk -- which turns out to be just a torso in a chair. Gosh, Martha -- she's a MACHINE! Without these little touches of SF in the "near future" (LA 1999), the shows are both just cops-and-robbers or a blend of The $6 Million Man/Incredible Hulk.

Mark Schulzinger: David Stein and I continue to disagree on the relative merits of Twilight Zone and Amazing Stories, but we both seem to enjoy the same episodes, so what the hey....

Craig Ledbetter: David Stein's TV column cried out for more depth. Amazing Stories sucked, sure, but why not detail the feelings and expectations to explain that reaction? TZ was better, but not much better. Its quality took a beating all season long (with or without Ellison). At least both will be back so improvement can hopefully take place.

Thom Digby: I was disappointed by that Amazing Stories episode. I was expecting the kid to grow up and turn his childhood fantasies into a career as a writer or artist or some such, rather than the physical objects being what mattered.

CONREPORTS AND RAMBLINGS

David M. Shea: In reference to your description of an "Obscure Books" panel, pardon me if I take this as an opening and shove some of my favorite, lesser known, books at you. For example:

The World Menders, Lloyd Biggle
Sleeping Planet, William Burkett
anything by F. M. Busby
The Ship That Sailed the Time Stream, G.C. Edmondson
Utopia 3, George Alec Effinger
A World Called Solitude, Stephen Goldin
Paradise, Don Henderson
A Rumour of Angels, M. Bradley Kellog
Bring the Jubilee and Joyleg, Ward Moore
Star Rider, Doris Piserchia
Pavanne, Keith Roberts
anything by Hilbert Schenck, especially Wave Rider
House of Stairs, William Sleator
Compleat Venus Equilateral, George O. Smith
anything by James Tiptree, especially Up the Walls of the World.

Most of these, alas, are out of print, but browsing around a well-stocked dealers' room or used SF bookstore might turn up some of these. All are very good reads.

Robert Sabella: "Con Reports and Ramblings" was easily my favorite part of LL #20, fascinating reading, even though I knew nothing about the cons or people discussed. In fact, it brought back such memories of my old APA days (APA 45, at the time a bunch of young turks all of whom were born after 1945; nowadays that sounds like a bunch of oldtimers!) that the urge is too overwhelming for me to resist any longer. I have to joine an APA and do a personalzine again! I know I'm crazy to do this: I don't have the time to write a zine, much less read how many other quarterly zines, nor do I have access to a duplicator like I had when I was in grad school. But sampling LL #19 after a dozen years of cold turkey made the addiction come roaring back. The problem is that I've been out of touch so long I haven't any idea who's running nowadays. So, Lan, can I bug you for a bit of information? Do you know of any APAs with either an opening or a short waiting list? The APA you belong to would be fine. After learning so much about you in the past two LLs, I'm anxious to learn more.

[[Good god, don't let the US DEA find out that my fanzine is addicting (or fandom in general). We all could get into trouble. // Maia and I will send you a sample copy of MISHAP.]]

The school you teach at does not sound like Valhalla at all. I taught in a private (Catholic) school for 5+ years because I was not certified for public education, having chosen teaching at the last minute after studying math in college. They put many more demanads on their faculty than a public school, and they were much tighter with the purse strings. Now I've been in public education for 7 years and find it preferable. Sure there are lots of problems (starting with a Board of Education that is a political body rather than a professional one), but at least teachers negotiate a contract which gives us certain guarantees that don't exist in a private school. All that stuff about the Service Program and Weekend dorm duty sounds abominable to me, as well as your having to go to the Headmaster individually to argue your salary. I was on the Negotiating Team for my district this year, so I had the pleasure of arguing the salary guide for all teachers. But at least I did so voluntarily, taking the onus off the other 576 people.

Nor was I thrilled by your class load. Personally, I find Geometry a boring subject to teach. I doubt it is even suitable for a high school curriculum in its present form. Historically, much of Geometry is devoted to step-by-step logic in the form of proofs. But nearly every high school now teaches programming to its college-bound students, which also requires step-by-step logic. So there is considerable overlap when we actually have too much math to teach students in 4 years. I think the Geometry curriculum needs revamping. Some suggestions: half a year of Plane Geometry rather than the full

year most schools currently teach; perhaps Geometry as a distinct entity should be eliminated and the concepts integrated into Algebra I and II; perhaps Solid Geometry should be reintroduced. One of the biggest problems is the heavy emphasis the SATs place on Plane Geometry, but still everything they require could be taught in a half-year. Nor are proofs needed for the SATs.

I also would not enjoy teaching a slow Algebra II, because it sounds like you eliminate most of the Trigonometry which I consider the fun part of the course. I've gotten spoiled in recent years since my supervisor has given me the cream of the courses. I've been teaching Advance Placement Calculus, Advanced Placement Computer and Honors Algebra 3 (which is comprised of Analytic Geometry, Probability, Statistics, Linear Algebra and other fun stuff). To go back to stuff like Algebra I or Geometry would probably bore me.

[[We changed our curriculum so that Plane and Solid Geometry is taught in 3/4 of the year, and trig the last quarter. We have also taken the slow Algebra I classes which covered the material in two years, and arranged for Algebra I and II to be taught over a three year period. I don't mind teaching the slower classes in algebra, mainly because there are greater rewards once I've taught them so they understand the material. And that has happened already this year. // The Service Program is one of the worst things I've had to do here. I feel like a policeman, and hate being that overt authority position. The Dorm duty is not that bad. I work my weekend activities around it since I know when I will be on duty. But you are right. The school eats deeply into my free time, and it has been getting more and more difficult to keep up with my fanac. I lose sleep rather than skimp on my classes. And I've meneged to develop some short-cuts in other things so I don't have to be tied to the school too much.]]

Your con reports were interesting. I was never much of a convention goer, limiting myself to Worldcons. Part of the problem was financial, but a large part was my personality. While I am a nonstop yakker on paper, I tend to be shy in person. Most of the Worldcons I attended were great fun, but even though I was surrounded by people with similar interests I often did not talk to anybody the entire weekend except waiters and checkout clerks! The last Worldcon I attended (Noreascon II) with my wife, which was better. Nowadays we have 2 children and a large mortgage, all on one teacher's salary since my wife is staying home until the boys go to school. So for the foreseeable future, Worldcons remain an elusive dream.

Ed Chambers: Well, finally your con reports got to me. I was moved enough to force myself to go to the next con in my area. This turned out to be the Creation Star Trek, Dr. Who, and comics con in Philadelphia in July. I don't know if you are at all familiar with these "Creation" cons, but I'm not at all pleased with the way they run them. Some of the events were very nice, but the overall attitude of the con was to see how much profit they could generate. Perhaps they don't make a profit, but that is the attitude I felt was present. Of course I wasn't discouraged from attending future conventions, but I wish I could get a hold of a listing of upcoming cons on a continual basis. Any ideas?

[[IASFM runs a convention listing, but it's not very thorough. SF Chronicle runs the best conlisting I've ever seen, though the editing sometimes slips. // And you should try to make it to some Midwestern conventions if you can. They're mostly run so that everyone can have a good time.]]

Mike Glicksohn: I was more than somewhat intimidated by your Contraption speech. It sets a bad precedent, you know. Will they expect me to give a serious intelligent speech next year? What am I thinking about? If they'd expected a serious intelligent speech they never would have invited me in the first place, right? (I did think it was cute the way you not only gave yourself stage directions but also left them in the printed form of your address. Perhaps I'll do the same next year. I can see it now, in LL 23, of course: [Take drink] [Take another drink] [Insult George] [Take another drink] ...maybe I won't even need a speech to fit around it.)

Dave Yoder: I really liked the Guest of Honor speeches, particularly Andy's (no offense but he is the more skilled writer and has more experience). The idea of putting them in the center in a contrasting color is good but I really wish you could have arranged the page count so that they would not have come in the middle of another article, or at least not continued the Ramblings on that last sheet.

[[I tried to do that, but it didn't work out -- maybe next time.]]

Speaking of the Ramblings, I suppose that I might as well cover them next. My first thought after reading the initial paragraphs was that your aspirations as a fiction writer are showing up in your fanwriting. Once again, this is not a bad thing, it is just that your opening was a bit more colorful than is usually the case. The level of exposition throughout the rest of the article held that level, something I have always found difficult to do for a variety of reason, with the result that what we have here is a pretty neat piece of writing. Older editions of this column were somewhat flatter, more on the "we did this and then we did that" level, but your improvement shows more and more in successive issues. You still have a way to go to get to Mike's level (Resnick not Glicksohn -- you are closing on him fast although he does have that wry style of his down pretty pat) but keep at it; I am looking forward to reading your first published piece of fiction which I

cannot help thinking is not too far in the future -- I wish I could say the same thing of myself.

