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SPECULATIONS

For Writers Who Want To Be Read

ISSUE 22



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How To Break Up A Writers' Group Alice Fiish.....	1
<i>Serve decaf, but tell them it's real.</i>	
Ask Bwana Mike Resnick	3
<i>Positively the last word on that copyright thing.</i>	
Meet the Editor: Toni Weisskopf Kurt Roth	9
<i>"I've never been a fan of big, hairy novels."</i>	
Die, Cliché, Die! Amy Sterling Casil.....	14
<i>Cleansing your fiction of scrofular prose.</i>	
Street Smarts For Writers: Pros and Cons Bridget McKenna.....	18
<i>A guide to professional schmoozing.</i>	
The Market Maven Cynthia Ward.....	22
<i>Ellen Datlow's new venture, Event Horizon.</i>	
Market Reports and Response Times Randy Dannenfels.....	31
<i>Prozines, semiprozines, e-zines, anthologies, and major book publishers.</i>	
Staying Alive: Writers Loving Non-Writers Bruce Holland Rogers.....	40
<i>The Poisonous Problem, Ordinary Problems, and the Itchy Problem.</i>	
"Mommy, Can I Eat This Alien Bug?" Wolf Read	44
<i>Break out the Roloids before reading this essay on alien biology.</i>	
Alien Languages 101 Dr. Lawrence M. Schoen.....	51
<i>See Klaatu run. Run, Klaatu, run!</i>	
Trusting Your Instincts Geoffrey A. Landis.....	56
<i>Outlines, character sketches, and surprises from the subconscious.</i>	
Nuts and Bolts Kent Brewster.....	58
<i>Politics, our 1,000th subscriber, and Good News From The Ego Shelf.</i>	

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How To Break Up A Writers' Group

Alice Fiish

Talk about writing but never actually write.

Cause the group to meet at your convenience. Be unable to attend at the regular time, insist on having the meeting changed, and then don't show up.

Critique brutally. If they can't stand the heat, they should get out of the kitchen.

Never turn in your best material. Make sure everyone knows it.

If you sell a story, quickly submit it to your group. Sit through your critique with a smug look on your face, and then announce to everyone that their opinions are worthless, since Gordon just bought it.

Discover what your fellow writers don't like to read, and write it relentlessly.

Attack the writer, never the work. If you absolutely must say something about the story, only talk about it in context of the writer's past output. "This is typical for you." "When are you going to grow out of this?"

Lose other people's manuscripts.

Argue. Right then and there, during your critique. They obviously don't understand what you are saying. Your mission: set them straight!

Misspell and mispronounce group members' names.

Pick a scapegoat, someone whose skills, experience, politics, or creative output just isn't up to your standards. Disagree with everything this person says and hammer his fiction extra-hard, but keep him in the group at all costs. Every joke needs a butt.

Snipe.

Require transportation to and from each meeting.

Instead of honest critique, say "I liked it," "It was really good," or just agree with someone else who's already spoken. This has the added advantage of making the actual reading of other people's material unnecessary.

Bully.

Never host a meeting. If it's absolutely necessary, make sure your kids are awake, the air conditioner's broken, and the refrigerator's empty. Serve decaf and tell everyone it's real.

Never bring food. Then complain bitterly when other members bring unsalted fat-free tortilla chips and extra-hot salsa.

Never read a story until the last possible second. Scrawl your comments in pencil. Lightly. And then rub the pages together.

Show up late. Or, worse, early.

Miss meetings where your stories aren't being critiqued.

Be the natural leader of the group. Contrive to prevent anyone with more professional credits than you from joining.

Drop names.

Write the same story over and over. Important: this is not a rewrite but the same story, plot, and hero every time.

Give bad directions.

Everyone's a member of an oppressed minority. Write about your experiences, and don't listen to any critique supplied by anyone who's not also a member of your particular group.

If the joke's on you, it's not funny.

Talk endlessly about how tough Clarion was, and how nobody who hasn't been through it could possibly understand.

Don't listen to critique. Your willingness to make changes should be inversely proportional to the number of people in the group who agree that those changes should be made.

Start rumors.

Don't answer your e-mail or return phone calls.

Cultivate a knowing smirk, an evil eye, a look of profound disgust, and an expression of detached amusement. Work extra-hard on that last one.

Never hand a manuscript back with a paper clip or without a coffee stain.

Never let anyone else have the last word.

Pick fights.

Sense when the group is about to implode. Catch everyone else at a low creative ebb, announce that they're just not up to your level any longer, and bail out, leaving destruction and hurt feelings in your wake.

Act surprised when the group breaks up two weeks later.

Start another writers' group. You know the drill: lather, rinse, repeat.

Next time: How To Break Up A Professional Writers' Organization.



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Duelling Quotes

“To write quickly and to write well are usually incompatible attributes, and if you must choose one over the other, you should choose quality over speed every time.”

-Isaac Asimov

“The idea is to get the pencil moving quickly.”

-Bernard Malamud

Ask Bwana

Mike Resnick

Lately, because I've optioned so many properties to Hollywood and Carol and I have sold some screenplays, I've been asked the following time and again by frustrated writers:

"I optioned my book to Producer A (or B, or C) or Studio X (or Y, or Z) a year or two ago. All they could talk about was how they were going to budget it at \$120 million, and they'd start shooting as soon as they could decide whether to hire Mel Gibson or Tom Cruise. So I waited, and I waited, and finally I started calling and writing to see what was holding things up, and no one writes or calls back. You're the expert; what the hell is going on, and why aren't they making my movie?"

Well, I'm certainly an expert on why they don't call back. The unhappy truth is they don't call back because they're not going to make your movie, now or ever.

Why?

Let's take a look at the economics. The average film today costs about \$45 million to make; the average science film may actually cost a little more. The blockbusters can go up to \$200 million (where you'll find megahits like *Titanic* and megamisses like *Godzilla*.)

Now, to break even, a film needs to make about three times its negative cost.

Still why?

Because first of all, the theaters don't show it for free. When you hear that *Batman #19* took in \$30 million last week, you don't think that all goes to Warner Brothers, do you? The theaters want a little something, too.

And then there's the ad budgets. We're not talking a quarter page in *Locus* here, folks. The *ad budget* for *Godzilla* was \$120 million...about \$5 million more than the actual cost of making the movie.

Okay, so your \$50 million film needs to make \$150 million to break even. How many films do that in a year? Six? Eight? Ten? (Well, not in America, but most will earn as much overseas as they do here, so a \$75 million domestic box office should just about get you out of the red a year from now, when the foreign money comes in.)

