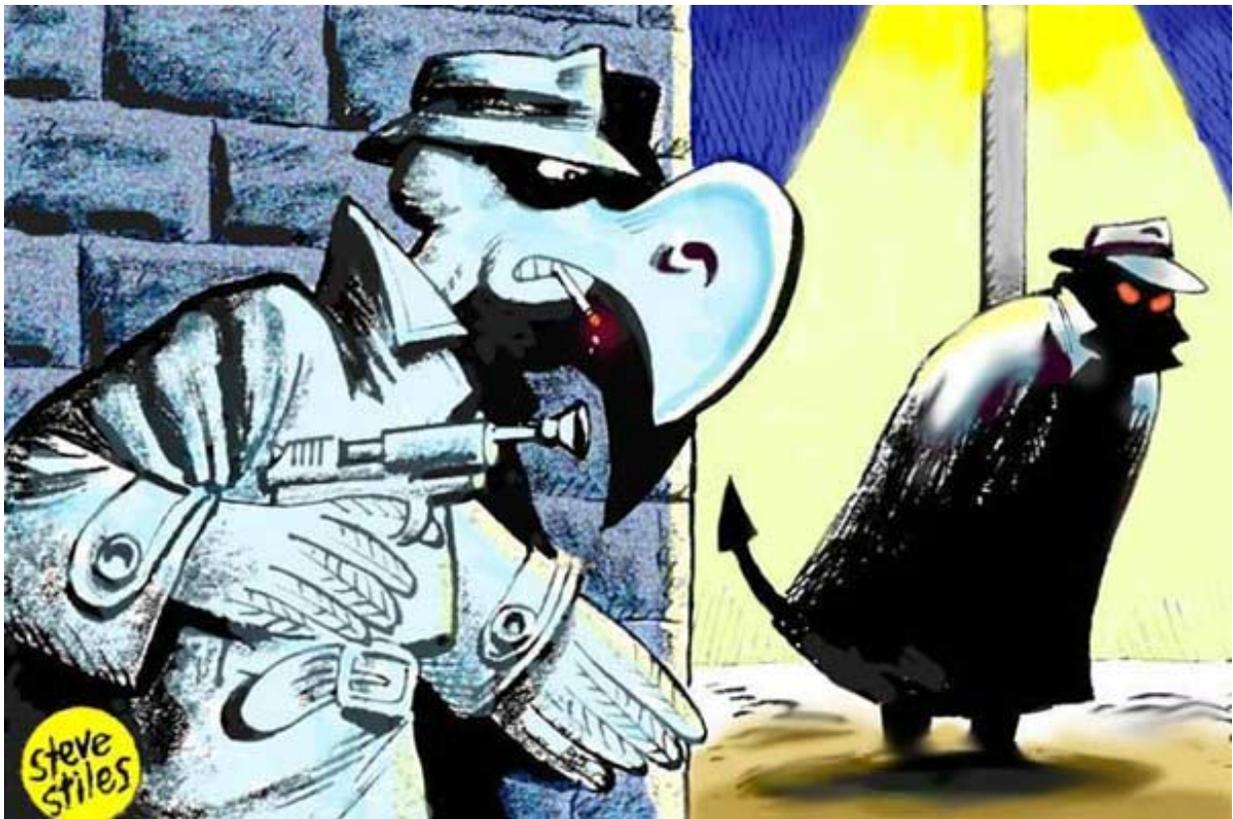




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Dodo Noir
by Steve Stiles

Contents — *eI30* — February 2007

Cover art: Dodo Noir, by Steve Stiles

...Return to sender, address unknown....20 [eI letter column], by Earl Kemp

Shuttering the Brick Hotel, by Earl Kemp

Len Moffatt: A portrait of a fan, by Earl Terry Kemp

Neighbors, by Victor J. Banis

Fritz Leiber and Eyes, by Justin Leiber

There's a game for every season—ice hockey, basketball, baseball, football. Life soon appears to be a game, and it isn't. In games the object is to win, but in life the object is not to win. The object of the whole world is to preserve the game board and the pieces, and there is no such game.

-- Kurt Vonnegut, 3/69

THIS ISSUE OF *eI* is in memory of my dear old friend, Bob Tucker.

In the exclusively science fiction world, it is also in memory of Ron Bennett, Nelson Slade Bond, Sydney J. Bounds, Octavia Butler, Richard Eney, Darroll Richardson, Jack Williamson, Lee Hoffman, and Robert Anton Wilson. Far too many of us to lose in such a short period of time.

#

As always, everything in this issue of *eI* beneath my byline is part of my in-progress rough-draft memoirs. As such, I would appreciate any corrections, revisions, extensions, anecdotes, photographs, jpegs, or what have you sent to me at earlkemp@citlink.net and thank you in advance for all your help.

Bill Burns is *jefe* around here. If it wasn't for him, nothing would get done. He inspires activity. He deserves some really great rewards. It is a privilege and a pleasure to have him working with me to make *eI* whatever it is.

Other than Bill Burns, Dave Locke, and Robert Lichtman, these are the people who made this issue of *eI* possible: Victor J. Banis, Robert Bonfils, Bruce Brenner, Jacques Hamon, Earl Terry Kemp, Justin Leiber, Andrew Porter, and Robert Speray.

ARTWORK: This issue of *eI* features original artwork by Steve Stiles and recycled artwork by William Rotsler.

“It’s hard work,” he said. “It’s not pleasant—just in solitude, writing. You can’t have anybody around. It’s a very lonesome business, and we’re social animals.”

-- phone interview with Kurt Vonnegut, *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, 4/01

...Return to sender, address unknown.... 20

The Official eI Letters to the Editor Column

Artwork recycled William Rotsler

By Earl Kemp

We get letters. Some parts of some of them are printable. Your letter of comment is most wanted via email to earlkemp@citlink.net or by snail mail to P.O. Box 6642, Kingman, AZ 86402-6642 and thank you.

Also, please note, I observe DNQs and make arbitrary and capricious deletions from these letters in order to remain on topic.

This is the official Letter Column of *eI*, and following are a few quotes from a few of those letters concerning the last issue of *eI*. All this in an effort to get you to write letters of comment to *eI* so you can look for them when they appear here.

Saturday September 30, 2006:

McClary, Thomas Calvert

Three Thousand Years

Fantasy Press; Reading, PA, 1954 224 \$3.00

1,454 copies printed in coarse red cloth, of which 300 have limitation sheet with number and bio tipped in; 1,699 Grant, smooth crimson boards with gold stamping.

Jacket by Hannes Bok. <== NOT! It’s clearly signed by John Brooks!

--Ned Brooks (no relation!)

Monday October 2, 2006:

There’s a thing about Crime Fiction that has always drawn me in. Whether it’s True crime (I recently read *A Cast of Killers*) or simply good crime fiction, they all seem to get me. I’ve only read maybe three things from Lawrence Sanders in my life, though. At least that’s all I can think of.

While I've seen *Ronald Rabbit is a Dirty Old Man*, I've never bought it and never read it. I might have to rectify that situation soon.

I swear I've read at least two Jay Flynn books. I'm not sure I've had my hands on the one featured in "Curious Couplings," but I know I've read a couple. For some reason, *The Spy in Ladies Clothes* comes to mind as one of his.

More from Fantasy Press. These are ones that feature more that I've read. When I started studying video game history, I discovered that Lensmen had led to the invention, however indirectly, because Steve Russell was a giant SF fan and had read all of EE Smith's titles. *Legion of Time* is another classic. I've owned a copy for years. *Man of Many Minds* and *Deep Space* were both books my Dad had at one point. I think he actually had one of them on his bookshelf when we cleaned out his place.

I can tell this is an article I'll be referring to a lot over the coming years. It's one of those things that'll just prove damn useful.

--Chris Garcia

Wednesday October 4, 2006:

I note that in *eI28* you have an article discussing those wonderful books from Fantasy Press, et al, and that Stanley G. Weinbaum features somewhat prominently.

You may like to know that Leonaur Press in the UK <http://www.leonaur.com/> has reprinted all of Weinbaum's SF and fantasy works in both hard- and soft-cover.

As with any writer, the quality of the stories varies, but many still stand up very well indeed—'A Martian Odyssey', 'The Lotus Eaters'... Included in the four volumes is 'The New Adam', which was a late work published posthumously, and which clearly shows how Weinbaum's prose had progressed significantly in quality. Had he lived, I surmise that he would have shifted into the mainstream partly because of this advance, and partly because 'The New Adam' indicates how strongly he was moving towards more universal themes and ideas which pulp SF at the time may not have been able to encompass.

Your readers may like to know of this set of books....

--Dick Jensen, Ditmar

Wednesday October 11, 2006:

I may have some insights concerning the dual introductions appearing in the Stanley G. Weinbaum memorial edition "Dawn of the Flame...". Sam Moskowitz was questioned once about this. SaM's explanation is that Weinbaum's widow felt Ray Palmer had mischaracterized her, objecting to his florid writing and some of the more personal commentary (portraying her as being Stanley Weinbaum's "own Black Flame") She refused to give her approval to the project until Palmer's introduction was dropped and a

more acceptable one substituted.

I am presently reading the Summer 2006 issue of *Videoscope* Magazine. This is a publication devoted to obscure and cult films. It has limited newsstand distribution. I subscribe.

On page 45 there is a profile of Tony Crechales, screenwriter for little-known productions: *THE KILLING KIND*, *IMPULSE*, *PSYCHO SISTERS*, *THE ATTIC*.

Born in New York in 1927, he arrived in Hollywood after World War II, using the name “Tony Kent” in a handful of films and TV shows. As “Tony Trelos” (Trellos is the Greek word for “crazy”) penned a series of pornographic novels for the Brand House imprint.

Q: When did you begin writing?

A: Somebody dared me to write what they used to call the paperback dirty books. So I write one and sent it in to Brandon House. They bought it, I wrote 13 in all.

Q: What were some of the titles?

A: One of them was very popular, *HIRED LOVER*. Other titles were: *ANY TIME FOR LOVE*, *THE TWISTED DRIVES OF VICTORIA MCCALL*, *THE SEX HAPPENING OF MARGO TURNER*, *THE STRAY PUSSYCAT*, *BORN TO LOVE*. Stuff like that.

--Mike Deckinger

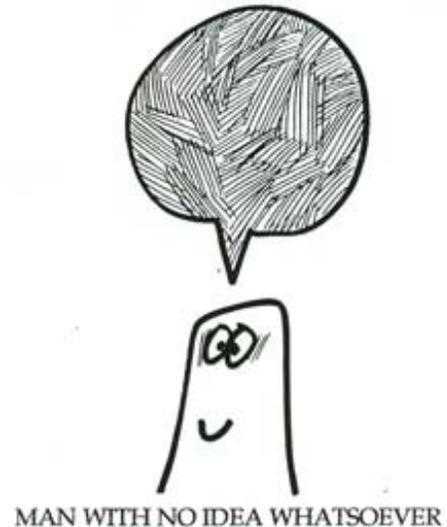
Sunday October 15, 2006:

I have always enjoyed Harry Bell's artwork. Here's hoping he can make it to Corflu. If I have anything of fannish worth that's auctionable, I'll pass that along to the Powers That Be in charge of the Fund. Otherwise, a fiduciary donation will have to do.

Lots of special memories are hitting me lately, especially about Bob Tucker. Are you planning on a Tribute issue or article for Bob?

[Yes, it's in this issue of eI. --Earl Kemp]

One of the first science fiction books that I ever read was Jack Williamson's *The Cometeers*; such fun. I still remember being simply “gosh-wowing” over the book. My dad actually had a paperback edition of the book, and thanks to him, this was the kind of reading that got me hooked on science fiction. It wasn't long after that I was tracking down other sf books by Williamson, like *The Legion of Space*, *The Humanoids*, and



Darker Than You Think. He is still one of my favorite writers.

Now that you listed out which issues of *eI* have writers writing about their careers as porno-hacks, I am going to have to peruse those back issues and read these articles. For a long time I've known about Silverberg and a few other sf writers who churned out this turgid prose, so this knowledge appeals to the curious reader in me. The Lawrence Block book *Ronald Rabbit is a Dirty Old Man* may be one I really need to track down somewhere. It sounds positively fascinating.

Many thanks for completing The Anthem Series. To quote John Boston's loc, Brilliant and fascinating! "Brilliant and fascinating!" So true. The titles, covers and capsule summaries had me drooling so much I was afraid that the spittle was going to short-out my keyboard. This is just wonderful stuff, and I stand—or sit, rather, to be precise—in awe of this material.

Awesome ish again. Here's to seeing you in Austin, Earl.

--John Purcell

Tuesday October 24, 2006:

I read and enjoy each issue of *eI*. I'm amazed at the quality of the writing, even if I'm not always that interested in the subject matter (i.e. the porn biz), although I have to admit that a couple of articles I didn't think would interest me really sucked me in. Er... no pun intended.

--Dave Burton

Sunday October 29, 2006:

All treat, no trick here...even if it is just before Hallowe'en. I've got issue 28 of *eI*, and on a quiet Sunday afternoon, I can write a loc.

I've seen at least some of Harry Bell's artwork, and his work always reminded me of the artwork in the British comic books my grandparents used to send me. Those titles are in my loc in this issue.

Ah, Corflu Quire...when it was in Toronto last year, I was asked if I was taking a room, and I simply could not afford to do so, and besides, Yvonne was off to a space conference, and I was by myself. I merely commuted back and forth, and couldn't find a dinner partner. Now comes Corflu in Austin, and I just can't do it. I would be great to go, but money just will not allow. I don't work enough hours these days to afford this kind of thing. I expect Yvonne will be going to Texas, but that's for another space conference.