[[Thank you. I have been trying hard to do some different things with the Conreports and Ramblings so to make them read more easily. My Worldcon report next issue will be a bit different again -- I hope. Gonna try!]]

Laura Todd: While I'm sure someone finds interest in the mundane details of cons -- hotel accommodations, what you ate, who you talked to -- I personally don't. A lot of Conreports are just plain irritating to me. They merely tantalize by scratching the surface of what I'd really like to read about: the panel discussions. Why stop at merely mentioning such intriguing titles as "Future Sex", "SF Cults", or "How Not To Get Published"? Why not tell us what really went on -- what stimulating, sparkling intellectual dialogue flew back and forth? Of course, I'd rather have been there myself, but with two kids and an infant I don't get to many cons (nor will I for the next 10 years at least). So why doesn't some enterprising fan writer get in there with a tape recorder or just a sten pad and let us in on the fun? Writers, you'd be doing a real service to humanity -- specifically a poor, shut-in mom in danger of drowning in mundanedom. I mean, if someone put out a special zine composed entirely of such material, I'd even pay money for it!

[[My main reason for listing people I've had conversations with at conventions is to let them see their name in print. These people did make an impression on me, and what we talked about may not necessarily be interesting to others, so seldom do I elaborate on the conversations. As for panels, I used to tape and transcribe, or at least summarize what happens; I've done some of that this issue. Of course, I would be willing to print such transcriptions/descriptions should people send them to me. Any readers out there interested in that?]]

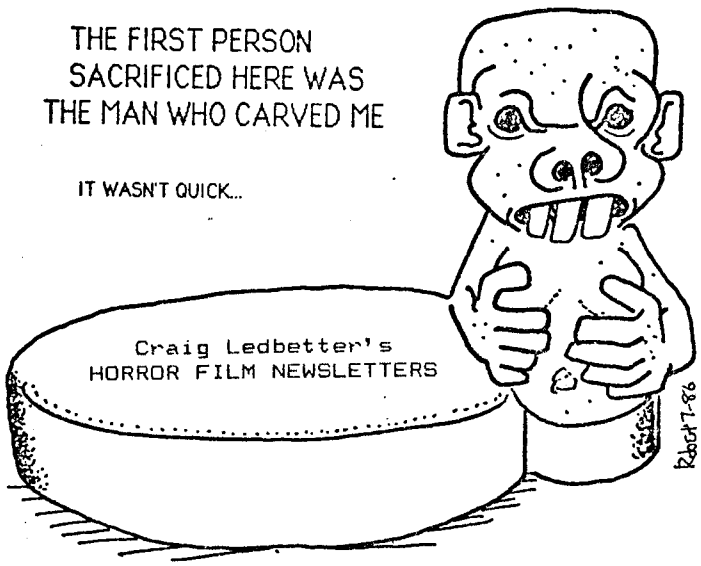
David D'Ammassa: "Another Contraption" is a pleasant article about fandom. The first thing that really got me was your point about how fans sing together. An old memory -- and a fond one -- is from a con my father took me too when I was little (I don't remember which one). At that time in my life I had discovered that I was Different From The Rest at school (about which I could go on and on but won't), and one reason was this: my father has a vast collection of oldies, mostly weird ones like "Along Came Jones" and other novelty items. I loved singing them, but no one at school knew them.

Well, this memory I have is of my first con party: someone outside the door had invited me in, gave me a coke, and took me into a room full of people who were sitting around laughing and talking. They were all open and friendly as they asked me to introduce myself. Later on someone started singing an oldie, and to everyone's surprise I chimed right in. For almost two hours we sat around, everybody singing oldie after oldie. I knew most of them. Some people got a kick out of me, and I found that some people would actually sing with me

The rest of the piece is honest and warm; very good. I hope it was a well-received speech.

[[Yes it was.]]

Milt Stevens: As you mention in your GoH speech, I also date my life by the convention calendar. I was married the weekend before MIDAMERICON. I figured I'd never forget my wedding anniversary as long as it was the week before Worldcon. The point is moot by now, since I got divorced the month after LACON II. Despite what it sounds like, I don't think it's an example of the old fannish curse of Worldcon chairmen getting divorced after the convention. We'd have gotten a divorce sooner, but we were both too busy working on the convention. Do you suppose fandom can warp your values just a little?

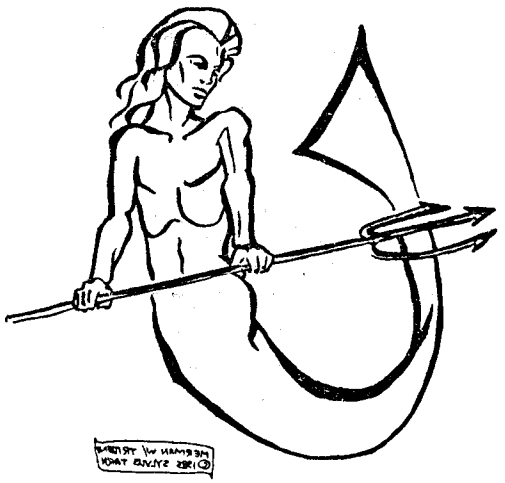


Kris Gilpin: I especially enjoyed Craig Ledbetter's piece on fanzines, a typically fine article from Craig, who is a super guy and a wonderful fanzine writer-editor. I hope this exposure supplies more growth for these fanzines, as these labors-of-love are produced by fan for fans, and deserve to live forever.

Roger Reus: Ledbetter's "Horror Film Newsletter" review caught my interest moreso than any other feature. I'm very familiar with, and have written for a number of, the zines he mentioned, including his own HIGH-TECH TERROR. These newsletters are all interesting, and all have their own editorial personalities like the better zines always do. If you haven't checked out any of these zines, I suggest you at least give a couple of them a try.

Dennis Fischer: Craig Ledbetter's article on "The Rise and Fall of Horror Film Newsletters" was somewhat interesting, but not

having seen most of these newsletters myself, I would have liked him to have expanded his article a little more to give the reader a sampling or some kind of flavoring of what each one was like and what made (or makes) it different. As it is, I don't know very much about them apart from the titles.



Comments on Book and Film reviews:

GENERAL (sort of) COMMENTS

David Yoder: I alwayd like "Pulp and Celluloid", particularly since I have seldom read or seen more than a couple of the items being reviewed. This time around the only one was Spider Robinson's Melancholy Elephants of which I thought more than David M. Shea apparently does. Some of it was a little weak, and I agree that the title story was not Hugo material, although it was not bad, but on the whole I enjoyed it. I suppose that if I was familiar with the other things being reviewed I would also have some points of disagreement with their authors, but since I'm not, my only comment is that they are generally well written and provide enough information to allow me to decide whether I want to become familiar with them -- which is what a review should do. Like Stephen Fox, I use them as a guide toward purchasing books by authors I am not familiar with or that I have not yet seen. However, it helps to have some idea of the reviewer's tastes as a completely unbiased review is a rare animal. If you have enjoyed other books that an individual has recommended, odds are that you will enjoy future ones.

Ed Chambers: More and more I find "Pulp and Celluloid" my favorite part of LL. I find very informative reviews here. Presently this is my best source for reviews; it is here that I decide which books to read.

Craig Ledbetter: Let me say that David Shea's conreport and book reviews were very well-written, and I hope he'll continue to contribute more in future issues. [[He has several reviews this time around.]] It's nice to read reviews of books that the critic didn't like for a change.

The "Pulp and Celluloid" review section this time supported a much greater variety of writers. It will hopefully continue this trend in future issues. (Still, I don't want to see Mark Leeper slough off!)

Dave Yoder's fantasy about you, Maia and the Leepers doing a reviewzine echoes mine also. That's two life-time subscriptions right there.

[[Mark isn't lying down on the job; I get regular contributions from him. // This issue has the largest variety of reviewers I've ever had.]]

Tim Ryan: Here's an open suggestion to your movie reviewers: If you did not catch a character's name or need a correct spelling of an actor's name, try approaching the theater's manager and ask to see the publicity kit for that movie. Most theaters with first-run films would have one. After stating that you write movie reviews for a "Science Fiction Magazine", you would probably get cooperation more often than not. Be courteous. If they say they are busy, ask if you may return later. If they cannot help you, they may be able to direct you to a local distributor who would be able to give information about any particular film.

David D'Ammassa: I think my favorite regular feature in the Lantern is "Pulp and Celluloid". Mark Leeper is the star. I enjoy his film reviews, though I haven't seen any of those reviewed. I almost saw Brazil, but my father wanted to watch Lifeforce. Damn damn damn! I am a Terry Gilliam fan who really wants to see the movie!

Roger Reus: The "Pulp and Celluloid" review section was the issue's greatest feature, I'd say. It's obvious that both the film and the book reviewers that you've latched on to definitely know the field and definitely know how to make their reviews of occasionally dry work interesting.