Now...how much does it cost to option a book? We're not talking a Tom Clancy or a Stephen King book, but just your average, run-of-the-mill category science fiction or mystery or Western or romance novel. The answer is that such books usually option for \$5,000 or \$10,000 annually, renewable either once or twice.

So you're a movie exec. You option 1,000 (yes, 1,000) novels at \$5,000 apiece. Some you option because you love. Some you option because they fit a certain star or director. Some you option because you don't want your competitors to option them. When the dust clears, what have you spent on those 1,000 books?

\$5 million dollars.

In Hollywood terms, that's lunch money.

And because you work in Hollywood, and you want to *keep* working in Hollywood, you know that the quickest way to lose your job is to go through those 1,000 books and make the *wrong* one. Spending \$5 million on properties is one thing...but spending \$70 million on a turkey that will only gross \$30 million is another. (And yes, it can happen. In fact, if you produced *The Postman*, those figures are positively optimistic.)

So if they can't put a deal together almost instantly, if Cameron is busy and Spielberg declines and someone remembers that David Lean is dead, if Gibson wants too much and Costner has been burned by too many science fiction flops and Cruise wants 30% of the gross, they learn all that within a couple of months. And of course they cool to your project; after all, they've optioned more than 150 books in the two months since you were the newest fair-haired boy (or girl) on the block. Now you're ancient history.

And only This Week's Flavor gets his calls returned.

Okay, on to this month's questions:

A graphic artist and I are about to launch into a collaboration in which I write and he draws (i.e., we're doing a collaborative graphic novel). Can you give us some perspective on ownership of artistic property? Do we each own half of the finished property and split the royalties commensurately if it sells? Are there other issues we want to address before we even get started? We are strangers who met through one of the trade newsletters. Also, any advice on marketing the graphic novel these days?

If you can't sell it without him and he can't sell it without you, then it seems logical to me that you should split ownership and all proceeds right down the middle. If you both agree that one of you is bringing far more skill, clout, and effort to the project than the other is, then it's up to the pair of you to dope out a percentage.

If you have different agents, you'll have to decide which one will handle the project. And you probably need an agreement concerning what happens if you split up (i.e., can one of you agree to a resale or a foreign sale, even if you split the money, or must both of you agree?)

Try to foresee every eventuality and prepare for it. Perhaps the best way would be to question some writers and graphics artists who are or once were in your position. Find out how they worked it, and what changes they would make in their initial agreements. Then, whatever agreement you reach with your partner, put it in writing or be prepared to suffer the consequences.

Given how difficult it is to get an agent and how some publishers won't accept unagented novels, why not just set up my husband/wife/girlfriend/boyfriend/mother/father/dog/cat as my agent? I've seen this one debated a bit and if Bwana has answered it, I've somehow missed it.

Because it's a totally transparent gimmick. The editors know who the agents are. If they don't, there are listings of accredited agents. It'll take about two minutes to figure out that this is a scam, another 30 seconds to decide that you're doing this because you're not good enough to get a legitimate agent, another 20 seconds to realize that you think the editor is dumb enough to fall for it, and a final 10 seconds to put you on his shitlist. Total elapsed time for the exercise: 3 minutes.

Please define "High Fantasy" and how it differs from "Fantasy."

I hate this question, because there is no clear, codified answer, and whatever I say is going to get jumped on—but what the hell, nothing ventured, nothing gained.

Fantasy is the literature of the impossible. It includes gorgons, dragons, magic, vampires (yes, almost all horror is a subset of fantasy), even time travel. The late John Campbell, when he was editing *Astounding*, then the best science fiction magazine extant, and *Unknown*, probably the best fantasy magazine ever, was asked by a potential contributor to define the difference between the two. His classic answer:

"Stories for *Astounding* should be well-written, logical, and possible; stories for *Unknown* should be well-written and logical."

High Fantasy is a subset of fantasy. It invariably involves a quest. It usually pits Good against Evil in one form or another, and Good always wins. It almost always involves magic. It most often takes place in kingdoms (as opposed to democracies) where people tend to speak a stilted English (as opposed to everyday English or any other language), and frequently features no weapon more modern than a sword. It features a Hero or a Heroine, who may or may not be of royal blood (but if they are, they are often unaware of it, or at least not in any position to assert their claims to the throne). There was a time when they published perhaps three new High Fantasy novels a year; these days, they tend to publish at least three a month.

Dear Bwana:

You missed an important point in responding to Laura Majerus in your June 1998 column.

Federal copyright law was not adopted in order to determine eligibility dates for the Hugo awards. The law was developed to protect authors' significant creative, emotional, and temporal investment in their works by preventing the unauthorized exploitation of those works. If the copyright did not attach to a work at the moment it was produced in tangible form, as Ms. Majerus stated, unauthorized persons would have as much right as the author to sell, print, or rewrite the work during the two, three,

or ten years it took the author to find a legitimate market for it.

Yes, it is amateurish to put a copyright date on a work you are trying to market. But your story is protected by federal copyright law, even though no one has bought or published it and even though the "copyright" date on the back of the title page will be the year of publication, not the year the text first rolled out of your printer.

Yours,
Susan Watkins

Once and for all (I mean it: this is the last time I will address the subject) I was not asked about copyright law per se, but rather about how to avoid looking like a clueless beginner. One of the ways, then, now, and always, is to avoid putting a copyright notice on the title page of your manuscript, since because of lag times it is almost certain to be wrong, and hence to scream "Amateur!"

Yes, your story is copyrighted the instant you print it out. That copyright is superseded by the one your publisher registers, in his or your name, when the story sees print.

However (read my lips) the initial question wasn't about copyright, but about how to avoid looking like an amateur. I've told you how. Now I intend to show you how to avoid looking like an annoyed man who repeats himself once an issue by refusing to answer this again.

Do you subscribe to any fiction magazines? If so, which ones? If I wanted to support a particular magazine, would it be better to subscribe or buy it off the newsstand?

I subscribe to the major science fiction magazines, since writing science fiction is my business and I feel I have to keep up with what's going on in the field. And if you wish to support a magazine, it's always better to subscribe than to buy it off the newsstand; you won't miss any issues, and the publisher will make more money from your subscription than from a similar number of newsstand sales.

I've heard writers like Stephen King and Dean Koontz say that they made a fair amount of money in the seventies by selling short stories to men's magazines like Cavalier and Adam. Do markets like these still exist? If so, where? Should I use a pseudonym when I send material to this sort of market?

You'd have to check the newsstands—and I mean the general newsstands, not those you find in the adults-only bookstore. (Why? Because if their distribution is that limited, they can't be paying all that much.)