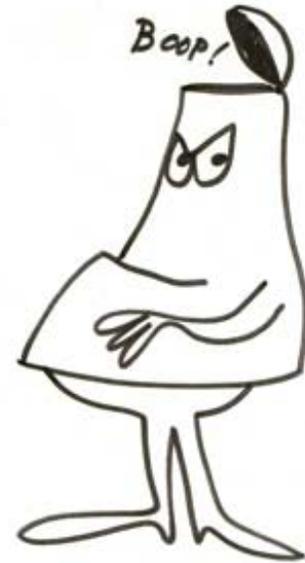
Chris and Andy, I have to be a smart shopper. There's so many things I would like to get... I spent most of Saturday in two bookshops, one new and one used, and I walked out with

so little. When I see something I'd really like, I ask myself can I afford it, where would I put it, is it something I really need right now, and could I buy it at home cheaper? The new bookstore had Gollancz books on sale for \$5 each, and I had a \$35 giftcard. The used bookstore had some George Alec Effinger books I didn't have, and I had a \$24 credit. I will make the room.

(What were the Gollancz books? *Next of Kin* by Eric Frank Russell, *Worlds* by Joe Haldeman, and *Son of Man* by Robert Silverberg, all trade-sized softcovers. The used books I bought were *Relatives* and *Those Gentle Voices* by George Alec Effinger, and an Ace Double, *The Twisted Men* by A.E. van Vogt/*One of Our Asteroids is Missing* by Calvin M. Knox.)

John Purcell is absolutely right. There is always something new to learn, and fanzines are part of the continuing education programme that is fandom in so many ways. I will happily admit there's a lot that I am unfamiliar with, and with your help, I am learning.

More of those wonderful book covers. They symbolize my own Golden Age of SF, for they combined rockets and exploration and wild adventures out beyond the Rim. Always loved it, and never got enough of it. I satisfied my demand for such adventure by reading all the anthologies in my small-town library when I was growing up. (The cover of *Under the Triple Suns* by Stanton A. Coblentz...the winged alien on the cover looks suspiciously like Betty Boop.)



--Lloyd Penney.

Saturday December 9, 2006:

Thank you, Earl! This is fantastic! I'll be reading this carefully. It's terrific to have *WKSF?* available at last. Thanks!

--Curt Phillips

#

A great issue. I am working my way through it. One point where my memory differs from yours is the printing of *WKSF*. My memory is that we printed both annual issues at Lynn's in Dixon. Your memory of breakfast with H.L. Hunt is "right on". I remember coming up to the counter to talk to you and wondering why a man so rich was sitting there.

--James O'Meara

#

All I can say is that this is a triumph. I remember reading the original from my Dad's collection, but this is so much more. It really speaks to the ways that eZining can add so much to a piece. It was wonderful to experience this incredibly important piece of SF history. There are few things that show a snapshot of the field at a single moment in the history of SF. There's *Who Killed Science Fiction*, the 1964 *Playboy* interview and the 1970 WorldCon tapes, and *Who Killed Science Fiction*. That's really about it.

For what it's worth, I don't think magazine science fiction was dead in 1960. It was dying, that's for sure, the first shots into the body of what most folks who were regular readers up to that point would call science fiction were fired in the '50s by Sturgeon and Farmer and the whole thing was finally killed off by *Dangerous Visions* and the anthology explosion. The science fiction survived until the x-Punk movements dragged science fiction into what it is today, for better or worse.

Exceptional, Earl. Thanks

--Chris Garcia

#

<http://efanzines.com/EK/eI29/index.htm> That's the link right there. Go and load it into your other browser window.

What you're looking at is the complete version of one of the most important fanzine (or related book) ever published. Earl Kemp's *Who Killed Science Fiction?*, winner of the 1961 Best Fanzine award at Seacon. It was a small-run edition (155 copies, says Earl) and I was lucky enough to have a Dad who traded tons of paperbacks for a copy in the late 1970s. It was wonderful!

This is the complete version, with intros from aborted version from 1980, a 2006 intro, and reactions to the original. There are wonderful sidebars and explanations from Earl and it's marvelous.

The bulk of the piece are answers to a questionnaire that Earl sent out ask if Science Fiction in magazines was dead, if the original paperback would save SF and so on. The answers came from nearly all the most important figures in science fiction including Campbell, Asimov, Vonnegut, Tucker, Gernsback, Farmer and so many more. In the further notes, there's Theodore Sturgeon.

This is the ultimate snapshot of science fiction 1960. There are few things that give as complete a look at folks in the field as *Who Killed Science Fiction*. The 1964 *Playboy* interview with Asimov, Heinlein, Sturgeon, Tenn, Blish and others is one, as are the complete tapes of the 1970



WorldCon. There's nothing close that's come out since that point.

It's a masterpiece that is finally complete.

--Chris Garcia, *Livejournal*

And a hearty Humbug to you too. What a splendid gift.

So, who's going to put "Ah, Sweet Idiocy!" on the Web?

--John Boston

What an amazing and wonderful surprise! Of course my first thought was that it will knock the inflated market "value" of that copy of *WKSF* that's been listed for over \$2,000 out of the water. So I went to look -- and it's gone. Wonder if the seller withdrew it or someone actually bought it?

Anyway, they now may have to rewrite the Hugo rules to allow a nomination for an electronic fanzine so *WKSF* can cop a rocket for the second time.....

--Robert Lichtman

#

Incredible to have this back in print *and* expanded to boot! I just printed it out and it's too thick for my Big Stapler. I'm going to take it to be velobound with clear plastic covers.

Thanks, Earl & Terry (and Bill)!

--Robert Lichtman

#

The letter that appeared in *PITFCS* 137 talked about something called "Who Killed Science Fiction?" and in the letter Phil says "...and, after blowing my top in *WKSF*, and feeling better..." Wait a minute! "after blowing my top *in*"...could only mean that Phil contributed to *WKSF*! Googling "Who Killed Science Fiction?" did bring up over 100 web pages, but other than learning that it won editor Earl Kemp the Hugo for best fanzine in 1961 and finding a few excerpts, there was little useful information online. And forget about trying to buy a copy, with only 155 copies printed they are just impossible to locate. Then, for no apparent reason I (Mike) decided to email Earl Kemp in November and ask him if he had a copy of *WKSF* available. Even a photocopy. Even a photocopy of just Phil's contribution. Amazingly he replied "*The December issue of my ezine eI is all about WKSF? Plus it has an expanded section of Phil Farmer material that might interest you.*"

So, without further ado, if you visit Earl's page at efanzines.com you can read The

Compleat and Unexpurgated [Who Killed Science Fiction?](#) which also includes new material from 1980. We realize we have spent a lot of time talking about something 97% of which does not have to do with Phil directly, but *WKSF* was important enough when it was published to win a Hugo. And we feel that it now being available online is just as important an event today to anyone who is a fan of science fiction and interested in its history. Thank you very much, Earl, for making this available. Now, everyone who plans on printing out all 189 pages of the pdf version, putting it in a binder and reading it cover to cover, raise your hand. Surely I'm not the only one?

--Mike Croteau, www.pjfarmer.com

Sunday December 10, 2006:

I'm sitting here looking at the online edition of *Who Killed Science Fiction?*

You have done a magnificent job, and if there were any justice you would receive the thanks of the entire profession, a combined Hugo/Nebula/Locus/Ditmar/etc./etc. award. What will actually happen at Nippon Heisei 19 will be, sad to say, a quite different matter.

I doubt, for example, that Jim "I got more first-place votes why didn't I win?" Gifford will look. It might spoil his belief that "Anonymous No. 1" "plagarized" Heinlein's contribution to *The Science Fiction Novel* -- which is what his scenario of "RAH sent in a version of his essay for *WKSF?*" would have appeared.

--Joseph Major

#

Just dropping by to thank you for taking the trouble to put up the expanded WHO KILLED SCIENCE FICTION? at <http://efanzines.com/EK/e129/index.htm> . Wonderful reading, the lot of it. I'm choked with nostalgia for all that I missed (as an Aussie from a slightly later period, although with a lot of cross-over in the '60s and '70s, now living in Texas).

--Damien Broderick

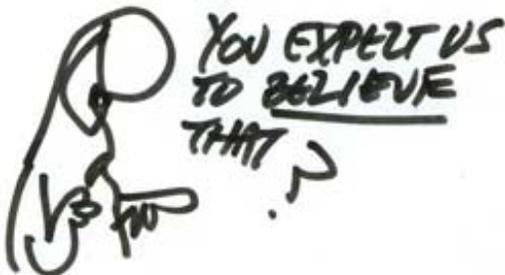
Sunday December 17, 2006:

I am so well pleased by the recounting of "Who Killed Science Fiction?" Believing in science fiction has always been a living presence in my life. Most of all I do remember. And to my memories all I can recount, as a young Kemp, by the side of my Father... the great and well-known entity of my science fiction world. I was there all the while, in the corner silent, watching. I was living the dream with the fascination of the science fiction books in my life as a day-to-day background. Like the drapes along the walls of our house, reading and rereading the bookbindings as I walked by. To be sure all was in order and the books were nesting in their correct place. I would reach for a book then find a corner

of my fantasy to put my quiet time fast behind the pages, and off I'd be, deep in their world. Off to space or beyond, fighting dragons or denizens of other worlds. Remember 1960... I remember it best! Walking in the halls of our house I could still see the faces of my heroes. Were they heroes? Or were they the friends and delighted guests that came to our house. These were the people I'd come to know as family.

As well as with an impressionable mind I came along, to be part of Science Fiction. Was it the best of times? Who's to say? The world of science fiction was entrenched by me. A way of life; I did not know another. I was not the youth who would pick up the child's book and read of Jack and Jill. I wanted adventure beyond my realm. So I came along... to put the ghostly sheet over my head and walk with the family goading Science Fiction's specter. Seeing the cover of *Who Killed Science Fiction* I would spot one of *US*, the smallest of them. It was I an unwitting participant of disguise to put an end to the Id. Or was it the beginning? But I stayed clad in a sheet and walked proud, as if I could fill my father's shoes.

[At the Pacificon masquerade, the Kemp children were dressed in sheets with painted-on Freas mourner faces and cut-out eyeholes. The characters were modeled after Freas' double title page for WKSF? The costumed children chased a purple-sheet-covered menace around the ballroom floor. –Earl Kemp]



I looked long into my Father's eyes that day seeing there was just cause for the fight for the right to admit that science fiction had a place and will always have. I did not see beyond his vision, that of the written word or the countless words that would be lost if the pages could not be turned. But I regarded the quest for that future of science fiction to be one of utmost challenge. From that day on I knew who I would be.

That is of what I was myself to be a long, long way down the road of my life. But I took stock in what I could remember, and it stayed with me as the best part of myself. I would find a way some how, some time, to keep the spirit alive of SF and recall a word or two. A Writer Writes! And around my belief was my admiration of writers and visions they reached beyond the cosmos. Dream... the unimaginable? And so I write. Was it the best of times? Could be... The shimmer of the rocket statue stood tall as a symbol to me. The Hugo Award that remained in our house always will be the proof of honor I hold for my father with the best esteem. Science fiction was not dead! And what we did that year would stand the test of time. Through all... Yes your meanderings, dear Dad... I could see. The days are like yesterday counting... Kennedy, Nixon... The Kinsey report, The Presidential report. The pain, the Terminal days. The wonderful warmth of the sun in Aijjic. And by then I was gone. 1980 starting over again! The Best of Times. That's life! I'm so proud *Who Killed Science Fiction* has claimed another day to reign. Thanks for remembering us, Dad. My Dad, the man who would not let science fiction go down without a fight.

--Elaine Kemp Harris

Wednesday December 20, 2006:

It's wonderful to have all this stuff available again. Robert Lichtman has printed it all out and had it bound and I've asked him to make a second copy for me, which he is in the process of doing. But you had to supply the text first, for which I thank you.

--Bob Silverberg

Friday January 5, 2007:

Robert Lichtman has provided me with a beautiful printout of the book. Thanks for making it all available again.

I do wonder, though, who wrote the stuff on pages 177-78 under my byline. Except for the first paragraph, it wasn't me! (I've never read the Heinlein book that is praised there, and I've never used the term "eco-fiction.")

--Bob Silverberg

[Wow! I really goofed somehow. Thanks for calling this to my attention. I'll see if I can figure it out. -Earl Kemp]

Wednesday January 17, 2007:

I wonder what I had to say in that original 1979 piece. Probably wasn't half as brilliant as the stuff you published under my name, but at least it would be my very own.

I've been reading through the nifty printout that Robert Lichtman flanged up for me. The section that impressed me the most was your own retrospective tour of the 1970s in the 1980 section. Really sparkling prose. That was a time, all right, man.

--Bob Silverberg

Thursday January 18, 2007:

I have now finished reading the new edition of WHO KILLED SF? and it's clear to me that the piece attributed to me at the end is actually the second half of Alex Panshin's essay. He's the one who talks about "eco-fiction" in both pieces, and that's a phrase unknown to me. Probably some sort of computer glitch split his essay in half and moved the second part to the end of the book, immediately following the first paragraph of whatever it was that I wrote.

--Bob Silverberg

#

[Alexei, please check the text of your piece in *Who Killed Science Fiction? 1980* and confirm that it is all screwed up and a portion of it attached to and assigned to Robert Silverberg by mistake. --Earl Kemp]

I looked for the black binder in which my precious copy of *WKSF? 1980* is kept between *Fancylopedia II* and *The Complete PITFCS* and couldn't find it. But just when I was starting to feel panicky, I spotted it in a pile just under my copy of *Sex and Rockets: The Occult World of Jack Parsons*, where, no doubt, I should have looked for it in the first place.

You are absolutely right. You clipped the last part of my remarks and stuck them under Silverberg's name. Everything in his 1980 entry after the first paragraph is mine. How did you discover the mistake? Did Bob discover it? And what happened to the rest of his 1980 remarks?

Ah, the two of us are always being confused. There's a picture of him identified as me in Google Images. (Just checked. Still there.)