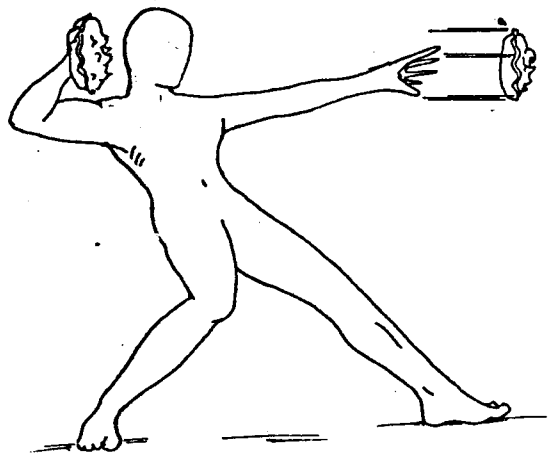
BOOK REVIEWS:

On Leeper & Bloch & Lovecraft's "Herbert West -- The Re-Animator"

Cy Cahuvin: Mark Leeper might be interested to know that Lovecraft received $5 per story in the "Herbert West -- Re-Animator" series. The series was commissioned as a whole, with each story at a pre-determined length set by the editor. It was Lovecraft's first professional sale.

[[Robert Bloch took Mark Leeper to task on this very issue last issue. Mark replies:]]

Mark Leeper: I have done a number of things in my life that I have afterward considered foolish. Rarely do I do things that I, before the fact, consider as foolish as crossing words with Robert Bloch. I respect him as a writer and, having been to a number



WHEN THEY MET, HE ATTEMPTED TO SHOW THE PROPER RESPECT OF ONE FAN FOR ANOTHER. © J TOLLIVER '86

of conventions at which he has spoken, I know him as a quick wit and one who, I am sure, is rarely bested in an argument. But with quivering sword and banging knees, let me step forward to face the dragon.

Mr. Bloch takes me to task on my review of "Herbert West -- Re-Animator." That, incidentally, is the title in the Panther Books 1969 edition of Dagon and Other Macabre Tales. Mr. Bloch takes me only slightly to task for not calling it "Herbert West -- The Re-Animator." I invite him to look again at the review, where he will discover that the title he prefers is the title I gave.

Mr. Bloch's chief complaint, however, is about my assertion that Lovecraft seems to have traded off his name to sell the "Re-Animator" stories. He contends that if I had looked up the facts in deCamp's basic biography, I would not have made such a mistake. He is quite right that I did not look up the facts in deCamp. You see, deCamp neglected to put either a bibliography of Lovecraft's work or an index into the biography (I have the 1075 Ballantine edition), making looking up any single work of Lovecraft's nearly impossib;e, particularly if the year he wrote it is unknown.

Mr. Bloch says that in 1921 Lovecraft had no name to trade on. Mr. Bloch also says that another journalist solicited six stories to be written in return, apparently, for $5 apiece. Of course, $5 does not sound like very much. After all, how much does $5 seem like in 1986? My suspicion is that $5 had considerably more buying power in 1921. I know that in 1898 $5 was a reasonable week's pay for an adult. There was an inflationary period after WW I, but hardly enough inflation to make a week's pay from 1898 seem like just a nominal payment. To have someone commission Lovecraft to write six stories and agree in advance to pay for them leads me to wonder if Lovecraft didn't have at least a wee bit of a name to trade off of after all, in spite of Mr. Bloch's contention.

Mr. Bloch points out that Lovecraft and I would agree that these stories were "hack labour" but says that they were "an amateur writer's attempt to turn out commercially-saleable material for the short story market." I certainly never meant to criticize an amateur writer fumbling out his best work. I wonder if, however, it really was his best work considering that in 1921 he also fumbled out "The Outsider".

If I take Mr. Bloch's words at face value, the facts point to a writer having or nearly having the skill to write "The Outsider". This writer is commissioned at a not-too-bad price to write six stories and he wrote six nearly identical and not very good stories. I do not wish to be disrespectful to Mr. Bloch or irreverent to the memory of Lovecraft, but I think there is more evidence in Mr. Bloch's letter that seems to confirm that Lovecraft was turning out less than the best work he was capable of, and that he was hired to do this work in advance by someone who respected Lovecraft's work enough to commission him. That seems to point to him trading off his name.

I want to thank Mr. Bloch for taking the time to comment on my review. He is perhaps correct that I "churned out" this review without getting the facts and I thank him for providing them. But his facts tend to confirm rather than to negate my impressions.

On THE VAMPIRE - JUNG and OLD
Comments on Vampires

David Yoder: Evelyn Leeper's comments on Jungian versus Freudian vampires were very interesting reading. I do not really know enough about the subject to make a more specific sort of comment (my psychology classes were a number of years ago, and I didn't do real well with them), but they add a great deal to the review.

Lee Hoffman: I was interested in the questions Sam Long proposed about vampires. As a kid seeing vampire movies, I was trying to grasp the canon from the fragments in various films. Kept running up against anomalies. We need more research in this field.

On Far Frontiers:

David M. Shea: I haven't read Far Frontiers and I don't intend to. However, Harlan Ellison has always been polite to me, and most of the people I know who know Ellison can say the same. Dr. Pournelle has never been polite to anyone, so far as I can tell.

Jay Sullivan: Please thank your reviewer Terry O'Brien for the review of my story, "Welcome to Freedom," in Writers of the Future Vol. II. At first of course I was unhappy with his description of my piece as an old story line and predictable (of course, the criticism goes with the territory -- I'm sure he feels that his submission is better than some of ours that were published -- but they were published). After I got over being unhappy, I realized that with few exceptions, Mr. O'Brien had panned the Nebula Award nomination stories...in fact, had only

managed to like one piece, "Dream in a Bottle," which was a nominee.

This was about when it dawned on me that Mr. O'Brien apparently has a reverse perception about what is a good, well-written piece. Disregarding my own story (I claim bias -- but I also know exactly what's wrong with it) he almost managed to completely reverse some rather expert opinion. The following, if you would be so kind as to convey it, is for him: "Dear Mr. O'Brien -- Please, in your own best interests, if you enter WOTF again, send what you consider to be your worst story." 'Nuff said.

On Other Books

David M. Shea: Tastes, obviously, vary. I was aware of what Evelyn Leeper aptly though exaggeratedly call the "levitation" problem, but it didn't spoil the book for me. None of Candy's skills are anything that any normally bright eleven-year-old couldn't master to a greater or lesser degree (as to the surgery, it's stated specifically that her father was a doctor). Flying a light aircraft differs in degree but not in kind from riding a bicycle.

PS: If you didn't like Emergence, you're going to positively hate Threshold. I liked both of them a lot.

For once we agree, though I would hardly cite Torch of Honor as a "prime example" of anything. Nonetheless, it's well written and a certain amount of fun. However, it suffers from the "mountain range climbing" fallacy: first we set the hero a small problem, and when he solves that, a medium-sized problem, and so forth until we get up to the humoungous problems. This strikes me as both an artificial and semi-cheating way to plot, and for this reader, reduced the pleasure I otherwise got from the enjoyable characters and writing.

Jack Williamson: Thank you for the copy of #20 with Evelyn Leeper's nice review of Wonder's Child.

Ben Schilling: To the best of my knowledge, the first of the multiple-path adventure books was published by Flying Buffalo, Inc., an Arizona based play-by-mail game company, in 1976. It was by no means as polished as the current crop of books. The first one, entitled Buffalo Castle, looks quite a bit like a fanzine. Flying Buffalo has published quite a few others, and I know that Buffalo Castle has been translated into French and German.

Buck Coulson: I wonder if Black Star Rising, as a title, is a reference to a Kuttner novelette in the January, 1949, Super Science, "The Black Sun Rises"? Probably not, but someone with more energy might check it.

Be sure and read Enigma. There's this one line in there: "You're a shit, Coulson." It ought to increase the sales of the book enormously, at least in fandom. Gene DeWeese could hardly wait to point it out to me the last time he was down, and he's a friend. (I think it's a great line; nothing like national recognition. Pretty good book, too.)

Comments on FILM REVIEWS

Jeanne Mealy: Mark Bernstein was right. Short Circuit IS a cotton-candy movie. But it can be fun. I checked my sense of disbelief at the door; had a little trouble convincing it to stay there, but generally decided it was worth the $1.08 I paid at the local cheapie moviehouse. It wasn't great -- I want my fantasies realistic! -- but it was a fine way to get out of the summer heat. I'm sure someone will review Howard the Duck; I've never read the comics, but have read the "Howard laid an egg" reviews.

I had more trouble accepting Space Camp, though. I have trouble believing the kids would have been so stupidly mean while at the camp. Jinx is such a fantastic plot device that I nearly left when it began requesting that Max go into space. Arf. I did like the space scenes, and there certainly was tension as we watched their attempts to return to Earth.