Playboy remains a top-paying prestige market. I think *Penthouse* is pretty much out of the fiction biz. Beyond that, just check the stands. And yes, except for *Playboy*, I'd use a pseudonym...not because selling to a men's magazine is anything to be ashamed of, but selling to a lower-paying market is something you'd like to hide from the markets you plan to submit to next month and next year.

Oh, and while we're somewhere near the topic, will writing (and

hopefully selling) erotica screw up my chances of selling to mainstream and other genre markets? I should definitely use a pseudonym here, right?

It didn't screw up Robert Silverberg's chances. Or Barry Malzberg's. Or mine. Or a host of other sf writers whose names you know—including a very major female writer. Harlan Ellison edited a men's magazine. So did Frank Robinson. So did I. Algis Budrys used to write the "Playboy Advisor." Terry Bisson and I both wrote for and edited weekly tabloids. It put food on the table and paid the rent, and never kept any of us from writing and selling what we wanted to write and sell. (I think only Barry used his own name on his erotic books—but most of us were doing grind-it-out work for hire, while Barry was writing works of serious literary intent that just happened to have enough erotic content to appeal to the sex publishers.)

Every time I try to write from the point of view of the opposite sex it comes out sounding hopelessly stilted. How does a man write convincing female characters, and vice versa?

This will sound condescending and/or simplistic, and I don't mean it to...but try talking to some members of the opposite sex and really *listen* to them. After you've written a scene, show it to your Significant Other (unless you're gay, in which case show it to your sibling of the opposite sex) and ask for input. And try to remember that, the unisex crowd

and Political Correctness notwithstanding, there *are* differences between the sexes. Always have been, always will be. The good writers pinpoint them and use them.

What are your last few favorite genre novels? Any "new" authors among them?

I don't quite know what you mean by "last few." If it's novels published since, say, 1980, they'd include Spinrad's *The Void Captain's Tale*, Effinger's *When Gravity Fails* and *A Fire in the Sun*, Goldstein's *The Red Magician*, Carroll's *The Land of Laughs*, Simmons's *Hyperion*, maybe a couple of others. (Notice how I modestly exclude my own work.)

If I'm allowed to go back further, the list would have to include Stapledon's *Star Maker* and *Last and First Men*, Malzberg's *Galaxies* and *Herovit's World*, Sheckley's *Dimension of Miracles*, Bester's *The Demolished Man* (magazine version much preferred) and *The Stars My Destination*, Bradbury's *Dandelion Wine* and *The Martian Chronicles*, Simak's *City* and *Way Station*, van Vogt's *Voyage of the Space Beagle*, and any collection of Catherine L. Moore's *Northwest Smith* stories.

Let's say that the on-line service you use the most suddenly turns around and says that anything you post becomes their property and may be distributed, manipulated, or changed at will. Do you worry about this? If so, do you stay or do you go?

Always assuming you're not posting unsold fiction, it's a matter of personal choice: if it bothers you, go; if not, stay.

I'm on a service that makes that claim. I don't worry about it. First, I seriously doubt it'll hold up in a court of law. Second, if they want to own the copyrights to my posts about horse racing, Michael Jordan, and why I hate this year's crop of sf movies, they're welcome to 'em.

Did you ever sit down in front of a half-done novel and realize that it was truly awful and did not deserve to see the light of day? If so, how'd you bring yourself to finish it?

A few times, in my starving-writer days. (I was starving for a reason, you see.) I didn't bring myself to finish them; I threw them out and began work on the next ones.

Although, to be perfectly honest, I didn't have to finish half of a turkey to know it was a turkey. Usually you can tell in 25 or 30 pages.

I realize that no subject can be considered taboo for each and every market, but are there any that you'd recommend a new writer not tackle, just because it'll be a harder story to sell?

Seriously? I think it's very difficult for a beginner to sell derivative short fiction (if only

because the established pros write it so much better, and the better short-story editors tend to demand work of literary ambition) and non-derivative novels (book editors know what their mostly non-demanding readers expect, so if you're not a name and you're writing wildly original stuff, most book editors—all their protests to the contrary—will fear that you'll scare off the readership, which for the most part only wants to be challenged by writers they know are challenging.)

If an editor asks me point-blank for a rewrite—"fix X, Y, and Z and I'll buy this"—shouldn't his response to the rewrite be faster than his miserable 90-day response to the original submission?

First things first—90-day responses are not miserable. In fact, they're reasonably swift.

If the editor has said in print that he'll buy your story if you make the requested changes, spend the nickel to make a copy of his letter and include it with your rewritten manuscript. *That* should get you past the first reader (you probably wound up right back in the slush pile with your revision) and onto the editor's desk in a hurry.

See you next issue.



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Meet the Editor:

Toni Weisskopf

Kurt Roth

Most conventions are hectic for fans, guests, and staffers alike. This seemed especially true for Toni Weisskopf at DeepSouthCon 36 in Birmingham, Alabama, where she functioned as all three. Not only did she appear as a guest, in her role as Executive Editor of Baen Books—she headed up con Registration and edited an “instant fanzine” while she was at it. Somewhere between the presentations, panels, and countless other distractions, she managed to scrape together a few (remarkably good-humored) moments to chat with us.

Kurt Roth: Let’s talk about your guidelines a little bit. They call for a “simple style.” Is this a function of dealing with new writers, or do you feel that it typifies Baen’s overall publishing mandate?

Toni Weisskopf: I think that if Jim or I came across a young Roger Zelazny, we would be as thrilled as if we came across a young Robert Heinlein. We’d love to have that. But it is very hard both to say something interesting and say it in an interesting way. The idea—What’s Going On—is always going to be of paramount importance

to us. Especially in science fiction. It’s our feeling that if you are constantly kicking the reader into an awareness of the fact that he is reading a literary text, it’s harder to appreciate that work. And so very few people do it well.

KR: Your guidelines also mention that an author should expect a nine- to twelve-month response time. Why does it take so long?

TW: Because everybody has a [blankety-blank] printer.

When the physical act of producing a manuscript took a lot of labor—then having to copy it and so on—there were simply fewer manuscripts. We get a hundred, a hundred-fifty a week now. It’s just a lot of paper to wade through, and there gets to be a back up. It takes a while for Jim to deal with even the five or ten percent that get to him. It’s still a big number. So that’s why. Wading through all the paper and waiting for one person to make the decision. In a lot of businesses, this wouldn’t make monetary sense—to spend that amount of time and that amount of manpower on speculation.

KR: But it's pretty much a necessary evil here, in publishing.

TW: I think it's a necessary *good*. A necessary expense. And we certainly have had good luck finding new authors. We're very proud of our track record.

KR: Yes, one of those authors is downstairs right now.