--Alexei Panshin

Friday January 12, 2007:

This is a very nice repair job. Don't flagellate yourself over the goof -- even I didn't notice, the first time through, that the "Silverberg" piece I was reading wasn't something I had written. Only when I finished it did I begin wondering why I was talking so much about "eco-fiction," a term I've never used, or referring to a Heinlein novel I haven't read. Even so, I didn't figure out what had really happened until I read the piece of Panshin's essay that you used and realized that the stuff under my name must be the second half of his.

Just tell people the computer did it. Mine ate half my incomplete tax return on Tuesday and I've been putting all the numbers back in ever since.

--Bob Silverberg

Thursday December 21, 2006:

Earl, I am so happy that you, Terry, and Bill put *Who Killed Science Fiction?* out on efanines. I promptly downloaded the sucker—which took up a *lot* of room on my jump drive, you bastard, eating up valuable space I use for producing *my* zines—and have just spent about half an hour leisurely perusing the contributions.

So now I have come to the conclusion that the same question is readily applicable to us malcontents here in the early throes of the 21st century. It seems to me that your series of five initial questions are still very valid. My opinion is that serious, thinking-man's science fiction - that which makes us contemplate what the heck we're doing here, what we are doing to each other, and why—is definitely on the down-slide once again. And the media is to blame. Magazine science fiction still numbers about the same (although I can only think of these major titles off-hand: *Asimov's*, *Analog*, *F&SF*), and there is simply a proliferation of small press and indie publishers running new titles at a rate that nobody has time to read it all.

Science fiction—even worse, fantasy—has proven it generates big bucks on the silver screen, especially with marketing tie-ins. Besides, fantasy is less restricted by physics, logic, and explainable phenomenon. Let your imagination run wild, and the more exciting, slam-bang action (with action figures available at Toys “R” Us!) you can show on the screen, the better. More than anything, I believe that popular culture is “killing science fiction” as we know it. Once again, things cycle around and there should once again come a resurgence of literate, thought-provoking science fiction. Or so we can hope.

Now I can go back to enjoying more of this issue. Many, many thanks for running this so that relative newcomers to fandom—like me, who jumped into the pool in 1973—can see what all the hubbub was all about. I am enjoying this a lot. Thank you.

--John Purcell

Tuesday January 2, 2007:

It's time for another *eI*, and I've been looking forward to the annish, but man, this isn't just a zine, it's a book! A 189-page .pdf! This is a challenge. I'd better read it, and see if this is the kind of publication to comment on, or just read and enjoy. I'm sure there'll be things to say.

I've never read this publication, and I'm glad to now have it in any form. To echo one comment read about it years ago, it's attempt to determine the health of SF with the equivalent of a rectal thermometer. Is it well or sick? Is it in need of some attention? This publication was meant to be SF's regular check-up, and I think it still needs it from time to time. Is it well? I'm not sure. Maybe it's just evolved beyond what I recognized it to be; reading it for more than 35 years will do that to a person. Maybe I could try to answer the five questions asked myself, and give another opinion...

1) Do you feel that magazine science fiction is dead?

Well, it hasn't been well for a while. I am referring to the general magazines like *Asimov's*, *Analog*, *F&SF* and newer companions. There are any number of newer webzines I read of at the edge of my radar, and rarely after that. Those I do see contain fiction by names I've never heard from before. Maybe this is the B-range of SF magazines, which may mean some level of health.

2) Do you feel that any single person, action, incident, etc., is responsible for the present situation? If not, what is responsible?

To me, it's just money. The printing and postage are too expensive to make magazine profitable. The web makes it easier to e-publish, but perhaps takes away the value of the publication as being just another e-disposable, something that can be easily ignored like much of the web's contents.

3) What can we do to correct it?

I'm not sure we can do anything. Where I live (who remembers *Slightly Higher* in Canada on their paperbacks?), a paperback can cost about \$10 to \$13. A hardcover can cost anywhere between \$35 to \$60. If we were stumbling into a genre of literature these days, we might not be able to afford anything, and we would see what's on the web. Those prices aren't about to go down.

4) Should we look to the original paperback as a point of salvation?

No, for there's no going back to anything affordable. See point 3.

5) What additional remarks, pertinent to the study, would you like to contribute?

Well, I think *Who Killed SF?* should go to another survey and printing. Who knows the field better than those who are writing, publishing, agenting and otherwise creating within it? And given that SF from its Gernsbackian beginnings is about 80 years old now, as I said before, it needs a regular check-up. Like most people, SF hasn't been to the doctor lately, and it needs a check-up. If you need contacts here, let me know, and I will give you the e-addresses I have to contact writers here, like Robert J. Sawyer and Robert Charles Wilson, Julie Czerneda, Tanya Huff, and many others. We need a new survey.

Also, I will offer the idea that the public now is different from the public then. Literacy levels are much lower, we live in an SFnal reality, so our new scientific dreams are few and far between, and for most people, instantaneous gratification takes too long, and we want our fix of whatever we want right now. That fix seems to come quicker via the small and large screens.

Much of what I express in the above few paragraphs are also in various answers from various pros in the field, circa 1960, which says to me that the problems are much the same as they were. The possible solutions will have some similarities, but we need modern versions of those solutions. Another reason to do all this again, and publish the results. Maybe as I said earlier, we feel that SF needs fixing because we don't recognize in it what we first liked about it, or it's no longer as accessible to us (in many ways). Does it need fixing? Yes, to bring it back to where it used to be for us? Probably no, it's appearing to a younger group of readers. It has evolved; we have not. And it is always strange to think that in a literature of new ideas and writing, we are diehard in our inability to change. We

are conservative readers of a liberal genre.

Another idea as I read through and type up ideas as they occur...could it be that maybe the general public doesn't need science fiction any more? The Internet, cellphones with built-in cameras, nanoprobes... the amazing future is today. If we think of astounding concepts, we don't write about them, we market them and produce those items for mass consumption. Add in that the reader now demands full scientific factuality in the SF, and is there room for speculation and dreaming any more? This may go back to us killing science fiction...what we want may not be SF any more.

The current state of the space programme may also be killing SF...it's an everyday occurrence, punctuated by exploded shuttles and dead astronauts. The space station is a non-event. Thanks to Yvonne, I am now immersed in the space advocacy field, and it is great to see the excitement these people can generate, but that excitement just doesn't get to the public, who can be easily likened to grunting zombies more and more. Several people claim that the space programme and Star Trek brought back an interest in SF... well, both seem to be in decline in the public eye.

--Lloyd Penney.

Thursday January 18, 2007:

I've appreciated the on-line material, particularly the magnificent (*eI29*) *WHO KILLED SCIENCE FICTION?*

--Barry Malzberg

Saturday January 27, 2007:

You're producing the best ezines ever -- fully comparable to *QUANDRY*, *OOPSLA!*, *GRUE*, etc... amazing. You & Lichtman & Guy Lillian are the best fmz eds of our era. *eI* is a wonder.

--Gregory Benford

People have to talk about something just to keep their voice boxes in working order so they'll have good voice boxes in case there's ever anything really meaningful to say.

-- Kurt Vonnegut

Shuttering the Brick Hotel

“...check out any time but you can never leave....”

By Earl Kemp

Among life's many unavoidable chores is the task each of us has been assigned requiring us to close down some very significant part of our pasts. Saying good-bye to Bob Tucker is one of those obligations for me.

I am literally shuttering the Tucker Hotel for the final time....

On other occasions I have written about my relationship with Bob Tucker. One of those times, “Just Another Brick in the Wall....,” (*Spirits of Things Past*, August 2001) was written for Bob's 90th birthday celebration party. In it I dredged up most of the best of my memories of Tucker, and they were mostly all involved with memories of Bloch, as are these words as I click them out on my keyboard. I gave that article a number one push, putting everything in it except the kitchen sink that I must have used somewhere else instead....

Arthur Wilson Tucker died in October 2006, just after the October issue of *eI* had been posted, so I could not acknowledge the occasion then. The December issue of *eI* was a single-topic issue with the obituary mentions deleted, so I could not acknowledge the occasion then either.

And here it is, February 2007, four months later, and I am finally saying good-bye to my dear old friend from the Midwest from the 1950s, in my own totally inadequate fashion.

I have decided to select my two favorite memories of Bob Tucker and share them with you here.

In the late-1950s, Robert Bloch was coming to Chicago for a couple of conferences regarding his sale of *Psycho* to Simon and Schuster. He was to meet with Clayton Rawson, his editor at Inner Sanctum, to finalize some details. Seizing upon the opportunity, I hastily arranged a party at my house in Bloch's honor and invited the usual A list of local science fiction fans, including, of course, Bob and Fern Tucker from Bloomington.

The Tuckers, by prearrangement, arrived in Chicago a bit early. Bob and I jumped into the car and rushed off to Milwaukee, a mere 100 interstate miles away. We were going to pick up



Bob Tucker, Bob Bloch, and Fran Light (1950s-60s Chicago fan), photographed in my house at that Bloch *Psycho* party. Note the science-fictional drapes.

Bloch and drive him back to my house. It was the only time I ever spent a couple of hours just alone with my favorite hero, and I used it as much as I dared.

Needless to say, the party and the events related to Rawson's visit with Bloch are permanent highlights in my memory.

In the late 1960s, Bob Tucker was going to be in Los Angeles attending some projectionist convention so someone took the opportunity to throw a very special party in his honor. It was not only an A list party, it was focused on old-time LA area fans and LASFS in particular.

The party was held at someone's residence in the Hollywood Hills sector. I remember 4sj Ackerman, Walts Daugherty and Liebscher, Bob Bloch, Elmer Perdue, and many others. Old photo albums were passed around and everyone made nice about Morojo (Myrtle Douglas) who had died less than two years earlier.

Sometime during that party I discovered that Arthur Knight lived directly across the street from where the party was being held. Arthur Knight, among other things, wrote a number of books and the many-years-long "Sex in the Cinema" series for *Playboy*. He was also on Stanley Fleishman's (the Greenleaf Classics attorney) A-list and I knew him from there. Knight was frequently called upon to testify for the defense in First Amendment cases, including at least one for Greenleaf. Anyway, I rushed across the street and insisted that Arthur accompany me back to the party where there were numbers of people he wanted to meet.



Lee Hoffman and Bob Tucker.

Arthur had a great time, he told me later, and thanked me for insisting that he attend the party.

It was at this party that I shared my most poignant session with Bob Tucker. Bob, Catherine Moore, and I spent a very long time sitting on the front steps of that Hollywood Hills house reliving the past and reminiscing about old lovers long gone.... [Henry Kuttner died in 1958.]

And here I am, once again, doing exactly the same thing.

Bob Tucker, thank you for helping make me who I am today.

Len Moffatt: A portrait of a fan

In Memory of Rog Phillips

By Earl Terry Kemp

Recently my father, Earl Kemp, talked me into going with him to the 27th Annual Vintage Paperback Show. This event was hosted by Black Ace Books in Los Angeles over the March 26th 2006 weekend. During our long drive from Golden Valley, Arizona, we talked a great deal about early science fiction fandom. Earlier that Saturday morning, while waiting for my father to arrive so we could begin our journey, I had been placing the finishing touches to a very personal family project. I thought that I was done with a short biography and bibliography I had written and compiled about my godfather, pulp-era writer, Roger Phillips Graham. As the weekend progressed, I was to find I was still far from finished.

We discussed this project while driving through the desert, my father adding a few more memories about a man whom I knew practically nothing about. At the Paperback Show my father introduced me to Len and June Moffatt as we bumped into them at the Sunday morning brunch. We said hello. Our encounter was too brief, as my father and I had other business to deal with. As a parting shot June told me that they were both “Fake fans...if you know what I mean.”

I said that I did as we parted.

Later that afternoon my father told me that Len had known Mari Wolf, Rog Phillips' first wife, and that was all I needed to hear. I jumped at the first opportunity I could find and cornered Len and June, took out my notebook, and started asking as many questions as I could in the short time we had together.

I was delighted to (unexpectedly) find out even more about Rog. As the impromptu interview continued, I became equally impressed with Len, and his life and times. When I finally put my notes together, it became difficult to separate the biographical anecdotes about Rog from those about Len. So I didn't.

The following is my portrait of Moffatt, with some emphasis on Rog Phillips. Now that it is done I feel it is as close a picture of Rog as I'm ever likely to get. I think that Rog would have appreciated the fond and cherished anecdotes from Len. I know that I do.

#

Len Moffatt is now 82 years old. For nearly 66 years Len has been an active part of the world of science fiction. Born on November 20, 1923, Len has been involved in fandom since his teenage years before and then after WWII. Even though he was born in Phoenix, Arizona, he reckons his start in fandom from the Pennsylvania area where he was a

founding member of the Western Pennsylvania Science Fictioneers. This club was formed due to an offer in the first version of *Super Science Fiction* in which they offered to sponsor and charter science fiction clubs. So Len and his friends started a club and got a chapter number from *Super Science Fiction*.

Blaine R. (Doc) Dunmire of Charleroi, Philadelphia, and Len (in Ellwood City) were the two most active fans in this early pre-war club, writing for and publishing fanzines, and corresponding with fans throughout the United States and England. Blaine went into the Army during World War II. Len recalls that just before his own outfit went to the Marianas, he received a letter from Doc's father with the news that Doc had been killed when his troop ship was sunk in the Mediterranean.

The writer Basil Wells was an original member of their club. The noted pulp writer, Ed Hamilton, who lived in the area, was not a member but Len asked. Hamilton nicely replied that he was too busy writing the Captain Future series and declined the invitation to join the group at that time. Instead Ed asked for a "rain check" indicating that he might join later but World War II intervened before Len had a chance to follow up on Ed's offer to join.



Len Moffat circa 1943.