I didn't care for Brazil, either. A little bit of it now and then would've been enough, but the whole thing was too depressing.

Lee Hoffman: Milt Stevens refers to "Evelyn Leeper's implied question as to why movies and TV don't deal with alternate histories..." May I suggest they do, in a manner of speaking? Watch a docu-drama about some area of history with which you are familiar some time.

Brad Foster: I hurried out to see Legend as soon as it showed up in Dallas, based purely on how impressed I was by Scott's work on Alien and Bladerunner. To say I was disappointed is an understatement. Lots of pretty sets and wonderful costumes and make-up, but it had to be the biggest mish-mash of fantasy cliches and one-dimensional characters I've ever seen. I knew it was in trouble when I kept being bugged by the fact that everything in this damn movie had glitter glued all over it, that the princess was a basic selfish troublemaker, the "hero" was pretty ineffective and wimpy, and that while Curry was magnificent as the Prince, I never saw the character, but was just impressed with what Curry was doing -- the plot was so thin to be transparent, what a waste of talents. And the Tangerine Dream scorss (I love Tangerine Dream) was totally inappropriate for most of the film -- why do we get these bizarre whale-song noises when the unicorns show up? It's like a review I heard yesterday on the new Aliens film where he spoke of the lush orchestral score, saying it would make you wonder why films waste time with rock and roll scores these days.

On the other hand, Brazil has gone right into my top-ten films of all time, great on all counts. I was disappointed to see you didn't care for it, Lan (going by your ranking of it in the Hugo list you ran). But I've yet to find anyone who didn't react

strongly to this film, either praising it to the sky as I do, or detesting it and relegating it to schlock. I agree with Leeper's final comments that this is a film it will take a while for people to really catch on to. I await Gilliam's next film quite eagerly.

Nola Frame: That thumping noise you hear in the background is me falling over in a dead faint, the result of shock that anyone else would like both "sciffy" movies, Short Circuit and Space Camp. And I thought my boyfriend was weird...even if he is a fan... Well, to be fair, after one got over the antics of the deus ex robota, the movie Space Camp did have its moments, even if the master control techs never paid attention to their boards. Well, that's what comes of watching too many Star Wars movies, staring at Darth Vader's sindy-blinkys. Louis and I sorta kicked back our heels and watched SC as if it was happening in an alternate universe, where space funding still exists. It was eerie watching the Cutey-pie robot construct an accident which was so similar to what destroyed the **Challenger**, or what The Power That Be thought might have been the cause of the destruction, early on close after the heels of the accident.

Martin Morse Wooster: I thought your book and film columns were quite thorough (especially the odd article on trashy slasher film fanzines), but I'm puzzled by Mark Bernstein's review of Space Camp, a puerile pile of cliches that is perhaps the most technologically illiterate film to emerge in some years. Didn't Bernstein choke at the cute little robot being able to program NASA's computers because Space Camp happens to be linked to Cape Canaveral? Or that there is no long-range radio communications because NASA took the radio away? ("Gee," the screenwriter must have thought, "I take my radio out of my car when I'm in a bad neighborhood, so NASA must take out their radios, too.") I don't mind disagreement, but Space Camp really was a rancid mess, and I wish Bernstein had been more critical.

[[Occurs to me that we technological literati should have the responsibility to judge things like films, by the influence they have on popular conceptions of science and tech. Something that proposes impossibilities should be rated low no matter the "entertainment" value.]]

Bernstein also thinks that manipulating an audience is a bad thing for a motion picture to do. All films are manipulative, in that they try to create certain emotions (through music, casting, script) in the viewer. For example, Aliens is an excellent film that is extremely manipulative in that The Alien is all jaws and claws [[with which to manipulate, right?]]. We're supposed to be frightened whenever she appears. Because Aliens has a great deal of wit and style, as well as an excellent performance by Sigourney Weaver, we are manipulated successfully. Space Camp has a cast assemble from a Brat Pack Identikit, and a rotten script that uneasily resonates off the **Challenger** disaster. It is as manipulative as Aliens, but badly so, which is why the viewer should be disgusted by Space Camp.

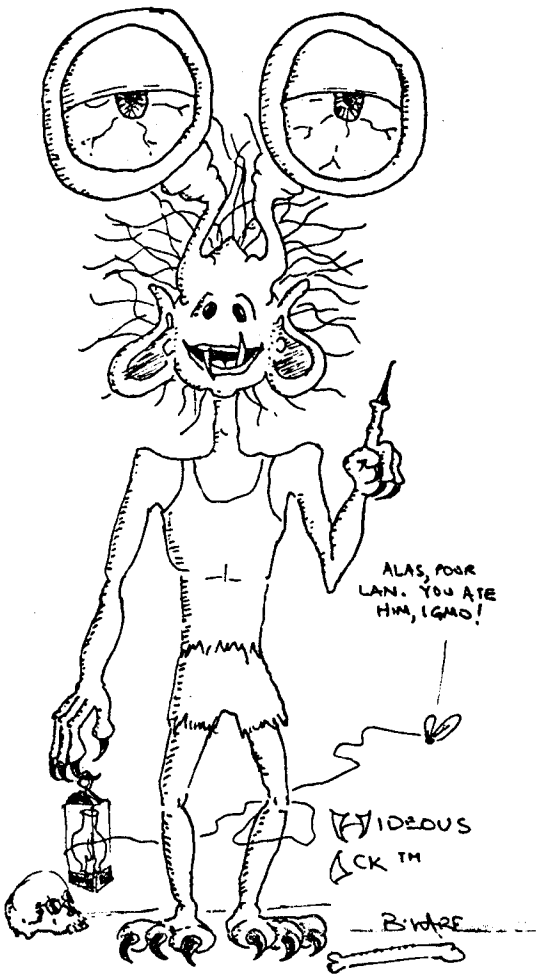
Lee Hoffman: Re Mark Leeper's review of the film Legend, is the idea of the unicorn as a horse with a horn a "popular misconception" or a valid stage in the evolution of a legendary creature? (My 1944 dictionary defines "unicorn" as "a fabulous creature like a horse but having a single horn projecting from its forehead," so maybe Scott did look it up.)

Dennis Fischer: I found The Quiet Earth to be quite an intelligent and intriguing film, though I can understand why Mark Leeper might have difficulties accepting that the handful of survivors were those poised midway between life and death at the time of the Effect. Sure, it's a bit metaphysical, but essential if one is to understand the ending of the film. I don't think the message of the guilt-ridden scientist in the film was that the invention could have been used for evil and so he shouldn't have worked on it. Rather, what I picked up from the film is that the New Zealand scientists followed their American counterparts blindly ("because, after all, they're our allies, aren't they") and made the mistake of meddling in a process they didn't fully understand. In other words, as a metaphor for the arms race, they were fooling around with dangerous materials without taking time to understand the possible consequences or take proper safety precautions.

Also, having seen Highlander, I doubt very much if the missing scenes of Christophe Lambert surviving throughout the ages would have done anything to improve this messy, comic book movie. The whole thing is very flashy and Sean Connery is quite appealing in his bit part, but the film's story is absolutely devoid of content. It isn't about anything except parting the cinemagoer from a few bucks in exchange for a light show.

Brazil on the other hand is about so many things it almost puts the viewer on sensory overload. Most people are used to receiving information from a film visually (hence many people's problems with films such as 2001), but Brazil is visually dense and rich in its communication of a society put to the screws by a bureaucratic nightmare. It is certainly unlike any other film I have ever seen.

Space Camp, unfortunately, resembles the worst aspects of far too many films. While I enjoyed looking over some of the NASA technology on display, the cardboard characters were annoying and that goddam cute robot which miraculously gains intelligence after it is fixed by a little boy and succeeds in launching the hapless heroes into space should be shoved up the orifice of your choice of the person who conceived him. My patience with robots that have feelings, a sense of humor, personality and cognitive faculties has been stretched to the breaking point when it comes to films and the misconceptions they foster. What could have been a tense, accurate portrait of the wonders and dangers of space exploitation instead turns into an awful whimsical farce that turned more people off than on. Needless to add, the film bombed. Totally, as its Valley Girl with the photographic memory might say.



I NEVER MET A FANED I DIDN'T LIKE!

MARK LEEPER'S ARTICLES

General Comments LL #19 and #20

David Yoder: Mark Leeper had three short bits that seemed to me to warrant special attention. The review of the premiere episodes of the new anthology series pretty well summed up my feelings about them though I continue to watch, occasionally, waiting for those flashes of intelligence and originality that crop up once in a while. He is right; the poorest of the three seems the most likely to survive.