TW: David Weber came to me because his brother and I are in the same APA. His brother said, "Look, I know this editor in New York, why don't you try her?" David and his friend Steve White had a manuscript that had been sitting at another publishing house for a long time. They were very frustrated, so they sent it to me and I thought, "You know—this is good!" Jim was like, "Okay, we'll try it." David's track record, in very interesting publishing times, has been spectacular.

KR: How does all of this tie into the fact that you ask to see an entire manuscript up front, rather than a query package?

TW: If we're interested in it, we're going to want to read the whole thing.

If you think it's the kind of thing that we're going to be interested in, you might as well just save the time. It could take us months to get to a query. If we have the whole manuscript there, then we don't have to wait through the other months for it to

come in, to get to the point where we can read it, and so on. If you're not sure, then yeah, send us a query. We'll respond to queries.

KR: Do you ever use consultants—people external to Baen—to aid in the decision-making process?

TW: We sometimes send manuscripts to readers. We've used Buck Coulson. His tastes are very similar to Jim's, which is nice. And Algis Budrys, also. That level of people.

KR: Your education, as far as I know, is in anthropology?

TW: [smiling] Yeah.

KR: So what exactly led you into editing science fiction? How did you get there?

TW: There aren't a lot of jobs in anthropology.

I enjoy fandom. I have very little patience with the big, hectic, horrible, be-everything-to-everyone kind of conventions. I really prefer the smaller ones.

[mutual giggling]

TW: I was not interested in going on and becoming a professional anthropologist, but I had been very much interested in science fiction from the time I was a little kid. *Little Fuzzy* was the first science fiction novel I ever read, with the great Whelan cover. I had been spending as much time doing science fiction in college as I had been doing other things. Organized a club, brought speakers in, did fanzines....

KR: You were very active in fandom, even at that point.

TW: I was active in fandom, designed courses in science fiction, ended up teaching a class in science fiction at an experimental college....

KR: So it just seemed natural....

TW: It really did. A friend of mine said, "You know, what you're destined for is to be an editor." I'm like, "No, I thought I was going to be a professor." But then I realized, "You're right." So I sent out the resumes, got a job in New York, and I've been at Baen ever since.

KR: But you remain active in fandom. I'm sure there are a number of tremendous drains on your time. Fandom must be very important to you.

TW: When I moved down to Alabama as a teenager, science fiction essentially saved me. Coming down here, meeting people who I could talk to ... so the social aspect of science fiction fandom appeals to me, as well as reading the literature.

I use fandom to recharge my batteries. I write a fanzine for The

Southern Fandom Press Alliance. A lot of editorials, a lot of position papers that I've done for sales conferences, and so on—it's all first laid as essays in my fanzine. I'm about to publish something on the web, actually, about why Baen does the kind of science fiction that it does. That started out as conversation with fans.

Now, of course, there's also a professional obligation. Used to be that writers would come to New York to meet their editor and agent. These days, that doesn't happen. I go out to conventions and meet my authors. I see agents at conventions, go to WorldCon and World Fantasy Con to meet with agents. In a way that's nice.

I think people are overwriting these days. I don't think we need big, hairy novels. I've never been a fan of big, hairy novels.

I get to travel. But it has also become a necessary part of the editorial process. If you want to be face to face with your authors, then that's what you do.

Also, a lot of Baen's larger accounts are not New York-based and never have been. Like Books-a-Million in Birmingham. I combine traveling to conventions and seeing authors and dealing with accounts.

KR: It's a great big symbiotic kind of thing.

TW: Yeah. So I enjoy fandom. I have very little patience with the big, hectic, horrible, be-everything-to-everyone kind of conventions. I really prefer the smaller ones. This convention—all of my roles are sort of combined here. Long-time southern fan, professional editor, girlfriend... person who has just moved into the city and is helping out the local club through volunteer work... it's all just sort of coming together.

KR: You've edited a couple of anthologies. Do you have plans for more in the future, or any general hopes for things like that?

TW: I do have some general hopes. There's a hard science fiction anthology that I've been noodling with. Even as I felt the need to do a hard science fiction anthology, Greg Benford came out with one, Greg Bear came out with one, Charles Sheffield and Jerry Pournelle did

their YA hard sf series—so that niche got filled—but I'd like to do an anthology about the importance of defending the scientific method and rationality. I think science fiction plays a large part in that.

KR: Okay, one last issue, and I hope it's a simple one. Length. Length is something a lot of writers think about—

TW: [She raises her eyebrow.] If we're talking novels—

KR: [laughing] *Ahem*. You ask for 80,000 to 110,000 words. Is that what you consider to be the most marketable range? What's the philosophy behind Baen's length requirements?

TW: In general, that's going to fit between a 288- and a 400-page paperback.

When the physical act of producing a manuscript took a lot of labor—then having to copy it and so on—there were simply fewer manuscripts. We get a hundred, a hundred-fifty a week now.

In terms of marketing, yeah, people need to key it to market. Obviously, each story is going to have its own length. Your story is going to be as long as it's going to be. My feeling is that almost anything out there these days could be improved by just cutting ten percent. Not every tenth word—but *some* of them could lose every tenth word. This is sort of a crude editorial philosophy. It's a harsh editorial philosophy, and it's one that Jim tries to restrain me on... so I don't apply it very often. But I think people are overwriting these days. I don't think we need big, hairy novels. I've never been a fan of big, hairy novels. Although, when I fall into one—a *Dune* or a *Shogun* or something like that—I do enjoy those.

When you look at some of the classics of science fiction... *The High Crusade* (Poul Anderson, 1960)... there's an absolutely brilliant idea, and it's *not* overdone. So I would like to see a return to that, but that's a personal quirk.

KR: A personal quirk. But considering the position you're in, you never know. It may become an industry standard.

TW: Highly unlikely. I'm also David Weber's editor.

KR: [laughing yet again] I think I'll let you take that up with David. Thanks very much for your time, Toni, and best of luck with all things Baen.



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Die, Cliché, Die!

Amy Sterling Casil

Last year, a writer did me one of the biggest lifetime favors one writer can do for another when he pointed out that my work was lousier with clichés than the greatcoat of a W.W.I soldier. That's pretty lousy. I once read an article describing a scientific count of the number of lice in some Belgian soldier's coat: they came up with more than a hundred per square inch.

Clichés, great and small, are so common and so pervasive that the advice I'm going to give, which is "search them out and smash them" is more along the lines of setting personal standards than publication advice. A great deal of published work, regardless of the genre, is filled with clichés.