Len finished high school in June 1941, during the outbreak of WWII in Europe. Out of high school by December of that year, he began working in a local Pennsylvania steel tubing mill taking care of his widowed mother while waiting for his draft number to come up. In November 1942 he joined the Navy and went to boot camp at Sampson, New York. Then he went on to Portsmouth, Virginia, for Hospital Corps School, followed by a brief time stationed at the Naval Hospital in Jacksonville, Florida. After a while he transferred to the Fleet Marine Force and trained with boot Marines at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, while attending Medical Field Service School. After his training he went cross-country to the west coast, sailing to Pearl Harbor and finally on to Saipan in 1944.

He was stationed on Saipan until March 1945, when he boarded yet another troop ship and went to Okinawa for the April 1st attack. His unit was held in reserve aboard ship but like all the ships in the operation, his had to contend with constant Kamikaze attacks.

Even now, 60 years later, Len still wonders why his unit was held in reserve. "When I heard about the large number of casualties suffered by the troops on Okinawa, I wondered why our unit was never ordered ashore.

"We got a battle star for being there. We survived the air and sea attacks and were taken back to Saipan. Perhaps they were saving us for the planned invasion of Japan. You didn't have to be a genius to know that was the next order of business.



Left: Len Moffatt circa 1944. Right: Len Moffatt circa 1944 at Camp Lejeune.

“On the day we got word that the Japanese had surrendered, we were going through a training operation away from our camp site. We assumed that they would let us go back to our camp and celebrate, but the brass kept us out there the rest of the day.

“That was the Marine Way,” sums up Len’s droll commentary on his battle experience.

At the end of the war he was stationed in Nagasaki for occupation duty. Len says, “The place was a shambles from the blast. We were loaded in a truck and went to the A-bomb area. It was leveled. We were not allowed to get out of the trucks lest we touch anything as we looked around and get “contaminated.” I was there around September to October, a month after the bombs were dropped. I have some old photos of Nagasaki. Mostly I remember the injured people, because while I was there I was working as a Corpsman.

“As a Marine company corpsman,” Len continues, “I was not authorized to give medical help to civilians. But there were some who had yet to get help, probably because the official help was directed more to the really serious cases. But we did what little we could for those we met who would let us help them and who had not been hospitalized.

“The items in my Unit 3 (medical bag) were mostly for battle wounds: sulfa powder, battle dressings, morphine, scalpel kit, etc. But I did what I could with what I had and what I was able to get otherwise....”

After the war Len wrote some weird science fiction for the latter day pulps. He wrote a few stories, satires of science fiction themes, fantasy, and even some westerns, before moving on to a mainstream writing career. Most notably *Father’s Vampire*, a short story written with Alvin Taylor that appeared in *Weird Tales* May 1952. He also published such fanzines as *JDM Bibliophile* (John D. MacDonald), and his FAPazine *Moonshine*.



Left: Nagasaki as it was before the war. Right: Nagasaki in 1945 after the atomic blast.



Nagasaki in ruins after the blast

Len quickly discovered that he “could make more money (on a regular salary basis) by writing non-fiction,” than he could writing for the magazines. “After all,” he continues, “I was no Frederick Faust or John D. MacDonald (both called ‘writing machines’ by their colleagues).”

Shortly after WWII he returned to the United States and he joined the Outlander Society while living in the Los Angeles area. Len first met Mari Wolf at the third WesterCon put on by the Outlander Society in July 1950.

Mari, by all accounts a very attractive young lady, worked in wind tunnel design. She was welcomed by one and all at the convention. During the 3rd LA WesterCon, Freddie

Hershey was the first Lady Chair in fandom. The Outlander Society that hosted the event thought they needed even more women involved. So they instantly asked and convinced Mari to join the Outlander Society.

Later, after he had met Mari, Len would travel with a buddy down to Laguna Beach to visit her where Mari Wolf lived with her parents. When his buddy wasn't making his trip in that direction, Len would travel by bus to visit the lovely Mari. He would visit Mari under her parents' strict chaperonage. They weren't sure about their young daughter dating an ex-serviceman.



Len Moffatt and Mari Wolf at the third Los Angeles Westercon in 1950.

“I don't think that her parents objected to me because I was an ex-serviceman. They treated me well enough and her mother kidded us about looking like 'little kids' when Mari and I cavorted on the beach that could be seen from their very expensive home. I, on the other hand, lived with my mother in a middle class suburb of Los Angeles. Not that Mari would have listened to her parents if she wanted to marry someone.”

After Len and Mari had been dating for a while, he made the mistake of not going with her to the Portland, Oregon 1950 WorldCon. Len says, “I didn't make a mistake by not going to the 1950 WorldCon in Portland. I probably could not get the time off from work and it probably would have cost more than I could really afford. I joined all the WorldCons back then but rarely was able to go out of state to one.”

It was in the fall of 1950 at that event where Mari first met Roger Phillips Graham. She thought Rog was a nice guy. Rog stole her away from Len. Len says, “Mari met Roger Phillips Graham at the convention, and it was love at first whatever...”

“When I heard about Mari and Rog,” Len adds, “I asked my old friend Stan Woolston what Rog was like. Stan said, ‘He reminds me of you.’ Rog and I would become friends—I never really hated him as we had never met until after his marriage to Mari.”



Mari Wolf in the early 1950s. The photo is inscribed to Rick Snearly.

About the time that Mari and Rog met, Rog had written his delightful (and not as well

known as it should be) autobiography “Christ: An Autobiography” that appeared in September 1950 in Art Rapp’s *Spacewarp*.

“I remember reading the piece in one of Charles Burbee’s FAPAazines (*Burblings*, perhaps) and had the impression that Rog had written it while visiting Burb, not an unusual practice for Burb in those days.” Len continues, “When you paid him a visit he just might sit you at a typer and insist that you write something for a one shot fanzine, or whatever. It is possible that Art Rapp reprinted it in *Spacewarps*—with Rog’s permission, of course.”

Mari and Rog relocated to the Los Angeles area from Seattle and became involved in local fandom. Rog became an “Outlaw” which was what the Outlanders dubbed people who married into the group.

Eventually Mari and Rog broke up, Mari gafiated and remarried, which was a great loss to fandom. “I think when they broke up and after she had left the group, we pretty much thought of him as a regular Outlander,” says Len.

After the break-up, Rog moved to the Bay Area where he met and married Honey Wood, who was quite active in local fandom there. Honey became an “Honorary Outlaw.” In mid-1954 Honey Wood and Noreen Falasca briefly revived the *Fannettes*, an all-girl science fiction fan club.



Left: Roger and Honey Graham in 1957.
Right: Honey Graham and Rick Sneary in 1957.

In May 1955, Rog became my godfather during a ceremony in Chicago. Roberta Collins, who married pulp writer Joe Gibson a few months later, became my godmother. While living in the San Francisco area with his second wife, Honey, Rog taught creative writing to the inmates at Alcatraz. My father, Earl Kemp, said to me, that of all the things Rog had done, he said he enjoyed teaching at Alcatraz the most.

By 1957 Rog had married Honey Wood and as part of the run-up for the 1958 Westercon, Rog became the Program Director. Honey Wood was added to the planning committee. Rog's chief function was to introduce speakers, as well as help in getting them to their programs on time. His wife, Honey, was of great help in registration and assisting Rick Sneary with the bookkeeping.

The SoLaCon (the official nickname for the sixteenth WorldCon c/w the eleventh WesterCon) was organized and run by the Outlanders. It was held at the old Alexandria Hotel in downtown Los Angeles. Rog Phillips manufactured the Hugo trophies for '58. Chicago (my father, Earl Kemp's fan group) and Detroit fan groups placed bids for the World Con next year, Detroit won.



Top: Len Moffatt, Ernie Wheatley, Rog Phillips, and Alan Creasley(?) Bottom: Bjo Welles, Ted Johnstone, Anna Moffatt, George W Fields, Stan Woolston, and Rick Sneary. Photographed at Stan Woolston's house in Garden Grove, CA in 1957.

During this event Len didn't know that Rog apparently had a heart condition, yet was running up and down from the second floor rounding up celebrities, under Len's direction, to show up at various functions.

"I don't recall Rog doing speaker introductions at the SoLaCon, but he sure as hell ran his legs off getting speakers to their panels on time."

Rog was always a robust looking man, constantly demonstrating wrestling holds to the amusement of fans. Pugnacious in word and deed, he looked like he had been in several

fighters, probably stemming from his early years as a longshoreman in Oregon. All the running around that he did during the Westercon later caused problems aggravating his existing heart condition.



Top: Len Moffatt, Stan Woolston,
Rick Sneary, and Rog Phillips.
Bottom: Anna Moffatt and Honey
Graham.

Len remembers that Rog was a prolific writer. Rog started his writing career by telling Ray Palmer at *Amazing Stories* that he could write better stories than the ones being published by them at the time. Palmer challenged him to do so. Rog succeeded and continued to be a mainstay writer for that organization even after moving to Los Angeles.

Rog told Len that while he was working for Palmer at *Amazing Stories*, Palmer would often call and say “I need 5,000 words right away to fill out an issue before press time.” Rog told Len that he would get the plot by taking long drives around LA which wasn’t as congested during that decade and driving was a pleasant form of recreation. Rog would pound out the stories within the word limitation, wrapping up the loose ends by the approaching deadline, after all there was no time for a re-write, but he was making a living.

Around 1951, about the time of the LASFS third Fanquet, Len married his first wife, Anna Sinclair. They both later became a part of the South Gate in '58 Planning Committee.

“The LASFS banquets were given to honor the new s-f writer who had sold the most words the previous year,” Len tells the story of the events leading to the 1958 convention. “Dave Lesperance and I tied for first place in 1950 and were so honored at the third Fanquet in 1951. It also turned out to be the wedding dinner for Anna, my first wife, and me. Anna would take Mari’s ‘place’ as Chair of SoLaCon, but that would come later when we got closer to the 1958 date and realized that most fans expected us to bid for the 1958 WorldCon.

“We wanted Rick to chair it, but he said he was more qualified to be a treasurer, and besides we should stick with our idea of having a female chair. Freddie Hershey was no longer around. She and Alan had divorced and she married Hal Curtis and eventually wound up in Hawaii. Alan married Mary Gibson, a wonderful Scot lass, and they had a large family and little time for fan stuff.

“Dottie ‘Grandma the Demon’ Faulkner was one of our livelier members, despite her chronological age, but she had no desire to chair a convention, smart lady that she was.

“So Anna, who had no convention experience, agreed to be chair with help from Rick and me. Besides helping with the chair duties, I was both the recording and the corresponding

secretary. Anna didn't type but I had enough business (as well as writing) experience to handle the jobs.

"Hindsight would tell me that Anna caught me on the 'rebound' from Mari. Our marriage worked for a while but was doomed to ultimate failure. I divorced her and resolved to be a bachelor for a while, if not forever. That was in 1964."

"I rented an apartment and invited friends over to a party to celebrate the divorce. Ed and Jessie Clinton were among the good old friends invited. They informed me that June was recently divorced and suggested that I invite her. Why not? I had met her at LASFS in 1947 and had seen her at various fan functions over the years (including SoLaCon) and she even wrote notes and some verse for my review zine, *Science Fiction Parade*. She had been active in LASFS and attended WesterCons but she was stuck at home with the kids while her first husband attended meetings."



Roger and Honey Graham with Ray Nelson in 1963.

According to Rich Brown, and his recollections of the World Science Fiction Society, "Eph and June Koningsberg were divorced partly because Eph did not permit his wife to participate in any fan activities. Len and June were married some years, I think, after that, with Len becoming an indulgent stepfather to June's three almost-adult children. The uniform attitude in LArea fandom seems to have been one of sympathy for all involved...with the possible exception of Eph, who hasn't been active in local or general fandom since at least 1960."

"We didn't need to be re-introduced as we had been good friends for years," Len continues with his autobiography. "We clicked so well the night of my 'apartment warming' that Redd Boggs (who had not met June before that night) assumed we had been going steady for some time.

"We did go steady for two years. I was wary of getting too serious but we worked so well together on writing and publishing that we found we had many other common interests."

Len finally asked June to marry him after returning from the TriCon in Cleveland in the fall of 1966. They were married on December 10, 1966, and will soon be happily celebrating their 40th wedding anniversary this year.

Len and June remain active in fandom as self-confessed Fake Fans.

"If we said we were Fake Fans, it was a joke," Len sums up his life, "we started out as

fanzine fans and we still are. We are both s-f and mystery fiction fans and also belong to a Sherlockian group.”



Left: June and Len Moffatt in 1965, and right: in 1995

#

Together, Len and June went on to amass an impressive list of honors and awards:

- 1972 WesterCon Fan Guest of Honor (Len)
- 1973 TAFF Winners
- 1976 BoucherCon Chair
- 1981 LOSCON Fan Guests of Honor
- 1985 BoucherCon Fan Guests of Honor
- 1991 BoucherCon Chair
- 1994 Evans-Freehafer Award
- 1999 Anthony Award
- 2004 The Forry Award

All photography in this article courtesy Len and June Moffatt Collection.

If I am going to spend eternity visiting this moment and that, I'm grateful that so many of those moments are nice.

-- Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse Five*

Neighbors

By Victor J. Banis



Victor Banis at the LA Paperback Show and Sale, Mission Hills, CA, March 2005.

She hated having to pretend, to fake something she didn't feel, but she knew how he was—he'd just go on and on and on, till she wanted to scream, really, and not from any orgasm, either. So far as she could say, he was utterly tireless. Sometime, maybe, she'd wait him out, see how long he really could keep it up. All night wouldn't surprise her. A month wouldn't surprise her, actually.

She began to grunt and to groan, softly at first, and as if it were his cue, he picked up his tempo, driving harder and faster now. Usually, she would drag it out a little, she knew it made him happy when it lasted, but tonight she was tired and her back ached from stocking shelves at the Seven Eleven. She thrashed her legs and moaned, louder, and tightened her grip on his shoulders, and, finally, stiffened her body like an ironing board.