David Palter: Your fanzine is becoming dominated by the Leepers, Mark and Evelyn, and this is all to the good. Their numerous reviews and articles are quite interesting. Since they have become so important to the fanzine, I'd like you to solicit an autobiographical article from them for the next issue so I can learn a bit more about them. Call it "A Leep of Imagination."

It is quite understandable to me that Mark Leeper (as he comments in #19) dislikes Harlan Ellison as a person and usually as a writer, based on limited reading. My own early acquaintance with Harlan Ellison gave me the impression that he was a pretentious and boring writier, as well as an overly argumentative or belligerent person. However, I have gotten to know him and his work better, over the years, and I now have an extremely high opinion of both. Harlan is certainly a troublemaker, but he makes the right kind of trouble. Sometimes the boat does need to be rocked. His latest essay collection, An Edge in My Voice, is nominated for a Hugo and, I believe, deserves to win. I strongly urge Mark to read it. I think that Mark needs and deserves to gain the insights into Harlan Ellison that this superb book yields. Harlan Ellison is one of the truly great writers I know of, and should not be so easily dismissed.

Dave Yoder: Mark Leeper's breadth of expertise continues to amaze me: Golems and oriental books and movies this time. Well, I know little or nothing about either so.... But where does he get the time to see all these films and do all that reading?

"Prejudice is Star Trek"

Thom Digby: Maybe all those aliens that seem to need the **Enterprise** to solve their problems are actually humoring Kirk and Co., and Earth people in general.

David Yoder: The comments on prejudice in Star Trek missed just a bit; I do not think it is prejudice so much as human chauvinism which is a little worse in a society which is supposed to exemplify all of the races, human or otherwise.

Nola Frame: I loved that darling short-short in LL #19, where the author is complaining about the "bias" in Star Trek towards "our kind" and good ole Human emotion. Very well said.

"Green Slime"

T. Kevin Atherton: I hope that Mark Leeper is under some terrible debt of obligation to you and that we'll be seeing more of his mini-essays and reviews. I find myself leafing through LL to read them all in a row (which is more fun than just finding them all printed in the same place -- too bad you don't have advertisers; they'd love that page-flipping dort of layout strategy). His observation that we (humans, that is) would find alien intelligent species not only (as is so often suspected) incomprehensible, but also probably (as is hardly ever pointed out) icky, seems right on the mark to me (oops! Sorry, Mark; no pun intended; let's say "right on the money" instead). It seems likely that we'll fid our first-contact species "disgusting" since that is how I, for one, rate most of our species.

"The Golem in Literature"

Lee Hoffman: The article that grabbed my attention first off was Mark Leeper's "The

Golem in Literature." My own first encounter with The Golem of Prague was in something I read sometime most probably in the late 1940's. At the time I wasn't certain whether it was an article or a work of fiction. All that I recall of it now is that it was told in the first person, that the narrator had got to Prague as a soldier or such at the end of World War II. Either then or on a later visit he managed to get into the attic of the Synagogue to search for the inanimate body of the Golem, and he had found it there.

My reaction was that here was a mystery and a monster I'd never heard of before. I wanted to know more. Like Mark, I never thought to look it up in the dictionary. If I had it wouldn't have done me any good. After his comment gave me the idea, I went to what was our household dictionary at the time (a rather fat Webster's New American Dictionary, 1944), and found it isn't included.

My next encounter with The Golem was around 1950, give or take a year or two. I saw some kind of film about old-time movies, possibly horror films in particular, which contained a clip or stills from a Wegener version. This further whetted my appetite to know more about The Golem, but it didn't occur to me to go off to the reference department of the Public Library and ask for help in looking it up.

That was about the time I got into fandom. In the ensuing years I came across various enlightening references to The Golem. I feel certain I have (or have had -- an unfortunate number of books have mysteriously disappeared over the years) some illuminating material in my own personal library, but at the moment the only source I can think of is Patai's Gates to the Old City, which contains excerpts from the Sefer Niflaot Maharal describing The Golem of Prague's creation and deactivation. Interestingly, this account does not include the placing of the parchment in The Golem's forehead. But it does give The Golem's name, Yosef (after the half-man, half-demon Yosef Sheda because The Golem contained Sheda's spirit.) According to this account, Yosef (or Yosele, as he was called) was three cubits high and "became like an ordinary man" in appearance, so that Maharal passed him off as a half-wit he'd taken in and made a servant.

According to this account, an interesting moral problem had to be resolved before The Golem could be deactivated. One of the three men who created it was a Kohen, who ritually could not defile himself by approaching a dead body, so before he could participate in the deactivation it had to be decided whether or not the corpse of a Golem would cause impurity like other corpses. The decision was that it would not.

Patai includes snippets about a couple of lesser animated golem (literally "shapeless masses, unformed things") from Hebraic lore but none compare with The Golem of Prague.

Well, I thoroughly enjoyed Mark's article, though I was sorry it was specifically "The Golem in Literature" rather than about The Golem in general with speculations on its relationship to other androids created by humans in ancient lore and their significance and such. And some bibliographic notes on further non-fiction reading.

Craig Ledbetter: A lot of interesting information and background was gleaned from Mark's piece on "The Golem". Other than the horrible film It and a lot of stills from Wegener's Golem films that kept cropping up in Famous Monsters, I knew nothing about the creature's origins. Mark did his usual fine job of research. His skewering of Winkler and his introduction were short and sweet.

Mark Owings: The Golem and the Dancer has had such detailed descriptions published that I'm sure it must have existed, but it's not about a golem -- it's about a man who dresses as one. The Baltimore SF Club runs the 1920 Golem once or twice a year as part of the Wednesday film program, and I'm told that this and The Great Dictator are the only two movies the (local) Jewish Times lists in its calendar from our schedule.

Don D'Ammassa: There's another Golem novel, Golem by Barbara Anson, quite good as I recall despite being marketed as a gothic romance of all things when it appeared in paperback originally.

Laura Todd: I especially liked Mark Leeper's article "The Golem in Literature". The majority of fantasy seems to be based on Celtic myths, and it is interesting to read of the legends of other cultures and the historical circumstances which inspire such tales.

Jessica Amanda Salmonson: I've long been fascinated by Golem stories so enjoyed Mark's overview of these stories. I wonder why he overlooked Wiesel's version? There are many fine Golem stories packaged as "children's" books when they're of wider interest. Mark says Meyrink's novel is not a tale of the supernatural, but Pernath has so many specifically supernatural experiences in addition to visionary experiences in addition to his entire life being apparently controlled by cabalistic magic -- how can this not be a supernatural novel?? The symbolic and intellectual depths to this book do not erase the literal supernaturalism. (By the way, I've been presenting previously untranslated stories by Meyrink in the small magazine Fantasy Macabre published by Richard H. Fawcett, 61 Teecomwas Dr., Uncasville CT 06382.)

Mark Schulzinger: I enjoyed Mark Leeper's article on "The Golem in Literature". The Golem is the one, true, Jewish robot, and its story should get wider distribution than it has in the past. The Golem of Prague was the only Golem ever constructed -- accept no substitutes. It is no monster, since anything that has the "shem ha'm'foresh" (ineffible name of God) on its forhead cannot be either evil or monstrous. The dybbuk is not

a monster either. It is a spirit, the soul of a departed person, who possesses the body of a living one in order to complete some task.

It's easy to dispose of either critter. The Golem can be turned off by removing the Name from its forehead; the dybbuk by convening a congregation and pronouncing the formula of excommunication. This last is quite a ritual and involves the blowing of the black ram's horn. Halper's great play, The Dybbuk, is a masterful tale of such possession which is looked down upon by those who don't understand the semantics of Yiddish -- a language that can make one weep without half trying.

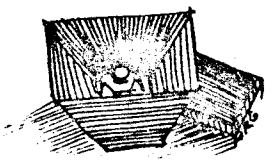
There are other Jewish critters and legends around, although you have to dig pretty deeply to find them. The Shamir is either a worm or a solid-state device which cuts rock. According to legend it was used to hew the rocks for Solomon's Temple, since the stones would have been profaned had they been cut using metal implements. Ibn Doud, in his rambling travelogue, described the Sambatyon, a wild and impassable river which only quiets down for the Sabbath. Beyond the Sambatyon dwell the lost tribes. While Ibn Doud's tales may sound fanciful, there appears to be more than a grain of truth in them. He is the first to have written about the Falashas of Ethiopia (Kush).

Dennis Fischer: Mark Leeper's "Golem" article appears to be very thorough and presents a good overview of the topic. Golem Und Die Taenzerin does indeed exist, but the story concerns a man who puts on a Golem costume to impress a dancer. The French-Czech Le Golem was made in 1936 and is also known as The Legend of Prague or The Man of Stone. There was also a 1966 Le Golem (aka Mask of the Golem), a 1916 Danish Golem; Alarune and der Golem (1919); Des Golems Letztes Abenteur (The Golem's Last Adventure) (1921); The Emperor and the Golem (1951); and Prazske Noci (1968).