The doctors said that the Belgian soldier had been completely unaware of his crawling friends until they cut a piece of wool from the coat and started counting. After they told him how many lice they'd found, he ran screaming from the infirmary. That's yet another thing about clichés: you can peacefully coexist with them until you become *aware* of their existence. After that point of revelation, there's no going back. Writing never will seem the same again.

First of all, what are clichés? Most people know the obvious ones; hoary sayings which were original at one time, likely back when the Assyrians started pressing triangular marks into cuneiform tablets. "It was raining cats and dogs." "As red as a rose." "As strong as an ox." "As rich as Croesus." I don't know the etymological roots of all of these (particularly the "cats and dogs") but I can guess at some. "As red as a rose" was old in Petrarch's time, when they started cultivating roses in Italian gardens. "As strong as an ox" certainly sounds pre-Biblical; and, of course, before the myths of King Croesus, we can be relatively assured that some other wealthy monarch's name was used in his place.

But these sorts of clichés are like a giant louse sitting on the soldier's collar and hollering the Yale Fight Song in his ear. Everyone knows about them; few who write regularly use them unintentionally.

It's simple to identify and rid yourself of this sort of cliché in your work. (You can go one step further and twist these clichés in unexpected and novel ways, like: "it was as strong as a rose," or "it was raining red oxen." Now, that'll get somebody's attention!)

There are other sorts of clichés which are pernicious and which will suck the life from your work if you allow them to take hold and proliferate. These clichés fall mostly into the area I will call a “failure of imagination,” because I think they all derive from that single basic source: when you write like this, you’re typing in a lazy manner, not fully imagining the scene.

These sneaky clichés result from the use of words which are “pretty good” to describe the scene, dialog or action.

Pernicious clichés amount to a kind of verbal shorthand. They come from the assumption that readers will “get” what the character is like from these words; or, worse, the character really *is* like that, in which case both prose and character are clichéd and trite. Here is a descriptive paragraph filled with clichés from a recent novel by murder-mystery novelist Patricia Cornwell:

“The wool fabric of his uniform whispered against upholstery as he shifted positions, leaning closer to me. I smelled Hermes cologne. He was handsome, with high cheekbones and strong white teeth, his body powerful beneath his skin as if its darkness were the markings of a leopard or a tiger.”

(Cornwell, Patricia. *From Potter's Field*, Berkeley, 1996, p. 15)

This passage contains a sequence of clichés: the “wool fabric ... whispered,” a cliché both in concept and in execution. Everything from wool to Qiana nylon to silk shantung whispers in this sort of description. The alliteration Cornwell uses is a writer’s trick of the oldest sort: Hermes, handsome, high cheekbones. Each word seems to

be reminding her of the next. Words like “handsome” no longer say much, for the concept is so variable. If you care enough about a character, you’re not going to let your descriptions rest on vague adjectives like “beautiful” or “handsome.” “Strong white teeth” is actually rather funny—

what if he had “weak white teeth?” “A brown cavity pitted the right front incisor of his weak white teeth.” So long, handsome hero.

This is a description of a black Police Colonel; a high-ranking professional. At the end of the passage, the officer is compared to a leopard or a tiger, yet the reader is intended to take this man seriously. People of color have had to endure so many similar comparisons over the years. I’m sure it’s completely accidental on the author’s part; but this is the sort of dangerous area where clichéd writing can unintentionally lead.

***“As red as a rose”
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The terrible absence of specificity in the example above is what produces the clichéd language and description.

Contrast the clichéd passage above with the following passage, rich in specific details, and all other manner of good writing, from another suspense novelist, Minnesota Chuck Logan. Chuck Logan is describing his hero's meeting with his old friend, Bud, another major character:

"Bud's face quivered. *Christ*. Like looking at Orson Welles with triple chins in a wine commercial. Harry suppressed an urge to knock the needy expression off Bud's face. God—what happened to the guy? The day they'd met at an antiwar rally at the University of Minnesota, they'd sniffed each other out like two skinny dogs who had lived out in the rain. Bud had stood straight on his crutch, his freckles were scorched pennies, and he'd worn this amazed Huck Finn grin from a year gone fishing in Hell—just back from Nam and Woodstock in the same week."

(Logan, Chuck. *Hunter's Moon*, Harper, 1996, p. 37)

A lesser writer than Chuck Logan might have saved some words by describing Bud as a "beefy, scared-looking guy." This passage contains the reactions of the viewpoint character, Harry, which are absent in the earlier description of the police officer wearing Hermes cologne. "His

freckles were scorched pennies" is an accurate and rich description, especially since Bud had just finished his tour in Nam. "Like looking at Orson Welles with triple chins in a wine commercial" is one of those rich details which evokes Bud's appearance *and* the time, place, and viewpoint of his friend Harry. The passage evokes other times and friendships;

male relationships—from the two skinny dogs sniffing each other out, to the Huck Finn analogy. If Bud is Huck, then that makes Harry Tom Sawyer, right? One paragraph, and these characters' past is illustrated, along with their present, and a hint of the future. Why would Bud have "stood straight on his crutch?" Because he was presumably shot in

Clichés, great and small, are so common and so pervasive that the advice I'm going to give, which is "search them out and smash them" is more along the lines of setting personal standards than publication advice.

Nam, that's why. Reading this, you get the sense that Chuck Logan knows these two men; he knows their past, he knows their present, and he knows what is to come, and the reader does as well. *Hunter's Moon* is a suspenseful, masterful book.

All you learn from reading the Cornwell passage is that the police officer has a wool uniform that "whispers," he wears Hermes cologne, he has strong white teeth, and he reminds the narrator, Medical Examiner Kay Scarpetta, of a leopard or a tiger. The argument could be made that the reader doesn't need to know any more about this character, despite the fact that he reappears in the book. When you just want to find out who's doing the killing and how gross the bodies are after they've been moldering in their makeshift graves, I suppose you don't care whether or not the man is like a leopard or like a \$600 red and yellow felt Beanie Baby.

You shouldn't jump all over yourself if, looking back over your work, you can find passages which more resemble the handsome Hermes-wearing police official than Chuck Logan's sharply-sketched Harry and Bud. That's part of the growth of writing:

learning to see, learning to choose the right words, not the easy words, and steering clear of the absolute first thing which pops into your head, which will more often than not, *be* the cliché instead of the right words.

The most insidious thing of all about clichés is that they live largely unnoticed with us as writers, just like the Belgian soldier's lice were happily making camp in his coat. Until someone does with clichés as those scientifically-inclined doctors did with the lice back in 1917, and points out that they are there, in their legions. Don't run screaming from the room like the unfortunate soldier. Just take

your time, close your eyes, *see*, and write. Build your vocabulary as well. "Handsome" isn't a description, it's more akin to a scrofular verbal disease which hides the true nature of your characters. Read more writers like Chuck Logan, and fewer like Patricia Cornwell. If you do that, the clichés will run screaming from you, instead.