It worked. It always did. She didn't know how he did it, holding himself at the ready the way he did, and then able to let go just like that. She thought there were probably a lot of men who would envy him. She knew he was proud of it. Probably, if you were a man, it was something to be proud of. Maybe there were women who would appreciate it more than she did. Her sister was proud of the way her dog would roll over or stand up on his hind legs when she told him to. It was just a matter of training, wasn't it?

Maybe you're just a bitch, she told herself, and did not have to fake a sigh of relief when he rolled himself off of her.

After a minute, he got up and went to the bathroom. He left the door open. He always did. Before they had fucked you, men closed the door. After, they always left it open. Why was that? She'd always wondered, and couldn't think who to ask. Once, she'd almost asked the minister, and had to stifle a giggle at the thought of his reaction. But, really, how were you supposed to find these things out? They sure didn't mention that in Ladies Home Journal.

She listened to him pee noisily, and couldn't help noticing that he didn't wash his hands before he came back to bed, slipping in beside her, bending down to give her a quick kiss.

"How was that?" he asked.

"It was great," she said, as enthusiastic as she could make it. Which wasn't very, but he never noticed. The question was rhetorical. He thought it was great. That was all that mattered. He lay back beside her and gave her thigh a pat.

“Have to keep my baby happy,” he said.

“You sure know how to do that, Ray,” she said. Once, she had made the mistake of telling him she hadn’t had an orgasm. Not like she was complaining, or anything, it was just, he asked, and she had said, no, but it was okay, it didn’t have to be every single time for a woman.

“It has to be for my woman,” he said, half pouting, and he went and got himself a beer, and drank it lying in bed, not saying anything, and then, just about the time she was drifting off to sleep, he rolled her on her back and climbed on, and started all over again.

That was the night she started faking it. A year and a half ago. Almost two years, actually. A long time without, she supposed. She didn’t miss it as much as you would think she would. Sometimes, but mostly not.

Once, she’d run across one of his girlie magazines. She found it stuffed in the back of his sock drawer. Curious, she’d looked through it, wondered how the women could do that, let their pictures be taken that way. She hated those times, luckily not often, when he decided he wanted to do it with the lights on.

“I like to see what I’m getting,” he said, but even he could not fail to notice that it made her uncomfortable, and he had given that up.

She had looked at the ads, though, some of them she wasn’t sure she even understood, but it was fairly easy to understand the vibrators. She’d looked long and hard at a full page ad of them, and wondered what it would be like, if she could give herself an orgasm with one of them—but he would never go along with that, and she couldn’t have one without his knowing about it. It was hard to keep secrets in a small trailer. Anyway—maybe if it didn’t look like something attached to a man. She’d had her fill of man things, thank you very much, and no pun intended.

“I saw the lezzie,” he said, startling her out of her thoughts.

“Amy?” she said without thinking.

“That her name?” He sounded surprised. “Say, you two ain’t getting all chummy, are you?”

“Just neighbors,” she said. “You know, she’s right next door, we see one another coming in and out, you have to say hi.”

“Maybe she’s comin’ on to you,” he said.

“Don’t be silly.” She knew Amy wasn’t. Knew, because Amy had told her that. She’d asked Linda if she wanted to come in for some coffee, and Linda had acted like some stupid schoolgirl, all flustered and blushing, and Amy had said, “Hey, don’t get excited, I wasn’t coming on to you. Just being a neighbor.”

“I’m just teasing you,” Ray said. He gave her thigh another pat. She held her breath, hoping this wasn’t going to be one of those nights. “Hell, no reason for you to want a woman, when you got a man to take care of you. Reckon I do that, all right.”

“That’s for sure,” she said into the darkness, thinking about that time Amy had asked her in, wishing—not for the first time—that she had gone. Not for that. Just for, well, she didn’t know what exactly, something. Something maybe a woman could get from another woman, something she thought certain was unknown and unknowable to a man.

“That’s probably all she needs, too,” he said. “Maybe I ought to stop over and see her some night.”

“Ray,” she said, like she was shocked. Frightened was more like it, though, frightened of the way Amy would look at her differently if he did something like that, of the difference it would make in the way she smiled at her, like she really wanted to be friends. Well, you couldn’t be after that, could you, after a man had brought man stuff into it.

“Maybe we ought to have her over here,” he said. “Let her have a taste of what you get regular, and then show her what I can do. Give her the old double whammy. What do you think?”

“I think you’re letting your imagination run away with you,” she said. She rolled on her side, turning her back to him. After a minute, he rolled on his side, too, away from her.

“Might be kind of fun, though,” he said, chuckling softly.

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She waited until he was asleep, snoring noisily. When she was sure he wouldn’t wake up, she got out of bed, found her bathrobe on the doorknob, and walked barefoot out to the kitchen. She left the lights out. Even with the door closed, the light still spilled into the bedroom, and anyway, the door squeaked and she might wake him up closing it.

She got herself a bottle of beer from the fridge, opening the door just enough to reach it out. She twisted off the cap and took a sip. It helped rinse the taste from her mouth that she didn’t know where it came from.

She went to stand by the sink and look out the window. Amy’s trailer was right there, not even eight feet away. Her blinds were only half closed. She could see Amy moving around inside, doing something, it looked like stretches of some sort. She had her music on, the same girl singer she mostly listened to, black, Linda thought, sweet and vinegary all at the same time. “Embrace me...”

Amy wore this oversized T-shirt, so big it was almost a dress. It was what she usually wore when she was home alone, Linda knew that from other nights, standing at the window,

watching, and when she bent over, you could catch just a glimpse of Jockeys—not panties, but Jockeys, like a man wore. Linda thought it was cute. She wondered what Ray would say if she tried wearing a pair. Probably he'd say she had turned lezzie on him. Or maybe it would turn him on. That thought discouraged her. Whatever that man needed, it wasn't anything to whet his sexual appetites.

Amy finished her stretches, walked to the kitchen area of her trailer, and did something at the sink. They were only a few feet apart, facing one another. If Linda's lights were on, they could wave, maybe open their windows and talk. Only, not with Ray there. He'd think it was sex. He thought everything was sex. What Linda wanted was something different, something she didn't have any words for, and she knew he wouldn't understand them if she found them. Amy would, though. Somehow, she felt sure of that. Which was silly. How could you know something like that about somebody you didn't even know? She thought it was true, though.

She supposed she oughtn't to complain, really. Compared to a lot of women, she had it pretty good. Carol Sue's husband knocked her around. Carol Sue denied it, but they all knew it was true, and Bobbie's man jumped on anything that stood still for more than forty seconds, and Sandra's spent all their money on Jack and smack, half the time Sandra and the kids didn't have enough to eat.

Ray wasn't like that. He worked hard at the garage, so hard he never could get all the grease and the grime out from under his fingernails or that smell out of his hair, like the freeway at rush hour on a hot day. He was a good man, really. Sometimes she wished she could hate him, she thought that might make things easier, but she couldn't. She hated herself for feeling so, so like she felt, which wasn't the way a woman ought to feel about her husband, that much at least she knew. They didn't have a lot, but the trailer was almost paid for and already he was talking about getting them a bigger one before too long, "a double wide, two bedrooms, get you a real kitchen for a change."

She wasn't exactly looking forward to that, though. She knew what "two bedrooms" meant. Time for kids. She knew he wanted them. Maybe she did too. She didn't know. Wasn't she already tied down enough, and the days running an hour or two shorter than they used to, working at the store, and doing everything around the house, washing and ironing and cleaning and cooking and the dishes, like a multiple purpose appliance, you screwed it on the bed and it took care of all the chores. Where was she going to fit a kid into that? For sure he wasn't going to give up what he wanted, which was the Nascar races on TV or a Dodgers game, or the NBA playoffs, and supper waiting for him when he got home, her waiting for him when he got into bed. Mac and cheese hot, legs open. She didn't even have time to be tired.

In the trailer across the way, Amy lifted her hands and peeled the T-shirt over her head. She wasn't wearing a bra. Her breasts were small and firm looking, half turned away from one another like they weren't speaking. Linda found herself staring at them, unconscious of it until they were gone and Amy bent down, doing something at the sink.

She came back up again, her hair wet, reached for a towel and wrapped it around her head. For a moment, she looked straight ahead, through the window, as if she were staring at Linda. She couldn't be, of course. Linda's kitchen was dark, there wasn't enough light to show her standing here at her own sink. Still, it gave Linda a funny, tingly kind of feeling, standing there staring at Amy's bare breasts, and Amy staring right back at her.

The toilet flushed. She realized Ray had gotten up to go to the bathroom. How long had she been standing here, anyway? A while, must have been. Her beer wasn't even cold any more.

"Where'd you go to?" he called from the bedroom.

She hurried toward him, not wanting him to come out here, to see Amy like this. She wanted to keep that image fresh in her mind, unspoiled by what he would have to say about it.

"What were you doing out there in the dark?" he asked as she got into bed.

"Just standing, thinking," she said. "I got to move the stock tomorrow, the old man wants everything changed around. He wants a lot from me, for what he pays."

"I got a good mind what that old fart wants," Ray said, and after a moment, "He hasn't tried puttin' the moves to you, has he?"

"Wilbur? Lord, he'd have a stroke if I showed him a tittie," she said. Now, where had that come from?

He laughed, and rolled onto his side again. "I expect you're right," he said.

She lay on her back, staring up at the ceiling, thinking about Amy next door. About that time Amy had asked her in. About what Amy would say if she just showed up at her door one day, came right up the cinder path and knocked on the screen door, one afternoon while Ray was at work. Said, "I was hoping we could have a cup of coffee, if you're not too busy."

Just to be neighborly.

Peculiar travel suggestions are dancing lessons from God.
-- Kurt Vonnegut

Fritz Leiber and Eyes*

By Justin Leiber

I was first struck by the influence of Fritz' writing on himself in the summer of 1968. My wife Leslie and I were living in Buffalo. I hadn't seen my father in a couple of years. Fritz was driving in from Los Angeles to do a science fiction workshop at Clarion College in nearby Pennsylvania. We were to see him at Clarion and then he was to visit us in Buffalo. I had just finished reading Fritz' *A Specter Is Haunting Texas*, then serialized in *Galaxy Magazine*.

The specter in question is a tall and very thin native of the satellite communities who most wear a support exoskeleton to visit a Texas which some two hundred years hence has annexed much of North America. Scully, an actor by profession, becomes a useful symbolic figure in the bent-back revolution against the ruling class of Texans, who use hormones to reach Scully's eight-foot height without mechanical support.



Fritz and Justin Leiber. Photo by Andrew Porter, n.d.

Science fiction is replete with stories in which the protagonist and a small band of conspirators try to free "the people" from an evil dictatorship. Such stories reveal and reinforce a belief that is common among SF readers: that the character of society is determined by a technocratic elite. "Revolution" in this view happens when a good elite, with fresh intelligence and technology, takes over the dumb masses from the bad elite.

Scully, to the contrary, is just a co-opted speechmaker, a spectral mascot. Scully, artist-actor like Fritz, does not change the world—he reflects it darkly. (*The Communist Manifesto* begins "A specter is haunting Europe, the specter of Communism ..." I asked Fritz whether anyone in SF had noticed the source of his title. He said no.)

When I saw Fritz that summer of 1968 he was sporting all of 140 pounds on his six-foot-five frame—a mighty gaunt reduction from the accustomed 200 or so pounds. He was Scully, or so it seemed to me. He had the somewhat silly giddiness of Scully. And he was putting on a crazy dramatic act (at Clarion anyhow). I still have a clear vision of this cadaverous scarecrow capering about and teaching fencing at a drunken backyard party at Clarion. You have to remember that this was the height of the Vietnamese War; LBJ had just withdrawn from running for a second term, which relieved the worries of *Galaxy's* lawyers (*Specter* begins "Ever since Lyndon ousted Jack in the Early Atomic Age, the term of a President of Texas has been from inauguration to assassination. Murder is merely the continuation of politics by other means.").

You might get a little of the style of the apparition of Clarion, “Scully” Leiber, if you see Fritz striding through that strange film *Equinox*. *Equinox* was first shot with Fritz and four quite amateurish actors. No sound. Later a pro villain, Asmodeus, and sound were added for commercial distribution. Fritz wasn’t around at the time to dub. Hence, though you see a lot of him in the film, he says nothing. He just runs endlessly through the underbrush clutching a magic book. (A much younger, handsome and inexpressive Fritz appears in conversation with Robert Taylor for a second in the Garbo movie *Camille*.)

The same “Scully” version of Fritz turns up in the two other major-award-winning stories of that three-year period, *Ship of Shadows* and *Gonna Roll the Bones*. In *Ship of Shadows* (1969), the protagonist, an ancient and alcoholic floor sweeper of a space bar, shadow boxes his way to reality, sobriety, eyesight, *and teeth*. (When he visited me in New York City in spring 1970 Fritz gave a little talk on his false teeth which I can only describe as brilliant. To speak of such a subject with wit and insight, careful attention to precision and economy of expression, is characteristic of Fritz. Though he never lost his conversational gifts his basic diet at that time appeared to be several vitamins and a quart of hard liquor a day.)

In *Gonna Roll the Bones* (1968), one finds recognizable—if myth-proportioned—visions of Fritz, his wife Jonquil, mother Virginia, and the Cat (that is, my father, mother, grandmother, and Gummitch [see “Space Time for Springers” for more on the last]). The protagonist, Joe Slattermill, the Quixote of the crap tables of all times and climes from Vicksburg to Vega, saunters out to shoot dice and comes up against death himself. Fritz drove back to LA. from Buffalo that summer of 1968 in a Datsun that Jonquil had named “Dunkirk,” in honor of the little boats of that desperate evacuation of the British Army from France in the summer of 1940. Fritz stopped in Vegas. According to one tradition, he had to cash in his spare tire for gas for the last leg into LA. (See “Night Passage” for a joyful evocation of sexuality and long night drives in the desert after the gambling casinos).

“Nature imitates Art” as Oscar Wilde put it. Like Joe Slattermill, Fritz won in losing. *Gonna Roll the Bones* ends “He turned and headed straight for home, but he took the long way, around the world.”