"On the Oriental Side"

Jessica Amanda Salmonson: As a Japanese film freak I enjoyed Mark's comments on various films. I do wish, in all his film reviews, he'd stop saying, "Give it a plus one on the minus four to plus four scale," as he sounds like a broken record and leaves an unimaginative taste as the finale to his commentaries. Without the ending cliche one would be left with some valid and well-stated opinions, which should themselves convey the worth of a film.

In any case, he over-estimates the worth of the film Mishima, badly cast, tedious, sometimes ridiculous (as when the middle-aged actor tries to play the youthful Mishima in flashbacks to the homosexual scenes, or the ridiculous synopsis of Temple of the Golden Pavilion), and the climactic suicide was silly. The strongest part was the performance of the bisexual singing star "Julie" in the role as the masochist involved



with the insane gangster lady -- and rather than a ten-minute synopsis of a story inside a longer film, one wishes that this film had been fleshed out instead.

Conversely, the work of Inagaki is underestimated, obviously because Mark was viewing VCR versions with inferior subtitles. Kojiro happens to be a story so well-known in Japan that some of the story, as the film portrays it, is left out -- much as an American film about Valley Forge needn't necessarily inform the viewer of George Washington's entire history, but may well build on what is commonly known. This is a typical way of making a samurai film, in fact, and a viewer cannot instantly understand everything that is happening without some background into the events. Inagaki was one of the finer commercial directors in his later career. His pre-war films, much harder to get the chance to view, are reportedly highly artistic, but later ones are full color extravaganzas which, judged on their own merits as opposed to the Westernized structure of Kurosawa's films, are excellent of kind. Unfortunately, his best known film(s) in the USA are the three-part story of Mushashi Miyamoto sometimes shown here as Samurai Trilogy. These were re-edited in curious ways for American showing. The first part won the Oscar for best foreign film, but it's really badly edited and not that hot a film. As Inagaki shot wide-screen throughout his later career, the full experience of the films is not possible in VCR versions and no critical judgment is possible for films that derive so much of their strength from the visuals; similar to Sergio Leone who is a stupid filmmaker on television because so much of the action and the visual impact are cut off on both sides. The early films of Kurosawa by contract are narrow-screen and fit well into the boob-box -- although even here, anyone who has only seen Seven Samurai in a little box is probably not qualified to judge its uttermost merits. But for Inagaki, one of his finest films available for theaters is Hiken or Young Swordsman, a relentlessly cruel story widescreen black and white. Rise Against the Sword is also a strong B&W widescreen film about peasant uprisings. Under the Banner of Samurai is another worthwhile film. Poor by comparison are The Ambush which fails to capture the essence of the Yojimbo character Mifune played so well under Kurosawa's direction, and The Yagyu Secret Scroll which can only be appreciated on a comic book level. The three Mushashi films and their adjunct Kojiro are in the middle.

Craig Ledbetter: Although I am not a fanatic on far eastern culture, I've been fascinated with Mishima's contradictory life since first reading of the Paul Schrader film project several years ago. I've pretty much come to the same conclusion Mark did about Mishima.

As to sushi, the only time I had any, immediately after taking a bite I begged someone to let a cat piss in my mouth so as to remove the taste.

I'm indebted to Mark for bringing to light a video label that caters to the Samurai film fan. I am going to try to locate Action Video releases down here [in Texas] (which I'm sure will be as difficult as trying to locate my other love, spaghetti westerns).

Mike Glicksohn: Isn't Mark Leeper's film review which is titled "Kagamusha" actually a review of "Ran"? [[Yes, my mistake!]]

Dennis Fischer: I was annoyed to see Mark Leeper perpetuate one piece of misinformation. In Ran's publicity materials, there was a reference to the fool in the film, Peter, as a "famous Japanese transvestite." The truth of the matter is that Peter is an onnagatta performer, a long tradition in Japan where Japanese actors do dress in women's clothing to portray some of the roles. (Onnagatta is often mistaken for kabuki and the two are related.) However, this tradition is far from a night spent at La Cage aux Folles, and to refer to Peter as a transvestite is both misleading and inaccurate. (Ahh, the vagaries of cultural differences...)

Perhaps one of the most amazing things about Ran that Mark does not mention is that its director, Akira Kurosawa, gave the film such a wonderful and colorful visual sense when he is almost totally blind. He'd been designing the storyboards for the film for years but couldn't find the funding he wanted in Japan. (The Japanese thought he was crazy in wanting to spend $9 million on a single film, an amount unheard of in Japanese cinema which largely caters to a very young audience of teenagers.)

"Leather-Bound Science Fiction"

Mike Glicksohn: Clearly Mark doesn't understand that people who buy leather-bound specialty editions are not science fiction readers but book collectors and that's why there'll always be a limited (but lucrative) market for this sort of volume. I have two leather-bound SF books and I've never read either of them. I have read the books they are editions of -- in cheaper, albeit still specialized, hardcover copies-- but I bought them because they are beautiful books. I like the feel and the smell of them and I like the look of quality they possess. (I also like the fact that they're worth five times what I paid for them even though, as Doris keeps informing me, I'll never benefit from that fact since I'll never sell them.) Nowadays the art of really fine book-making has been largely lost. The SF field is one of the few places where one can still buy top-quality specialized editions of good books. So let those of us who are both readers and book lovers indulge ourselves when we can. Why should the fetishists have all the fun?

Milt Stevens: Mark Leeper's article "Leather Bound Science Fiction" brought to mind one of the rarest collectors' items in existence. In 1955, Bill Crawford brought out a six volume, boxed, half leather bound set of the Fantasy Press Lensman books issued under the title, "The History of Civilization". The entire press run was 75, and they were all autographed. You virtually have to have a printing press in your garage to put out books in 75 copy editions, and that's exactly what Bill Crawford had. He was responsible for some other oddball items. The old Fantasy Book is said to have variant editions of the same issue with different stories and illustrations in some of them. Since not even Crawford knew how many variants he produced, I've never worried about it myself.

A REQUEST FOR HELP
A Katherine Kurtz Panel at CONFUSION

CONFUSION (January 23-25, 1987) is scheduled to have as GoH one of my favorite authors, Katherine Kurtz. I find her historical research impressive. She's a fascinating talecrafter and I'm eager to discuss aspects of her work with other fans. I'd like to put together a panel discussion at CONFUSION. Any interested readers please contact my at the address below so that we can make plans. I have written the con committee about this already. Discussion could range through all the Deryni books as well as Lammas Night. I would like to talk about liminality and power as seen in the protagonists of Deryni Rising. Other topics for discussion could include: Christian and non-Christian mysticism in the Deryni Chronicles, aspects of Deryni magic, and how her latest work, The Deryni Archives, amplifies and complements her previous stories. If anyone has other ideas, let me hear from you!

Angela-Marie Varesano
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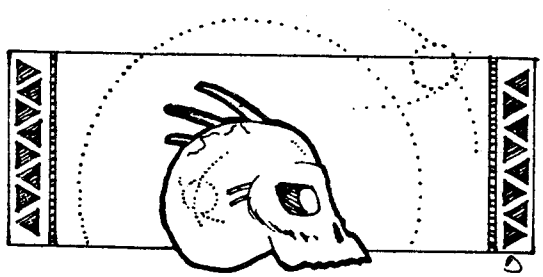


Post Scriptings/ Leeper & Varesano & Kurtz

COMPUTERS

Dick Napoli: I noted that you are now a computerized household. Do you have a modem? I bought one after hearing Scott Card's propagandizing of the subject of telecomputing at INCONJUNCTION in July. Since then I have been trying to drum up interest in the Central Ohio area for a science fiction SIG on one of the local Bulletin Board Systems (BBS). To date I have been unsuccessful and am about to branch out to the Midwest in search of a sympathetic BBS. Perhaps you could raise the issue in a future LL, asking if there is anyone running a SF SIG in the states surrounding Ohio. I would be happy to write something on the joys and advantages of "modeming", if you are interested.

If you don't have a modem, you might consider one for the benefit of LL contributors who could send you their files by phone. That would save some typing on your part.

[[No, we don't have a modem, nor are we planning to get one, soon. We strained the budget to buy the computer and can't afford to spend too much more at one time until we get caught up on finances. The issue is now raised, by me running this letter. I may raise it again, but I would prefer some who knows about such things to write an article. Sooo, since you offered, Dick, I accept. Do please write me something about "modeming".]]

HUGO NOMINATIONS AND VOTING

Steve Bridge: Congratulations on your Hugo nomination! You've done a lot of work to build up a group of contributors and a solid collection of writer interviews to make your zine consistently good. And your own writing has gotten significantly stronger over the past two or three years. I always know that I'm going to find interesting ideas and an absence of garbage when I pick up the latest issue.