***"Handsome" isn't
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Street Smarts For Writers

Pros and Cons

Bridget McKenna

When I wrote last issue of the importance of keeping your professional attitude intact at professional gatherings, I seem to have hit upon a subject of interest to a lot of people. In the time between then and now I've received accounts of several tales of career-destroying behavior. There were tales of writers being downright rude to other writers, and others arguing loudly and publicly with convention volunteers. One much-discussed writer recently torpedoed his entire future in the science fiction and fantasy field in a matter of minutes in front of a roomful of astonished fellow-professionals.

Behavior problems aside, I've also heard from writers who still aren't certain about the fine points of what they're supposed to be doing at conventions to bolster their careers. After sweating over a hot keyboard in relative solitude during the creation of our stories, it seems strange and foreign somehow to know that another important phase of the writer's process involves social interaction. And that phase often takes us to conventions.

For the two or three of you who haven't heard, the science fiction and fantasy field is notable for the fact that anywhere you live in the civilized world there are frequent opportunities for you

to get together with writers and readers, editors and agents and artists and others. These are known as conventions, though when speaking to your parents, co-workers, and the IRS you might prefer to call them "conferences." Depending on the size and type of the convention, there are opportunities at these gatherings to help out your career while having a sociable good time. The more important the convention, the more likely the guest list will contain not only lots of your fellow writers, but editors and agents as well. These are the people you need to get to know, and all in all it's a pretty enjoyable task, which we'll get to down the road a bit. Knowing how to handle yourself at a con can give you an advantage compared to those who don't attend them, or who do attend, but don't know what to do there.

The Big Three

There are three conventions that I consider important for a professional or paraprofessional writer to attend when possible: The World Science Fiction Convention (Worldcon), The World Fantasy Convention, and the Nebula Awards Weekend. Hardly anyone gets to all three in most years, but most plan to hit the one or two that are geographically closest. These are the sf

community's Big Three—the times when we gather together to socialize, gossip, and do business. In addition, many writers like to attend one or more smaller conventions a year as well. Some of these are also excellent opportunities for business, and they all offer a chance to spend time with folks who speak the language of writing, something many of us don't get enough of at home.

Does this sound like a lot of work? It can be. Sometimes, for some writers, it's too much of the wrong kind of work. Don't forget that counting preparation, travel time, actual convention days, and necessary periods of decompression, a writer attending four or five conventions a year can be looking at nearly a month out of her life and her writing time. I personally feel that conventions are necessary and energizing for a writer even when—perhaps especially when—no business at all is conducted, but there's a danger of making endless convention-going an end in itself. In North America alone there's probably at least one con taking place any weekend of the year, and maybe half a dozen in addition to the Big

Three that might be within your reach. My advice is to pick carefully and don't overdo it.

"But wait!" I hear an earnest voice protesting. "Really Big Publishing

Company just bought my novel! Shouldn't I be out there promoting it to the readers?" Yes and no. Earnest. Promote your novel—appropriately and professionally, of course—at the conventions you do attend, but don't forget that most of your anticipated readers don't attend conventions at all, and you can't even reach all the ones that do without spending tons of time and

money. (I'm not going to get into the subject of self-promotion here, but I may at some future time.) Meanwhile, attend a few conventions a year and write the next novel. Look at the smaller conventions as an opportunity to cement those important social/professional relationships and do some serious hanging out, but don't go to every one you can reach. That way lies madness.

So now you're on your way to the con, and the butterflies in your stomach are growing razor-sharp fangs. What the heck are you going to do when

*Others cringe in
terror at the
approach of the
Schmoozemeisters.
You've all seen
them, latching on to
passing agents like
starving remoras.
This, in case you
haven't guessed, is
behavior you want
to avoid.*

you get there? Should you pack half a dozen copies of your novel manuscript to hand over to those editors you're going to meet? And speaking of that, where are you going to meet those editors, and what are you going to say to them? How are you even going to know who they are? Sound familiar? We've all been there.

I suppose there are neophyte writers out there ~~and~~ thorough enough to look up names of ~~slf~~ editors in *Writer's Market* or *Literary Market Place* and make crib sheets to refer to furtively at publishers' parties, but I don't know any. The accepted practices seem to be 1) to introduce yourself to everyone you meet and ask them what they do, or 2) to make the acquaintance of a friendly person with slightly more experience, and say "Hi! My name's Joe Writer, and I'm a little new to all this. Would you mind answering a few questions for me?" If you've picked wisely, this person may be willing to introduce you around a bit, or at least point out a few editors for you. There are a few duds in any batch (see above), but the vast majority of writers in this field are friendly and helpful to newcomers. I've

already given you the "dress up and be on your best behavior" lecture, so we can skip that part, and get down to the finer points of the convention arts:

Beginning and Advanced Schmoozing

The word "schmooze" can mean anything from hanging out with your writer friends in the bar or coffee shop, to heavy-handed self-promotion of the sort that makes others cringe in terror at the approach of the Schmoozemeisters. You've all seen them: scanning the horizon at chest-level for editors' name badges, or latching on to passing agents like starving remoras. This, in case you haven't guessed, is behavior you

Oh, and before you finish packing for the con, leave out those novel manuscripts—you'll need the room for all the books you're going to buy in the dealers' room and write off on your taxes.

want to avoid. Everyone needs to make contacts at conventions, but it's possible to be more casual about it, or at least more subtle. Most schmoozing (and networking, another word that's been given a bad name by folks who overdo it) falls into the area of socializing, exchanging information, and establishing acquaintances and friendships that will enrich your life on more than just the career level.

Oh, and before you finish packing for the con, leave out those novel manuscripts—you'll need the room for all the books you're going to buy in the dealers' room and write off on your taxes. The only thing an editor or agent wants is your name (that's why you printed up those tasteful but distinctive business cards), and if requested, a *very* brief description of what your novel is about. If she's interested in having something sent to her, she'll let you know. If you're introducing yourself to a magazine editor, he won't need even that much. Just tell him if you've sent him or are just about to send him a story, or if you've sent him one in the past. Exchange a few pleasantries and be prepared to step aside or move on when the conversation lags or someone else comes up to do the same thing.

If you're looking for an agent, the rules are pretty much the same. Introduce yourself and say you're a writer. "How do you do? I'm Joe Writer. I've just finished my first science fiction novel, and I'm getting ready to market it." If you have any short fiction credits or anything else of note to say about your credentials, this is when you might mention it. If he's doing his job, he'll take over from there. If he asks you for a run-down on the novel, give it without telling him why you think it stands out from all the other novels in the field, or trying to sell it to him in any other way than to describe what it's about quickly and well. Don't synopsize the entire plot for him, just give him an idea what kind of book it is.