In “Waif” (1974) and related stories Fritz does some analysis on his sexuality. Indeed Fritz has written—looking back several decades—about the sexuality submerged in some of his earliest works.

In “Adept’s Gambit” (1947 publication, though written years before), we find that grand sword and sorcery pair Fafhrd and Gray Mouser in the ancient Tyre of this world, rather than their now customary world of Nehwon with its adventure, vermin, and vice-infested Lankhmar—that classical medieval port, the one full realization of a city of which we find hints throughout the literature of sword and sorcery. At the center of “Adept’s Gambit” is a reclusive, evil young man who experiences the world voyeuristically by sending his sister out under his mental control. Fritz has remarked that he would not have realized at the

time he wrote it how much the story suggested about his own sexuality. Fritz, an only child, spent much of his childhood with staid and ancient relatives while his impossibly romantic father and mother toured with his father's Shakespearean repertoire company. He secretly burned the sheets of his first wet dream. It would seem wholly natural that his first literary mentor was H.P. Lovecraft and that his first stories were supernatural horror, part of the attempt to revive that quintessentially Victorian sensibility, decadent romanticism, in which the reek of sexuality pervades a landscape of alabaster corpses, little girls in white, unspeakable cellars choked with leprous toadstools, all "splashed with a splendid sickness, the sickness of the pearl" (G.K. Chesterton).

What is extraordinary about Fritz is that he has explored the genre and himself with clarity and determination. In a way, *A Specter is Haunting Texas* is the supernatural horror story turned inside out: with the specter as point-of-view we get a picaresque farce, Scully is an explicitly sexual specter, brimming with life and fun, revolution and ribaldry. And, above all, Scully is a professional actor (as his father) from Circumluna. When he comes to Earth for his brief weeks as a specter, the Shakespearean figure is literally true for him: "all the world's a stage. "

In "237 Talking Statues" (1963), Fritz makes a kind of amusing peace with his literal father, Fritz Leiber, Sr., or "Guv" as we called him. Guv was a major Shakespearean actor in the 1910s and 1920s. Fritz, under the name "Francis Lathrop," appeared in Guv's repertoire company in its last tour (1934). The Depression meant the end of such companies. Guv's had survived as long as it did because it had a two-year contract with the Chicago Civic Theatre. Fritz now thinks that Guv knew the last tour couldn't succeed but it would mean that father and son would tour together at least once and it would provide Hollywood exposure. The final tour seemed planned so that there would be a good run in Los Angeles before the financial collapse. In any case, Guv went on to do character roles in the movies and settled into a house in Pacific Palisades. Guv peopled the Pacific Palisades house with statues and paintings of himself and Virginia (Fritz' mother), usually in Shakespearean roles; others were represented in less profusion—a statue of me at age four was the major figure in a modest backyard fountain; Fritz has a head Guv did of him over the hall of his present-day San Francisco apartment. Guv also liked to paint young women in bathing suits, working from his photographs. The Guv's artwork was what you might expect of a man who had also put together a fine darkroom and shop, meticulously maintained and stocked with a very large number of tools, cabinets, and devices that he had made for himself. The kitchen, for example, was brightened by walls peopled with nursery-book characters that would gratify a professional Disney in their craftsmanship and unpretension.

In "237 Talking Statues" we find "Francis Legrande II," a mildly alcoholic midlife failure, making his peace with his dead "famous actor" father who, just like Guv, peopled his home with theatrical self-images. Francis talks to his father, who speaks out of one or another of his self-statues, particularly the part of Don Juan. Francis speaks of his jealousy and suspicion; his father arranges his own exorcism with affection and dispatch. Mother is persuaded to let one of the cluttering images go. The Don Juan statue is donated to the Merrivale Young Ladies Academy.

The Guv died in 1949. Fritz and Jonquil wound up their Chicago affairs in 1958 and moved to Los Angeles. For a few years they lived in the Pacific Palisades house with Virginia. Then they moved a couple of miles down the coast to Venice, a low-rent hippy-haven with remnants of the canal system that justified the name. Fritz moved north to San Francisco after Virginia's, and finally Jonquil's death in the end of the 1960s. Virginia herself appears, appropriately, as Fafhrd's implacable mother Mor in "The Snow Women" (1970). In some sense she also appears in that story as the eighteen-year-old Fafhrd's first (and last) respectably betrothed Mara. Single and double analogs of Jonquil also appear in the Fafhrd-Gray Mouser saga. But more on that subject later.

Fritz has continued the Guv's renaissance person tradition, though in a more literary and arcane, more theoretical and less manual, way.



Fritz Leiber, Sr. in 1940.

Naturally, he is an expert chess player. He won the Santa Monica Open shortly after moving from Chicago to LA. The *Chess Review* published his version of the *real* first meeting between Sherlock Holmes and Professor Moriarty, "The Moriarty Gambit" (1962). Scene, the first round of the brilliant (and quite real) Hastings International Tournament of 1888. Game, a winning double-rook sacrifice, the most impossibly gaudy of all the grand mating combinations in which the opponent's Queen is drawn away from the action by the forced "gift" of two rooks, so that the minor pieces may spring a mating net around the opponent's king. The game and players are not actually recorded in the official records of the

Hastings International because both Holmes and Moriarty withdrew from the tournament after the first round.

Fritz is an accomplished fencer. At the University of Chicago he studied psychology and philosophy; there was even a mercifully brief flirtation with religion at the General Theological Seminary in New York City. And he is a very knowledgeable student of magic, drugs, and psychic powers, though a wholly skeptical one.

He is also a great student (professor?) of cities. "Smoke Ghost" (1941) cunningly transforms the "blasted heath" of tradition into the lonely, smoke-ravaged rooftops of warehouses in downtown Chicago. In "Catch That Zeppelin" (1975), we tour Manhattan both in present day and in an alternative world. Fritz can show you what he has deduced to be Sam Spade's movements through the streets of San Francisco in the *Maltese Falcon* just as he has toured so many through the countless byways of mythic Lankhmar. Joanna Russ has her adventurer, Alyx the Picklock, remember having an affectionate brawl with Fafhrd in what must be Lankhmar's Silver Eel, and in Fritz' "The Best Two Thieves in Lankhmar" (1968) Alyx turns up, as an observer of Fafhrd's silliness, in the back of the

same tavern). Fritz' second novel in the "Change War" series is set in late Republican Rome—it has yet to be completed because it has, according to Fritz, become an excuse for reading ever more extensively about the Eternal City. In Fritz' recent novel, *Our Lady of Darkness* (1977), we even find "Thibaut de Castries" *Megapolisomancy: A New Science of Cities*.

It is characteristic that Fritz' visual art is minor key. I have a picture over my desk of San Francisco's skyline that Fritz did with his spatter-paint technique. When I was a kid "little books," cartoon stories of "Terrinks," "Molly," and "Pommer," appeared on birthdays. Fritz and his friend Harry Fisher (Fafhrd and Gray Mouser) made a Lankhmar game decades ago. The two were recently reunited as guests of honor at a fantasy game convention organized by TSR Games, which now markets a commercial version of Lankhmar.

By far the most valuable device in Fritz' present apartment is a good astronomical telescope. It gets systematic use. Indeed, Fritz' telescopic work helped him discover a tiny degeneration, now successfully laser-arrested, in one retina. Since you look through a telescope with only one eye, you can pick up such damage early. Fritz' first thought, after eliminating stellar phenomena, was that there was something amiss with the telescope; then he worked back to the eye. Outward vision is inward vision: "he headed straight for home, but he took the long way, around the world." This incident is the theme of this essay in a minor variation. Fritz found what was amiss in himself in his art.

Recently, Fritz showed me a short piece that recounts his examination of his cheap, functional, hour-minute, digital-display, electric clock. The prose is a model of clarity and concision: an exercise in observation, deduction, discovery, and more deduction, that is a miniature, a bit of Cellini goldwork, of disciplined thought and investigation. The final discovery that the clock has a 67-second minute and a correlative 53-second minute in each hour is reached through a series of observations and deductions that give us a sharp picture of what ought to happen when one thinks about the discontinuities between the physical features of machines and the rather different cognitive functions—such as giving the correct time—that we want them to exhibit

What makes this intellectual paradigm so interesting is that it maps a territory that is characteristic of the best of recent work in human cognitive psychology. Fritz read my article, "Extraterrestrial Translation" (*Galileo Seven*) and part of my *Structuralism* (G.K. Hall, 1978), in which I write as a professional philosopher about cognitive psychology, and then he handed me his piece about his electric clock. *Padre, padrone*: father, master. Perhaps it's comfort that Fritz mentioned that when he was taught to play chess, Guv decided that he wanted to learn too; Guv beat the kid. *Grand-padre, grand-padrone*.

Fritz was an editor of *Science Digest* from 1945 to 1957. Particularly during that period he produced scads of articles on scientific subjects. One standard family activity of the late 1940s, when I was about a nine-year-old, was the old collation march around the dining room table, assembling copies of *New Purposes*, a mimeo magazine that Fritz got out,

with a little help from his friends—and for his friends. Reflecting on that period in my own life, I am struck by the degree to which I was being shown the future. When Marshall McLuhan danced into the cultural gestalt in the middle sixties, I was able to yawn. McLuhan's first book, *The Mechanical Bride*, appeared at home shortly after its publication in 1951—it contained a substantial analysis of Fritz' "The Girl with the Hungry Eyes" (1949). *The Mechanical Bride* had the standard McLuhan scam: it fell "stillborn from the press" because the audience was out of phase. Doing hard puberty at the time, I was particularly taken with the lingerie ads that McLuhan analyzed.

Fritz is above all prodigal in the variety of literary forms he has employed—and invented. Poetry from sonnets through the varieties of more gaudy meters, ten-page letter correspondences in the pre-twentieth-century manner, short stories written to fit magazine covers, essays on social questions, short plays, songs and chants, parodies of Robert Heinlein and Mickey Spillane, historical and crime tales, a still to be completed book on the fantasy novel, and so on.

What is striking is the degree to which much of this is motivated by friendship and the challenge of yet another form. *Sonnets for Jonquil*, a blue-covered mimeoed publication, contains some of Jonquil's poetry and a note on her other writing, including a play that Fritz helped put on, plus some sonnets by Fritz about Jonquil.

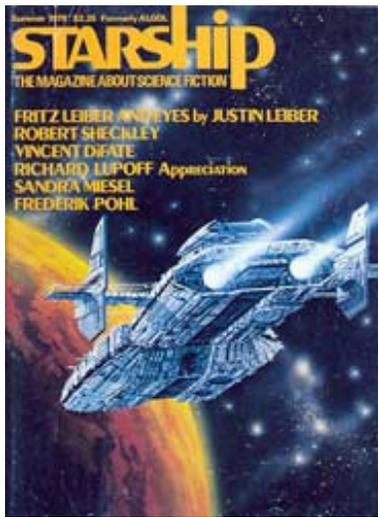
"The Lords of Quarmall" (1964) bears the note "In 1936 my comrade Harry Otto Fischer conceived, began, and abandoned the story 'The Lords of Quarmall.' Twenty-five years later I decided I was up to the pleasant task of solving the mysteries of the tale and completing it without changing his words at all, except to add details of the plot. Harry, in some ways a very patient person, laconically commented that he was glad to discover at last how his story ended." If you read that story, which appears in the fourth Fafhrd-Gray Mouser book, and distinguish Harry's passages from the story that Fritz wove round them, you will have a curious lesson in comradeship.

(Have I forgotten to mention the stories and novels that have won Fritz more Nebula and Hugo awards than any other writer? And the fact that in 1979 he will become the only writer except Heinlein and Bloch to have twice been the exclusive guest of honor for the World SF Convention? Ah, but that's the point. Though Fritz presents himself a free-lance writer by trade, with no high art pretensions, there is simply no one in SF with anything remotely like his prestige or talent who shows less of an interest in the big money or is more of a soft touch for fanzine editors who beg for a piece to give their magazines some class. Fritz simply likes to write a lot of different kinds of things and if half of them are ahead of their time or behind their time or so far out in left field that the people who have the right background to read it can be counted on your fingers—well, tough. "The Moriarty Gambit," for example, calls for a reader who likes to play out others' games from chess notation and who knows the Sherlock Holmes stories and is crazy about them.

But since Fritz is known for his award-winning SF writing, I want to say a little about one of his most original and form-forging works, *The Big Time*. *The Big Time* introduces the "Change War" world in which a vast war is conducted through space and time by

“Spiders” and “Snakes,” and by humans and extraterrestrials who have the rare quality of flexibility and alienation that allows them to be drawn away from their ordinary lives and into the big time, the world of all times and possibilities.

Many time travel stories suggest that one might travel to the Ice Age, mash a blade of grass, and change all history. But if you think about it, if time travel is possible, then all of time must exist at once in some sense—the past cannot have wholly disappeared if you can get to it, nor can the future be wholly unmade if you can go there and back. This raises the question as to how one can change the future or the past. This also raises the question: what is “the present”? If you can travel the big time continuum of space-time-history from ancient Egypt to the distant future, who is to say what slice is the present?



The cover for *Starship*, Summer 1979, featuring “Fritz Leiber and Eyes.” Cover artwork by Eddie Jones.

Strikingly, Fritz has an elegant answer to these questions: the “law of the conservation of reality.” The idea is to extend the conservation laws of physics once more, into the psychological, historical, and higher physical sciences. Two conservation laws were the hallmarks of 18th and 19th century science: 1) Mass (matter) is neither created nor destroyed, though it may change form from a liquid to a gas, enter into a chemical reaction, and so on; 2) Energy is neither created nor destroyed, though it can change from random heat to mechanical motion, sound, ranges in the electro-magnetic spectrum, and so on.

These conservation laws generalize cruder and more specific conservations and they have been generalized themselves in this century. We now have, as Einstein’s $E = MC^2$ suggests, the law of the conservation of mass energy: the total amount of mass energy is conserved, though you can transform, as stars do all the time, one into the other.