[[Thanks. And you are right -- I have been working hard to imrpove LL.]]

I didn't particularly care for Cuckoo's Egg. The idea was interesting, but I thought the writing was disjointed and I had a lot of trouble getting involved in the mair characters. I think Orson Scott Card's Ender's Game and Greg Bear's Blood Music are far superior contenders for the Hugo Award for best novel. I have The Postman (Brin) and Footfall (Niven & Pournelle) here to read, but I haven't done so yet. I need to get them read quickly before the mailing deadline.

[[Your letter is dated July 3, and I saw you at INCONJUNCTION on July 4-6. That gave you 9 days to get the deadline postmark on your ballot. Hope you made it. // You know how I voted from LL #20. Isn't disagreement wonderful? It's nice to have a choice.]]

Robert Sabella: Your selections were interesting. We have overlapping tastes although you tend to lean more toward hightech while I lean toward softer SF. I agree that the nominated short stories were a generally inferior bunch, and I agree almost completely with your novelette and novel choices. My main disagreement is with your assessment of Robert Silverberg's "Sailing to Byzantium." I loved the cities as he portrayed them, since I am a lover of history second only to my love of SF. The setting carried the story which I did not think was boring at all. But one disagreement among four fiction categories is not bad.

I generally don't vote for the Hugos because of the cost. I would like to see a Voting Membership cheaper than Supporting Membership, but it would probably be unfeasable because of the ballot-stuffing it would encourage.

Mike Glicksohn: I've been talking about the idea of a Hugo-voting-membership to a few people (oh, all right, a few SMOFs) and their general reaction is that it would open the awards to the possibility of vote-buying. Personally, I think this is a red herring. For years one could vote for the Hugos for a couple of bucks and while there were one or two attempts to influence people into voting for a particular candidate these were very few in number. I don't think a $10 or even $15 voting fee would be subject to any further abuse than we've seen in the past, and it would certainly widen the base of knowledgeable Hugo voting.

Dave Yoder: I do not read much current fiction, and so seldom feel qualified to vote for the Hugo Awards. I find it very impressive that you not only are able to read a wide range of new material, but that you are able to reread it and give it the sort of consideration necessary to make intelligent and informed choices. Now I am going to have to hunt up some of those stories you were impressed with and give them a trial.

About the only categories I feel competent in are the artist categories. As to the fan artist, I have no quibbles about your choices, although you could probably shuffle those five into just about any order and still produce an acceptable list. In the pro department I would be inclined to leave Rowena out and replace her with someone else,

say Barlowe, or Cherry, or Johnson, but this is largely a matter of personal taste (i.e. Rowena does very nice work, I just do not happen to like her style all that much.) Actually, if it were up to me, Richard Powers would get the award every year he is eligible with his only real competition coming from Freas and Whelan.

Perry Glen Moore: I was struck by several things on this year's ballot. Last year was dominated by Analog and IASFM. This year, NOT ONE STORY from Analog was even nominated. I find this shocking!!! There were several outstanding stories in Analog this year. Considering the weak nominations across the board in the shorter works this year, I have to wonder who did the nominating. Very few of my nominations made the final ballot.

I agree that the best novel field is the strongest in years. Footfall was a good adventure story. It held my attention and ended very well. Of course, I have always liked Larry Niven. I was disappointed with Blood Music. I half-way liked the novelette the story was based on -- but seriously wondered how it could be expanded. The last one-fourth of the book struggled in trying to tie everything together.

David Brin is an excellent storyteller. I thoroughly enjoyed "The Postman" and "Cyclops" when they were first published. In the novel, though, some of that magic is missing. It's almost as if Brin promised something, and then could not deliver it. Cherryh again does an excellent job in portraying an alien culture. She introduces us to the real story -- I look forward to the second novel in that series. That leaves Ender's Game as my choice for the Hugo. It was an excellent novel in an excellent year.

Congratulations on your own Hugo nomination -- an honor long overdue. I sometimes question whether nominating and voting is worth $20. So far it is, and I voted in both site selection elections this summer. I want my voice heard -- the price of one hardcover book is well worth the cost.

[[I talked to Carolyn Cherryh at RIVERCON and she told me that there will be no sequel to Cuckoo's Egg. That is sad news. // You were correct on two of your choices for the Hugo (if you voted for me). Orson Scott Card won for Ender's Game, and I garnered the Fanzine Hugo. Thanks for your support.]]

Craig Ledbetter: As I said on last year's overview of Hugo Nominations that you did, I found this year's to be as illuminating and entertaining. My only quibble would be to put Brazil at the top of the Best Dramatic Presentation. If anyone can give you a run for the money in the Best Fanzine section, it'll be Holier Than Thou. How can I get hold of a copy of Anvil? So far no luck on address.

[[See the fanzine reviews this issue.]]

Thom Digby: Re voting for stories one remembers: My problem is that I'll remember the action in a story but will never have noticed the title or the author's name. I suppose I could fill in Hugo nomination ballots with stuff like "The one where this dead sea captain on his way to heaven gets into a race with a comet and wanders off course and ends up at the wrong planet's equivalent of the Pearly Gates..." but I don't think the committees would appreciate it. (By the way, that description is of a real fantasy of many years back (before I was born, even). I do know the title and author, but how many other readers recognize it?)

[[It sounds somewhat familiar, but I can't place it. Anyone??]]

Mark Schulzinger: Let me add my congratulations on your winning a Hugo to the others you have undoubtedly gathered by now. Ray Beam told me about it and I was very pleased to get the news. You certainly deserve it. You realize, of course, that you will really have to share it with Maia. After all, she puts up with your fanac and this, in itself, contributes to your work.

Nag him, Maia. Don't let up -- you deserve some credit too.

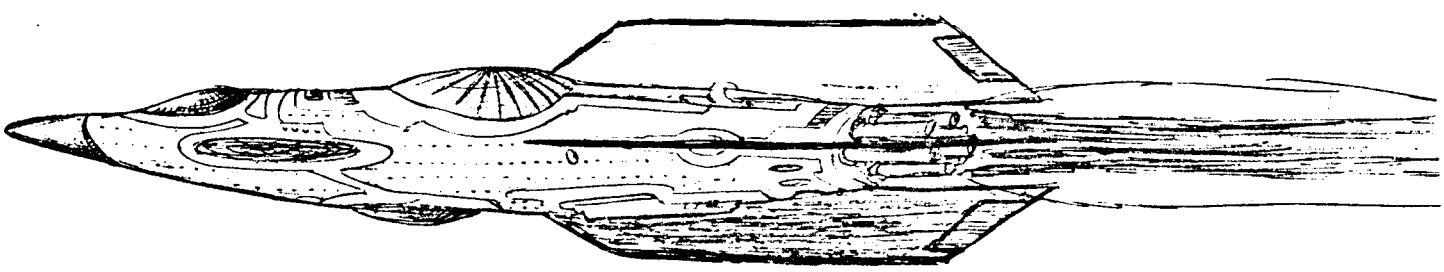
Greg Benford: I want to belatedly say I thought the Hugos were great this year, your win much deserved. Only the Del Rey rejection topped that point.

I've liked the Lantern muchly and hope you won't be so exhausted you give it up.

Noting the observations on the Hugo, I think the Nebula is converging toward the Hugo because the SFWA membership is so large (850 now) and when that happens a similarity of outlook must follow. Most SFWAns now are neo-pros or nearly so, and they will reflect the judgments of fans more closely.

No help for this, but I miss the distinctive feel of the Nebulas. I do feel the Hugo audience is not mine. I haven't even been on the Hugo ballot in a decade or so; my novels sell well and win other awards but never make it with the worldcon crowd. (Timescape wasn't nominated, etc.)

Too bad, and I always feel a bit of unre-



quited love over it. I'm an oldtime fan, came in in 1955, published a fanzine for a decade....

But I still enjoy fanzines, and am glad to see the quality of Hugo awards there has not slackened!

[[That you have not been nominated in the last ten years or so does not mean that you won't get on the ballot in the next decade. Keep up the good work; your next novel might be "it", Greg. // Thank you for your kind words. I don't plan to stop publishing for a while yet. // You have a better sense of what goes on in SFWA than I do with regards to the Nebulas, but I get the impression that the award will still mean something different than the Hugos because it is chosen by the writers. Even the neopros have standards and can recognize good writing.]]

Fred Cleaver: Tad Williams has a novel, Tailchaser's Song, published in hardcover by DAW; it's described as a feline Watership Down, not a description which has impelled me to seek it out. Dramatic Presentation: I looked through other parts of LL #20 and see that Mark Leeper describes Brazil as the best film of 1985 (I agree) and wonder why you put it in fifth place and a Pepsi commercial in first place..