If he's taking new clients, and if you've impressed him with all that professional behavior and attitude, and if your story sounds like something he might be interested in, you might just get an invitation to send him a chunk of it.

Don't overlook the educational opportunities of conventions. Most feature at least a few interesting presentations and panel discussions on subjects of interest to anyone writing science fiction or fantasy. Authors' readings are an excellent way to meet writers you don't know yet, and to get a taste of their work. Writers' workshops give you an opportunity to have your fiction critiqued by experienced professionals, though you must sign up for these weeks or months in advance. Gatherings in the bar or coffee shop are a good way to unwind and talk writing with your peers, and to be introduced to still more writers, editors, and agents.

Conventions are a priceless opportunity to get yourself and your work known in a positive way. They are unparalleled for relaxed social times with fellow writers, far from the ordinary worries of the rest of your life. They are also a chance to meet the people who will one day buy and sell your fiction. Pack your good clothes and your professional attitude, and make the next one count for you.



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The Market Maven

Cynthia Ward

Erratum:

Last column, I neglected to give an address for the Polish SF/F/RPG magazine *Talisman* (Piotr Gociek, editor). Submissions can be e-mailed (as ASCII; no attached files) to talizman@kki.net.pl, but read GLs first. Snailmail hardcopies to RMF FM, Al. Waszyngtona 1, Kopiec Kosciuszki, 30-204 Krakow, Poland. English-language subs OK. A Website is under construction at www.kki.net.pl/~talizman.



From **Graham Evans**, editor of *The Edge*: "I've just been sent the paragraph below, which I'm told you published.

A writer reports, "The Edge [UK] requires a standard SASE with subs, as one would expect. Since they are a foreign market, that means a couple of International Reply Coupons along with the MS. Three months ago they rejected one of my MSs through e-mail. I wrote back and asked that if they were willing to communicate through e-mail, could I dispense with the IRCs. They said no. However, they just bounced a second story of mine yesterday through an e-mail. My question is, what's happening to my IRC's?"

The facts of the matter are as follows.

I do not require a standard [SASE] from overseas writers submitting material. I require 2 IRCs only. We rarely reply by e-mail, because I don't have it, and I'm the only person who deals with fiction submissions. However, about once a fortnight (less often than I deal with submissions) I send a disk to someone who sends e-mails for me. We try and keep e-mail for purposes other than responding to submissions. Occasionally I send replies by e-mail to save the writers time— if I'm sending a disk anyway, if I hear of a postal strike somewhere or if it's Christmas. Most of the people I e-mail responses to have sent only 1 IRC or written to the wrong address. Unfortunately word gets out that 'The Edge has a policy of responding to submissions by e-mail,' people don't send postage and I find myself e-mailing more often. It takes longer than signing a rejection slip.

As for what I do with the IRCs, everyone who e-mails me asking whether they can skip the IRCs is sent a form e-mail letter covering that point: anything made that way goes back into the magazine in the form of postage and paying for postal redirections, since people continue to write to and publicize the old address (I sent coas to every market list-

ing I knew of last September, but that hasn't stopped people.) So your correspondent knows perfectly well.

As to why I won't drop the IRCs for people I know I've got 2 from already, how am I supposed to remember? I already record post in and out so I can answer queries about it. Am I supposed to put sticky labels on the IRCs and go through them whenever I receive a submission? Or perhaps I should use e-mail for everyone with that facility and take peoples' word that I've got their IRCs...."



Save Your Postage:

Temporarily Closed/Changes:

Ad Astra no longer publishes fiction (*Gila Queen's Guide to Markets*). *Bare Bones* currently closed to fiction but not verse (*Scavenger's NL*); see also Changes of Address.

The Cosmic Unicorn is still on indefinite hiatus; see www.customforum.com/cosmicunicorn for more info (*Scav*). *CZ's Magazine* and *Phantom Fantasy* "are now online (Internet) only" (*Scav*); URLs unknown. "*Cartwheel* (Scholastic) closed to unsolicited subs" and queries (*Genie*). *Excursions* "booked solid for the first several issues. Inquire again Jan. '99" (Internet). *Night Terrors* backlogged and closed 'til 10/1/98 (*Scav*). *Odyssey Magazine* SF Short Story Contest deadline moved to 1/31/99 (*Scav*).

For *Pulp Eternity* see Magazine News. "*69 Flavors of Paranoia* closed to fiction through 1999" (*He-*

liocentric Writer's Network, lbothell@wolffenet.com, www.wolffenet.com/~lbothell). *Starlance* is "not soliciting" (*H-Net*).

Twisted is closed indefinitely because of the Fine Print bankruptcy (*GQ*). *Weird Tales* is overstocked and closed 'til 1/99 (*Inklings*, www.inkspot.com). *White Wolf Publishing* "closed to subs...for the 'foreseeable future'" (*GQ*). *Widdershins* "closed to fiction and poetry until 9/97, still open to art & nonfiction" (*H-Net*).

Permanently Closed/Missing:

Authors (Canada), *Cranberry Winters*, *Island* (Aus.), and *Spaceways Weekly* (Can.) nonresponding (*Scav*). Writers report e-mail to *Brutarian Quarterly* bounced and *The Fractal* "mailbox was not found" (the e-mail addresses used were not identified).

"Joe Sena's *Dungeon of Darkness*, an online database of H film reviews and Webzine, is shutting down" (*DarkEcho NL*, DarkEcho@aol.com). "*Futurist* (Aus.) has ceased publication" (*GQ*).

The Golden Age of Flying Saucers is folding (*Scav*). *More Monsters from Memphis* closes 7/30. *Pulp Fiction* "officially out of business and accepting no further subs" (*H-Net*). Letter to *NewHouse Publications* (*Cadence* and *Arbitrary Random Thought*; John Liptow, editor) "returned...marked 'Moved, left no address'" (*GQ*).

Correspondence to *Pursuit*

(Greensboro NC PO Box) and *Zone 9* (Charlotte NC PO Box) came back marked "Return to Sender" (Scav). *Pyx Press*, *Shadowfire Press*, and *Writer's Resource NL* missing/nonresponding (H-Net). *Slip Into Something Uncomfortable* closed 8/1. "*Spy Magazine* has suspended publication" (GQ). *West End Games* "has apparently filed for...bankruptcy" (Genie). For *Wetbones* see Magazine News. "Editor/publisher **John Platt** has announced that *White Knuckles* is officially dead" (*DarkEcho*).