The law of the conservation of reality, like the other conservation laws, suggests that nothing is really lost, nothing spontaneously evaporates or appears: you can, with a great expenditure of reality through time-travel agents, transform something in the space-time-history continuum (replace Julius Caesar with a secret spider agent, throw a tactical A-bomb into the Peloponnesian War), *but the rest of the historical continuum will conserve reality*, it will change the absolute minimum needed to accommodate this intervention.

In another change war story, a big time recruit goes back to prevent his being shot in ordinary time, altering as little as possible so that no bullet hits him. Nature makes the proper hole in him with a meteor just as the bullet would, this mere improbability being the most conservative step nature can take in changing the continuum of history. Time travel in ordinary time violates reality: reality reshapes the pattern of events so that the violation fits right in with a new reality of ordinary time.

What has to be the “present” in the continuum of ordinary time? The “present” is simply

the slice of history that is most conserved, least changeable, and most influential.

Formally, *The Big Time* maintains the most strict unities of classical drama. *All* the story takes place within a few hours and in one large room, a rest and recreation station outside of time. The cast—the Place is obviously a theater and the action dramatic—of entertainers and agents come from choice points in history, or slightly altered, “Change War torn” history. This provides the challenge of displaying very different accents and ways of thought together. The Place is like a ghostly theater in which characters from different plays meet. Take Karysia Labrys, originally of the ancient Crete of the Triple-Goddess, who gives the following description of the battle she has just returned from with a Lunan and a satyr:

Woe to Spider! Woe to Cretan! Heavy is the news I bring you. Bear it bravely, like strong women. When we got the gun unlimbered, I heard seaweed fry and crackle. We three leaped behind the rock wall, saw our guns grow white as sunlight in a heat-ray of the Serpents! Natch, we feared we were outnumbered and I called upon my Caller....

But I didn't die there, kiddos. I still hoped to hurt the Greek ships, maybe with the Snake's own heat gun. So I quick tried to outflank them. My two comrades crawled beside me—they are males but they have courage. Soon we spied the ambush setters. They were Snakes and they were many, filthily disguised as Cretans. . .

They had seen us when we saw them, and they loosed a killing volley. Heat- and knife-rays struck about us in a storm of wind and fire, and the Lunan lost a feeler, fighting for Crete's Triple Goddess. So we dodged behind a sand hill, steered our flight back toward the water. It was awful, what we saw there; Crete's brave ships all sunk or sinking, blue sky sullied by their death-smoke. Once again the Greeks had licked us!—aided by the filthy Serpents. Round our wrecks, their black ships scurried, like black beetles, filth their diet, yet this day they dine on heroes. On the quiet sun-lit beach there, I could feel a Change Gale blowing, working changes deep inside me, aches and pains that were a stranger's. Half my memories were doubled, half my lifeline crooked and twisted, three new moles upon my sword hand. Goddess, Goddess, Triple Goddess... Triple Goddess, give me courage to tell all that happened.

Let's suppose you did recruit such a fighter and equipped her with ordinary English, rather than the stilted language that scholars will likely use when they translate a popular, pre-literate folk epic poem like the *Iliad*. If you didn't notice the rhythm in Kaby's chant, read it out loud. The passage is in the meter of our oldest and noblest poem: classical hexameters. But also note the fierce feminism of Kaby. Joanna Russ's Alyx is much like her, particularly in *Picnic on Paradise* (1968), and Russ's work is recognized, correctly, as the first real entry of feminism in SF. But Fritz thought up Kaby in 1958.

I could make similar points about the rest of the cast. The narrator entertainer, Greta Forzane of Depression Chicago, Prussian Erich von Hohenwald, WWI poet-soldier Bruce Marchant, riverboat gambler Beau, Doc of a Nazi-occupied Tzarist Russia, Sidney Lessingham of 16th century London, and so on. The plot and action form a tightly

structured roller coaster that leaves you breathless. But the Lunan Illilihis provides the final revelation, slid in so casually that I missed it until this last reading:

Feeling sad, Greta girl, because you'll never understand what's happening to us all, because you'll never be anything but a shadow fighting shadows.... Who are the real Spiders and Snakes, meaning who were the first possibility-binders? Who was Adam? Lilith? In binding all possibility, the Demons also bind the mental with the material. All fourth-order beings live inside and outside all minds, throughout the whole cosmos. Even this Place is, after its fashion, a giant brain: its floor is the brainpan, the boundary of the Void is the cortex of gray matter—yes even the Major and Minor Maintainers are analogues of the pineal and pituitary glands, which in some form sustain all nervous systems. (p.169)

The mind is the big time. For we find there a constructed reality, a panorama of space-time-history that flexes and readjusts as one reconstructs the past and repredicts the future, reintegrates the macrocosm and microcosm: at the same time, in the mind's big time, there is the continual play of possibilities, of alternate histories and worlds. The cast of the Place worry that the Snakes and Spiders may have messed so much with the fabric of historical reality that it may fission, smashing the conservation of reality as an atomic bomb explodes the conservation of matter. But that's what madness is, isn't it? The Ego can put it together no longer.

You will also notice a view of the mind that is as old as Plato and as new as Hermann Hesse's *Steppenwolf*: the mind is composed of many persons, forged in fear and love, from experience, history, and imagination, and when the mind acts or receives reports, it does so through one or another of these characters and must take account of that character's weaknesses.

In one of his brilliant philosophical puzzle pieces Jorge Borges has Shakespeare wonder that he has no "real me" inside but rather a vast cast, he is "everyone or no one." Borges' story concludes when God tells Shakespeare that he feels the same way. In another short-short, "Borges and I," Borges, comparing his inner sense of self with the construction that is reflected by the body of his writings, concludes that "I do not know which of us is writing this line." But all of this is simply *more* true of the writer than of most of us. Einstein once summarized what he thought was the philosopher Kant's great insight so: Reality is set us *as a Task*.

In his initial choice of supernatural horror and sword and sorcery genres, shy Fritz would seem to have found just what he needed to lose himself in. These are pulp, lowbrow genres—no pretension in that. They impose on those who write them a special, colorful, and gaudy vocabulary and style. They also impose a special sort of atmosphere, landscape, and arcane lore: excepting SF, they are alone among pulp forms in combining brawny, physical combat with the cut and thrust of intelligence and secret lore.

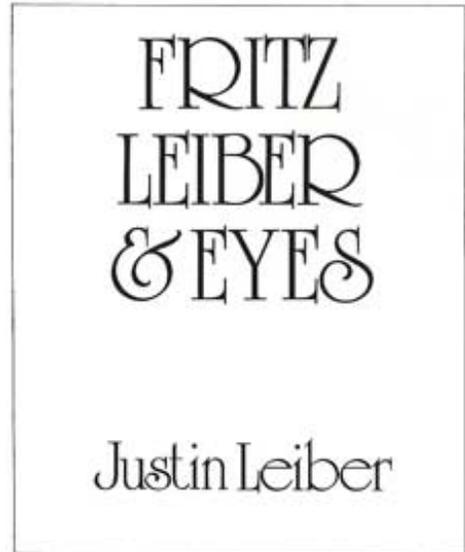
Finally, these forms dictate clever, gimmicky plot construction and rapid action; even the kind of emotional punch is much restricted. One can, and people do, write recipes for

these genres: from that it seems to follow that one reveals nothing about oneself in writing one except that one knows the recipe and can follow directions. Further, because these are both pulpish and minor genres, to write them reveals no pretensions to high art or fair fame. Rather, they generate a relatively small circle of initiates and playful semi-professionals—perhaps here Fritz found something of a replacement for “the company,” his father’s Shakespearean band.

Of course, Fritz undoubtedly got some simple pleasure from picturing the sword and sorcery world of Lankmar, from making a barbarian adventurer Fafhrd that had his height and none of his self-consciousness. But the artist, of course, has a craft and is trying to tell a story to someone else. Even if the artist starts with a simple, wish-fulfilling cast and dream, the artist is driven to make the dream more dazzling, compelling, and seductive. The wish fulfillment may be made more complete and less obvious to the reader: always the artist is forced to understand the magic, the machinery, with which the reader is bewitched. But the artist isn’t after self-therapy either, though that is a byproduct. That is the disanalogy with the telescope incident. When Fritz noticed something in the heavens that couldn’t be there, he checked the telescope, and finally worked back to the damage in his eye. Then, naturally, he got medical treatment. Now it is part of my thesis that Fritz started with escapist, and deliberately unpretentious, genres—Id demanded gross meals, and shyness (murderous Superego) insisted on concealment in pulp genre—but, as Fritz improved his art and grasp of form, his artistic daemon, reflecting on past work and planning new, simply forced him to realize various pathologies in himself, forced him into better self-understanding.

When the Id demands skillful pornography from the Ego’s endless spinning of wispy webs, it should watch out, for it may find by some sudden slight that it is not the king speaking to a humble player but the bull facing the matador.

Fritz soon grew unchallenged by the supernatural horror and sword and sorcery forms with which he began: once one gives oneself to art it may become discontent with simple tasks and low dreams. The first substantial works he made are rich in ideas and technologies, though retaining much of the atmosphere of the earlier tales. The unpretentious pose of professional pulp writer is maintained. The ideas and characters are there to wring the maximum punch from the dramatic, swift-moving action that clever plotting affords; style and narrative structure are unobtrusive. The protagonist is invariably an attractive and uncomplicated character with whom the reader may easily identify, both innocently awaiting the tricks that are in store. Though the protagonist often shares a couple of skills or experiences with the real Fritz—the writer has to know



This is the dramatic title for the article as it appeared in *Starship*, Summer 1979.

something about the settings he puts his characters into, surely—the protagonist is no confession of the real Fritz, nor is there any tricky interplay between protagonist and artist. All this begins to turn about in the later works. *You're All Alone*, *Gather, Darkness!*, and *Conjure Wife* of the 1940s are followed by *The Big Time*, *Specter* and *Our Lady of Darkness*.

In *You're All Alone* (1950), one of the narrowest and most dramatic expressions of paranoia that I have known is explored. The protagonist discovers that almost everyone in his present-day world operates like a Leibnizian “windowless” monad. They are all following a pre-arranged, automatic pattern that makes it look like they are interacting while in fact they are not—if you are one of the very few who can break out of pattern, no one will notice you, and indeed they all continue “interacting” with the empty space you are programmed to occupy exactly as if you were there. The “all” does not include a small number of evil breakouts who are exploiting the situation and hunting down everyone else who has broken out of the automatic interplay. Eerie effects come from manipulations of the automaton normals, from re-hiding in the automatic pattern.

It's a scary story, and should one stand back and think about it, suggests something about the writer (about a grim Chicago downtown business-and-bar world), but everything is done to lead the reader away from that issue, and the author has no place in the story. It's “you're all alone,” not “I'm all alone,” or even “we're all alone.”

On the other hand, in *The Big Time*, which employs the same notion of breakout for the few whom the Snakes and Spiders can recruit (they do not break out of themselves, however, and Illy eventually suggests that the recruiter is really the demon-daemon Art), we have not the simple paranoiac punch, but the gay, giddy, multileveled fabric of high art, of the “everybody and nobody,” in which the Place, dancing with drama and history, is of course also revealed as the mind of Fritz Leiber and his Art (like “I” and “Borges”).

Gather, Darkness! (1943) is one of the first (perhaps *the*) classical novel of a future, post WWII world dominated by an authoritarian, medieval-modeled church hierarchy whose inner circle employs a secret scientific technology to keep the superstitious public and lower priesthood under control. The action is dramatic and colorful, the technology cunning and charming, the plot stunningly well constructed. One idea that gives the work its classical balance is the logic of a revolution against such a hierarchy of white magic: the revolutionaries will play Satanists, a hierarchy of black magic which will dismay, frighten, or win over people who are adjusted to think in magical, not scientific, ways. (The French historian, Jules Michelet, saw medieval Satanism as the only available expression for the anti-feudal revolution—if the churchly hierarchy says that God wants all wealth and power to go to the temporal and religious lords, who is on the side of the poor peasants? Who is their spiritual resource?)

But, as I've suggested, when we get to *A Specter is Haunting Texas* (1968), we have a more multi-leveled, more comic and more realistic story of our post-WWIII future. Scully (Fritz, narrator, Death, Dark Art), actor from Circumluna, is dragged into the bentback revolution against hormone-hiked, conquering Texans, who identify with LBJ and (no

doubt) a certain war... And Scully knows that history is hardly ever a tale of technologically-inventive elites, coldly manipulating the credulous masses. You don't reason its craziness out, you sing it, chant it, farce it out. ("It is death to be a poet.")

In *Conjure Wife* (1943) we have what Damon Knight insisted was the "necessarily-definitive" tale of witchcraft. The protagonist, Norman Saylor, teaches anthropology at a good small college. One day he discovers that his wife Tansy is practicing witchcraft. She reluctantly admits that she thinks she is protecting them with various devices; still more reluctantly she is persuaded to give her superstitions up, to discard her protectors. Naturally, strange and increasingly harmful events begin to multiply: disaster looms around them, taking Tansy's soul eventually. Norman's intelligence eventually forces him to give up skepticism and, eventually, to use symbolic logic in an attempt to derive the "r-formula" that will return Tansy from hints and variations in magic books. Tansy was, of course, defending Norman from the witchcraft of the women faculty and faculty wives. (Catch the English version of the novel on the late show under the title *Burn, Witch, Burn.*)

It is true that Fritz had had a brief teaching post at Occidental College and that Jonquil then, as always, had a fascination with witchcraft and had read much about it. On the other hand, Fritz taught drama and stagecraft. And Norman is the familiar neutral protagonist of this period. His blockheadedness is no real confession of Fritz, and Fritz has never been converted to a belief in the supernatural. *Conjure Wife* is Fritz' first published novel and he did not return to the novel of magic until his latest *Our Lady of Darkness* (1977).