[[I had not, and still have not, seen the film; in spite of reports, I had seen the others and voted accordingly.]]

Non-Fiction Book: I voted for the Aldiss book. I looked at it when I didn't have $10 and it seemed to be a good collection of essays. I have a copy of the Campbell Letters and find it very hard to read. A number of letters start off in an interesting fashion (some anotations would help for those of us with faulty memories of Astounding published when we were three years old) and after a start in literary gossip wanders off into long boring dissertations on Campbell's asinine sociological and political theories. The best non-fiction book of 1985 is Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Weird Fiction Magazines by Marshall Tymn and Michael Ashley.

[[Good choice. I have a couple of articles in it.]]

Novel: I read none of the nominees when I sent in my nominations ballot. I had read three of them when I sent in my final ballot last week, I read The Postman last night, and am on page 72 and holding in Footfall. I thought Blood Music was the best of the lot, and Schismatrix was better than any of the nominees.

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More Addresses

I also heard from the following people -- at cons, over the phone, quick notes and postcards, letters not published, etc. The list is quite long this time -- Worldcon was a wonderful place to pick up verbal comments. I misplaced Hank Heath's tapes and found them after I had completed the lettercol. I hope to excerpt some of his stuff for next issue.

Doug Andrew, Arlan Keith Andrews, Lola Andrews, Jo Anselm, Gerri Balter, Mike & Rosa Banks, Tom Barber, Ray Beam, Martha Beck, Rose Beetem, John Benson, Gary Bernstein, Greg Bridges, David Brin, Jack Brooks, Ned Brooks, Karol Brown, Ed Bryant, Bruce Burdick, Robbie & Marty Cantor, Orson Scott Card, Terry Carr, Jackie Causgrove, Bill Cavin, Ann Cecil, Jack Chalker, Perry Chapdelaine, Rob Chilson, Craig Chrissinger, Ron & Susan Clarke, Chris Clayton, Fred Cleaver, Hal Clement, Kathleen Conant, Glen Cook, Doug & Sharon Cooper, Wendy Counsil, Michele Cox, Kevin Davies, Joseph Delaney, Scott & Jane Dennis, Pat Diggs, Alan Dormire, Julia Ecklar, Leigh Edmonds, Tara Edwards, Jim & June Enlow, Kurt Erichsen, Mark Evans, George Ewing, Moshe Feder, FLahsh, Clif Flynt, Alan Dean Foster, Diane Fox, Steve Francis, Don Franson, Lisa Freitag, Jim Frenkel, Shelley Frier, Ragnar Fyri, Bob & Betty Gaines, Alexis Gilliland, Bruce Gillespie, Jim Gilpatrick, Paul Gilster, Mike Glyer, M.E. Goldhammer, Michael Goodwin, J.E. Gosnell, Joe Green, Alan Greenberg, Michael Goodwin, Bob Greene, Rob Gregg, Liz Gross, Josh Grosse, Jim Gunn, Mick Hamblen, Hanila Harding, Laura Harding, Michael Harper, James Harris, John & Lynn Harris, Terry Harris, Fred Haskell. Hank Heath, Bill & Alexia Hebel, David Held, David Henninger, Margaret Henry, Rusty Hevelin, Lynn Hickman, Margaret Hilt, Colin Hinz, Irwin Hirsh, Arthur Hlavaty, Doug Houseman, Steve Hudson, Tanya Huff, Keith Hunter, Thea Hutcheson, Ben Indick, Sourdough Jackson, Dennis Jarog, Dale & Susan Johnson, Deb Hammer Johnson, Frank Johnson, Ken Josenhans, Neil Kaden, Joy King, Donald Kingsbury, Alex Krislov, Michael & Karla Kube-McDowell, Mike Lalor, Jean Lamb, Rich Lamb, Dean Lambe, John Langner, Gary Laskowski, George Laskowski Sr., Sophie Laskowski, Roy Lavender, Steve & Denise Leigh, Becca Levin, Sue Levy, David Locke, Doug Lott, Dick & Nicki Lynch, Carol Lynn, Jim & Laurie Mann, Cindy Marlatt, Stacy McDermott, Drew McDonald, Jamie McQuinn, Ed Meskys, Marie Miesel, Sandra Miesel, Ken Moore, Tim & Aimee Moran, Paula & Rick Morgan, Janice Morningstar, Pat Mueller, Kathy Nerat, The Neilsen Haydens, Frank Norton, Terry O'Brien, Anna O'Connell, Jodi Offutt, Frank Olynyk, Elizabeth Osborne, Naomi Pardue, Joann Pauley, Sue Peel, Lee Pelton, Bruce Pelz, Sue Phillips, Sharon Porath, Andrew Porter, Stacey Potts, Mary Price, Charlotte Proctor, Mike & Carol Resnick, Neil Rest, Roger Reynolds, Ted Reynolds, Peter Roberts, Paula Robinson, Ross Rocklynne, Bob Rodgers, Jan & Tim Rotarius, Fred Roth, Steve & Fran Scherer, Stan & Joyce Schmidt, Bruce Schneier, Sandy Schreiber, Liz Schwarzin, Mike Sestak, Bob Shaw, Roxanne Shields, Joey Shoji, Susan Shwartz, Joe Siclari, Carol & Van Siegling, Steve Simmons, Pat & Roger Sims, Mike Sinclair, David Singer, Fran Skene, Marian Skupski, Jeff Smith, Joe Sokola, Keith Soltys, Dick Spelman, John Stanley, Suzi Stefl, David Stein, Ian & Dan Story, Bill & Judy Sutton, Chris & Pat Swartout, Sally Syrjala, Robert Teague, Charlie Terry, Vince Tessier, David Thayer, Caryl Thompson, Don C. Thompson, Verna Trestrail, Richard Tucholka, Larry Tucker, Bob Tucker, Kees Van Toorn, Jan Wagner, Bill Walldroop, Sharon Webb, Don Wentzl, Mickey Weeks, Toni Weisskopf, Brad Westervelt, Mel. White, Eva Whitley, Dennis & Judy Wilemski, Dave Wixon, Hania Wojtowicz, Don Wollheim, Ruth Woodring, Tim & Anna Zahn, Joel Zakem

Wahf Listing

(Continued from page 2)

The result is now that hardly a month goes by that does not produce some tale, from somewhere across the country, that I am a hoepless alcoholic, or at least fighting to effect the Cure.

If they only knew...

Nothing could be further from the truth. I've been a serious asthmatic for forty years, fighting---and losing---a battle that may eventually cost me my life. I've landed in a hospital emergency wards a number of times, and have taken all sorts of prescribed medications intended to let me simply keep breathing.

Add to that sleep apnea and a large number of allergies, and complicate it with the fact that all those medications I've turned out to occasionally produce some rather excruciating side effects--and you'll realize that I'd have to be insane to put alcohol on top of all that.

The joke is small. I'm one of those writers who can't drink and write; and I write seven days a week when I'm not away from home--which I've left only eight times in the past three years.

Still, the rumors persist, even in the case of old acquaintances, whom you might think would know better.

I'm sure you can imagine how frustrating this is. More, you can imagine how little I enjoy seeing in a leading fanzine a statement that could be taken to mean that I was a habitual user of illegal drugs. ---And, yes, publishers to get to hear about such statements concerning the authors in whom they have large investments, even when they're published in fanzines.

So let me categorically state that I do not indulge in "recreational chemicals," not even the "harmless" ones. I could not do so, even if I wanted to. And there are no songs about my doing so. Any fantasy that I do so should stop here and now.

Let me repeat again, for those who might be thinking I've gotten myself exercised over an innocent, casual remark: I've had experience with the way a false story, unquashed, can spread, grow--and end up doing me irreparable damage.

The writer who spoke of "cutesy songs" was himself indulging in a cutesy remark. It must never be forgotten that anyone who writes for publication, even in the amateur press, takes on the burden of journalistic responsibility; and even the funniest joke may rebound to hit someone in the teeth.

Best Fanzine Hugo

Thanks to everyone who sent congratulatory notes, letters, and other things (you should see the t-shirt I got from the Dave & Carol Yoder and Sandy and Roger Reynolds). And thanks to all my contributors who made LL what is is today!

1987

L. Sprague DeCamp
Frederik Pohl

1988

William F. Temple
Lester Del Rey
Arthur C. Clarke

1988

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

PLEASE CONTRIBUTE

In the next three years several authors will be celebrating their 50th anniverasries as writers of Science Fiction and Fantasy. Consider submitting critical articles articles, artwork, anecdotes, reminiscences, and personal experiences about these authors so they can be honored as they deserve.

I am planning the issues to come out in the summer/fall of their year of celebration, and so would need the submissions by the 31 of March of that year. Please think about this and try to help honor these writers who have given us so much pleasure for a half-century.

Ending It


Bill Nichols '86