This latest novel plays upon a theme to which Borges has brought our attention, something that Thomas Pynchon's work typifies: the pollution of reality by dream—or dream by reality, for it is the trickery of mirrors and artistic representation. The protagonist of *Our Lady of Darkness* is a writer of horror stories, Franz Weston, who just happens to live at 811 Geary Street in San Francisco, and has a landlady and some friends who happen to have the same names and characters as Fritz Leiber of 811 Geary Street has happened to have. Similarly, the engine of horror derives from the activities of various people in the first decades of the century, some real, some part real, so cunningly intertwined that the reader cannot see the seams. And the final tip of the engine that most closely attacks Franz is just his "scholar's mistress," the pile of pulp novels and source books that share Franz' bed in that he lives in one room and often writes in bed.

Thibaut de Castries, decades-dead author of *Megapolisomancy: A New Science of Cities*, who is the possible ultimate source of this attack, says of another book of his that is originally aimed at (the real) Clark Ashton Smith, "Go out, my little book into the world, and lie in wait in stalls and lurk on shelves for the unwary purchaser. Go out, my little book, and break some necks!"

Fritz' art has developed; it becomes ever more willing to play and joke, to fool with words and themes, to inject comic gaiety into the midst of tragedy. (My favorite in the pure comic vein is "Mysterious Doings in the Metropolitan Museum" (1974), a tale of insect

political conventioning.)

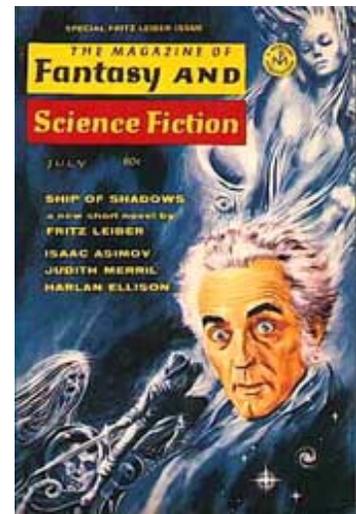
I have suggested that as Fritz' art developed he came to employ richer and more complicated forms, came to use himself and his artistic self-image in his art, came to play the mirror tricks of high art. But one might argue that this doesn't fit the Fafhrd-Gray Mouser stories with which Fritz began and which he has continued through his career. Surely, Fafhrd is a vision of Fritz himself, or so someone might object.

Well, I certainly have to admit that when I was a kid both my mother Jonquil and I called Fritz "Faf" or "Fafhrd" more than anything else. It is true that both Fafhrd and Fritz share impressive height and a taste for strong drink and songs. In 1934 Harry Fisher wrote Fritz a long letter in which he briefly mentioned a Gray Mouser who "walks with swagger 'mongst the bravos, though he's but the stature of a child," and a tall barbarian Fafhrd whose "wrist between gauntlet and mail was white as milk and thick as a hero's ankle."

But one is skeptical, particularly considering the shyness with which Fritz started and his admissions that he felt, initially, overawed by and prepared to learn from young Harry. After all, it's Harry that provided the initial description. Gray Mouser fits Harry's vision of himself as Loki-like trickster, skilled swordsman, wit and dabbler in dark lore, and footloose adventurer and gentleman thief, onliest companion of the "seven foot" barbarian Fafhrd.

Given just this pairing of city cat cunning and barbarian bear, and a certain humility coupled with a sense of story, it seems natural that Fritz' first Fafhrd-Gray Mouser stories should have been written from the Mouser's viewpoint; and that many of these stories have cunning and feline Mouser save the honest, unsophisticated barbarian giant from the sort of bewitchment or other exotic danger that that blockhead would walk into. You can't have the tall barbarian saving the tiny Mouser, for there is no balance of amusing inversion in that. Fafhrd is the natural straight man, the butt of the jest.

And since sword and sorcery adventures are not read by swordsmen and rarely by confident, brawny brawlers, rather attracting bookish and brainy types who just fancy physical adventure, it is natural that the audience is attracted to Gray Mouser and his slipper victories over the big brawlers. (It belongs to the high comedy of art and life that when Fritz and Harry surfaced publicly as Fafhrd and Gray Mouser at the TSR game convention recently Fritz should have felt uneasy until he realized that, as Gray Mouser, Harry was attracting more attention and dominating matters, with Fritz suffering the problem of being Fafhrd rather than the author of the whole world. This is a second minor variation of the theme, a complement to the telescope story.)



Cover of the special Fritz Leiber issue of the *Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, July 1969. Artwork by EMSH. Scan courtesy Jacques Hamon Collection www.noosfere.com/showcase/

So I am inclined to think that Fritz wasn't Fafhrd from the beginning. Though Fafhrd eventually becomes more Fritz-like. Certainly, there are some revealing and confessional changes as the saga develops.

The first tales are quest stories in which the twain are lured into some doomful quest, drawn and nearly overwhelmed by some distant and lonely horror. The atmosphere strives for a relatively uniform feeling of somber eeriness mounting to arcane and chilling climax. As the latter stories appear, Fritz has a much surer and broader sense of language and plot. Comedy and gaiety invade the saga, romance and drunken silliness appear, and grand Lankhmar becomes central with its motley of religions, beggars and thieves guilds, necromancers and decadent aristocrats, gates and streets, mysterious houses and musty passages, shops and taverns, gods and humanlike animals.

My favorite is "Lean Times in Lankhmar," in which the penniless and disaffected twain separate, Mouser hiring himself out to a protection racket enforcer covering the religions that move up the Street of the Gods as they attract a following and down as they lose it, and Fafhrd becoming an acolyte of Issek of the Jug, swearing off booze and swords. The confrontation that must occur as Issek of the Jug moves up to the successful part of the street is managed with such astonishing deftness, twist upon twist, that one finds oneself laughing "too much, too much," only to have yet another carefully prepared rabbit pop out of the hat, and yet another after that. The story plays effortlessly with the inversions of high art.

Fritz (and reality) seep into the saga world. Fritz has some fairly somber morals to point out about hard drinking that point much more to Fritz than to the Fafhrd of the very first stories. And, as I remarked some pages back, various family figures appear.

In the most recent novel *Rime Isle* (1977), the second half of the sixth volume, *Swords and Ice Magic*, a considerable further step is taken. Fafhrd and Mouser are hired by two woman councilors of Rime Isle, an atheistic and practical fishing community which is thereby somewhat estranged from the Lankhmar world and on the rim to others. Fafhrd arrives with a ship and small band of well-trained berserkers, and Mouser with a crew of Mingols and a band of disciplined Lankhmar thieves.

The story really began some time before when very faint versions of Loki and Odin appeared from another world and were gradually nurtured into somewhat more palpable existence by the councilors Afreyt and Cif, the gods Loki and Odin insisting that Rime Isle is threatened by hordes of Mingols, inspired by another deity.

Gradually, as defenses are prepared, it becomes clear that tricky Loki really intends a sea disaster in which all sides are destroyed and, even more clearly, Odin wants to see as many participants as possible killed in a land battle, with the remainder hanged.

Young Fritz found the Bulfinch picture of the Norse gods attractive, particularly of the mysterious and wise Odin. More recent research has made it clear that Odin was the center of a death cult. Here on Rime Isle Odin insists that his followers wear hangman

nooses and carry a gallows into battle. Fafhrd, apparently less affected by Odin's wiles, refuses to wear his noose around his neck but places it around his left wrist as a concession.

At the last moment both Mouser, who is directing the sea forces, and Fafhrd, on land, throw off the bewitchments of trickery and death. Neither their own men and the Rime Islers, nor their similarly inspired opponents, are drawn into the grand doom that the gods intend. All part somewhat dazed, except that the noose around Fafhrd's hand draws tight and that famous bravo, now responsible protector of a practical and atheistic community, has no left hand.

To my natural query, "Conan Doyle unsuccessfully killed off Sherlock Holmes but at least he didn't maim him," Fritz rather tersely replied that it just seemed to him that no one was really getting hurt in the story. Ah yes, old trickster, but what does Prospero say on that island when he adjures his powerful magic, remembering that he is traditionally regarded as Shakespeare's mouthpiece?—"I'll break my staff, bury it certain fathoms in the earth, and deeper than did ever plummet sound I'll drown my book."

Through history, the left hand has been the symbol of trickiness and death: we now know it as the hand of the right brain which may be full of visions but has not the words and reason of the left brain which controls the right (the writing) hand. That last point may even suggest that nature has a taste for the inversions of high art. Who knows what tales tell us?

Fritz Leiber assumes humility in writing or speaking of his own art. He will say that all he has ever wanted to do is tell a good story. His works, Borges-Shakespeare style, conceal and jest with their structures. How am I to reply?

In the "Moriarty Gambit" Fritz makes a solid point in distinguishing the real Sherlock Holmes from the "thinking machine" carefully analyzed by Watson in that first great novel *A Study In Scarlet*. Watson, wondering what his newly acquired roommate's profession is, lists what kinds of knowledge Holmes possesses. Watson's list, though Watson does not draw this inference, suggests that Holmes has systematically stocked his mind with what a detective might need, and, just as systematically, has not stocked it with irrelevant information (Watson is shocked that Holmes does not know that the earth orbits the sun).

Fritz points out that as one reads the stories it becomes clear that Holmes knows almost everything there is to be known. That he should play expert chess, though Conan Doyle fails to mention it, is thus natural. Well-made characters have an integrity that gives them dimensions outside what their written stories tell us, and certainly outside or even against what their authors explicitly state about them.

A professional writer writes about vocations, undertakings, locales that are familiar. If you know how hospitals work by all means set a story there. Dashiell Hammett had been a detective. Yet what is more familiar to a writer than writing, than himself?

In the punning play, paradox, and self-swallowing of high art there is important truth. But why not blunt truth? Or complicated truth straightforwardly presented? Bertrand Russell said that a philosopher-logician should be ever on the lookout for paradoxes, for they will be the best source for getting at the hidden structure of our language and thought.

One can say all this neurobiologically—art above all recreates and educates our cognitive abilities, sharpens ear and eye, tuning understanding and sensitivity. It serves something like the function of play among cats. Language is the human mind's oldest technology and most basic and extraordinary cognitive capacity. The kind of art that most sensitizes us to language—that is, to logic and meter, to writing and artistic form, to the interplay between language and reality—is the art that appeals to our oldest and most powerful and most central faculty, housed in our distinctively human left brain. It is a blend of artifact and neurology that has made us different from the other mammals.

Fritz combines an awesome and precise command of language with a joyous willingness to measure it against every sort of verbal challenge. Fritz' tendency to distinguish the smallest literary favor with precision and imagination is par with his tendency to treat even the most fetid and undistinguished humans with a respectful and friendly manner.

One fundamental thesis I offer about Fritz Leiber is simple and compelling. The most concrete and revealing components of this phenomenon are a couple of bookshelves of written work and a man who now lives at 565 Geary Street in San Francisco, who of course is continuing the sorts of symbolic interactions that lead to more books on the shelf. The thesis I offer about Fritz Leiber is simple, because it so compactly explains the development of Fritz' life and work in a way that holds up as a simple commonsense account, but also in a striking way at other levels.

The tale is that of an extremely intelligent and talented young man, doubtless with a taste for dramatics without self-revelation, for a language and life wholly outside his century that Shakespeare amply provided. At the same time he was cripplingly shy, horribly self-conscious, with a sense of guilt and failure, a sense of being out-of-joint with self and world that bred dreams and fantasies. If strong enough, a sense that can result in madness, like a space-time-historical continuum so pressed by Snake and Spider activity that it can tell no tale of itself and must fission, when art and science cannot flex enough, having neither the intellectual creativity nor the courage to hold the reality together.

I must tell you that the damage that was written into Fritz' genes or, more likely, mad and murderous psychological effects of childhood are as real as vital statistics. Very clinically, this is someone who has had insomnia, a most reliable indication of psychological trouble, throughout his entire life; who has ministered to himself with alcohol and barbiturates in a way that slides into equating making oneself happy and putting oneself to sleep, between making oneself completely unconscious of the external environment/making oneself more sensitive and more responsive to it. The story is one of agile intelligence, of ego and art, fighting a long-term battle with self-destruction bred in the genes or the crazy chemistry of childhood.

The thesis is compelling because it derives from the works, makes sense of what Fritz has given his life to, and so makes sense of the giver.

This portrait sees Fritz as he is today and his work in that perspective. True. But we read books that way too. The end casts full illumination through the means, the earliest scene. Not that the big book of Fritz Leiber is complete. Fritz has more, much more, work in him. He still exhausts twenty-year-old fans by walking them around San Francisco. There is much brewing, stories capering seductively or raucously around his bed. Go, little stories, and fling his fingers on the typewriter keys. Fritz is an artist like the wild old Gully Jimson that Alec Guinness plays in *The Horse's Mouth*, whose houseboat runs the Thames tide into the Atlantic and transfiguration, while Gully measures gigantic ocean liners as potential canvases.

Go little stories, and change street numbers so the fans can't find him; fox the postal machines so his mail goes to Auckland, New Zealand, and viper the wires so that incoming calls move by spidery indirection from initial dialing to total confusion. Shake hailstones down large as spearmint blossoms if he dawdles in the streets or runs unnecessary errands. Sprinkle dust of Yeats and Poe, and toenail clippings of Robert Graves and Ingmar Bergman, in protective circles round his rooms. Go, little stories, and pull some strings. Fritz Leiber is for the stars.

*Reprinted, in a somewhat revised form, from *Starship*, Summer 1979 with the permission of Justin Leiber. A much longer version appears in *Philosophers Look at Science Fiction*, Nelson-Hall, 1982. Special thanks to Andrew Porter for making the original abridgement, and for the photo of Fritz and Justin. Special thanks to Robert Lichtman for supplying the text and scans of the *Starship* version.

Writers get to treat their mental illnesses every day.
-- Kurt Vonnegut