Changes of Address:

AlphaDrive Web-Magazine (s.c. virtues, director) to Software Development SCV Systems, 306 W. El Norte Pkwy., Suite N-201, Escondido, CA 92026 (GQ). *Bare Bones* has a temporary address, c/o Kevin L. Donihe, Chief Editor, 1742 Madison St., Kingsport, TN 37665; pleather.com/barebone (Scav); see also Save Your Postage. **Carroll & Graf** and **Grosset & Dunlap** no longer accept unsolicited subs (GQ). **M. Christian**, editor of *Guilty Pleasures* and *Rough Stuff*, has a new e-mail address, zobop@ix.netcom.com (queries only).

Gauntlet Press website to www.gauntletpress.com (*DarkEcho*). **Northern Fusion** (Carol Weekes, editor) to 29 Pine St., PO Box 344, Ingleside, Ont K0C 1M0 Canada (Scav). For *Pulp Eternity* see

Magazine News. *TransVersions* to 83 Royal York Rd., Toronto, Ontario, Can M8V 2T7 (H-Net). For *The Third Alternative* and TTA Press see Electronic News. *Weird Tales* has a new subscription address, DNA Publications, PO Box 13, Greenfield MA 01301-0013 (*HWA Internet Mailer*).



Author Beware:

From the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators (SCBWI): "The May issue of the Houston NL had an interview with **Noreen Wise**, editor, at *Huckleberry*. One of our members submitted with SASE. Returned in the SASE (sans MS) was a long letter complaining about people who browse bookstores without buying and how much money she (Wise) had invested in *Huckleberry Books*. Wise stated in the letter that they would assess your MS if you 'purchase \$25 worth of our books' (naming her own as examples). Then you are to 'send us your receipts' marking the envelopes that receipts are enclosed. 'All envelopes marked as such will be opened first and assessed.' Wise went on to say that if the person submitting would get 10 friends to do the same (buy \$25 worth of *Huckleberry books*) and send the receipts from all of them, 'We will move heaven and earth to assist you in getting published.' "As a note, our member did not receive her MS. With the above-mentioned letter, there were GLs stating that *Huckleberry* does not return MSs. The member

has sent notice she is withdrawing her story.”

In addition to these problems, writers on Genie warn that “Noreen Wise is apparently giving ‘bring us your MS’ seminars at Barnes and Noble bookstores all over.” Don’t attend. Also, contact your B&N; their policy is not to bring in people from vanity or fee-charging presses.



From *DarkEcho*: “The National Writers Union has issued a ‘call to action’ concerning the **National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws (NCCUSL)** proposed new standards for the Uniform Commercial Code Article 2B (UCC2B). UCC2B is a section of the Uniform Commercial Code, which forms the basis of contract law in most states. Section 2B started out addressing rules for the sale and lease of software, databases and information but has now expanded to include language that would apply to individual creators’ contracts in journalism, books, and technical writing. According to NWU and other content-creation groups, UCC2B endorses all-rights contracts and sets a lower standard of commercial behavior for media companies and is seen as having ‘a tremendous negative impact on writers if it passes as-is.’ Full info is on the NWU site (www.igc.org/nwu/pic/ucchome.htm).”



From *H-Net*: “NWI, a subsidiary of **Quality Plus Books**, claims to be looking for fiction but responds to subs by soliciting for their ‘marketing services.’ For a fee, they promise to hook you up (don’t explain how they will do this or what the result will be) with at least two major publishers. Marian Valenton, PO Box 634, Lawrenceville, NJ 08648-0314. Another book doctor-type scam?”



Scav reports “**Right Here Publications** requires that accepted authors buy 9 copies of their latest anthology in order to be included.”



Magazine News:

A recent bounce note from *Whispering Willows Mystery Magazine* included the following:

“The Board of Directors decided, after receiving the results from marketing surveys, to combine WWMM with Sleuthhound, using the name Sleuthhound which sounds more like the genre. We’ve been testing the market with a variety of formats to get just the right one for us ... We’ll continue to purchase and publish short mystery stories, but due to the change limiting our space, we have fewer slots open ... On the downside, we have to return many manuscripts that we were considering for WWMM.”

GQ reports "*Cracked* editors need humor for 12 - 15-year-olds. 1-5 pages; pays \$100/page, on acceptance. Read the magazine first." Rights purchased not listed. 3 E. 54th St., Floor 15, New York, NY 10022.

Multi-genre e-zine *Dark Annie* (members.aol.com/darkannie) seeks fiction "to 5,000-words (firm)...[B]uy[s] Universal Online Rights at 1/2 to 1 cent/word. Reprints okay...Deadline: 12 AM Eastern [10/31/98] regardless of postmark or electronic delay." GLs are *very specific*; query darkannie@aol.com or send SASE to PO Box 566, East Brunswick, NJ 08816. Editors: Eva Harstein and Elizabeth Watts; Associate Editor: Shikhar Dixit.

Dark Planet e-zine (www.sfsite.com/darkplanet) "is back with the biggest update ever: twenty new poems and nineteen new stories from writers around the globe." They have "decided to archive all stories and poems for as long as authors and...file space quota will allow...[and] to handl[e] subs/site updates differently...in three-month alternating shifts...From Sept. 1 until Nov. 30, I will... accept... subs... then... close...from Dec. 1 until Feb. 28; during this time I finish responding to whatever subs have piled up and then I will put up the next [reading-period] update." For more info, contact Editor Lucy A. Snyder at lusnyde@indiana.edu.

From *DarkEcho*: "'*Escape* is an electronic magazine of speculative fiction. We consider all forms of SF/F/H and any combination thereof...' Payment: 1 cent/word. Length: 500 to 5000 words. 'We buy first serial rights and first electronic rights with an option on nonexclusive antho rights.' Snailmail subs preferred for MSs originating in the US; foreign subs should be made electronically if possible. E-mail subs to Dave Phalen at dphalen@interink.com as a text file or in a format compatible with Word 6.0...Please see full submission [guidelines] [at] www.interink.com/office/guide.html."

"Also 'looking for artistic pieces that would fit into the speculative fiction category, including but not limited to SF/F/H. Interested artists should examine issues of our magazine to see how we utilize artwork. Issues are available free of charge at our Web site www.interink.com/escape.html.' Payment: \$25 per illustration and \$50 for cover artwork." Marie Loughin and David Phalen, co-editors, 1228 Westloop #356, Manhattan, KS 66502.

DarkEcho reports "**Event Horizon Web Productions, Inc.**, comprised of Ellen Datlow, Pamela Weintraub, Robert K.J. Killheffer, and Kathleen Stein, has acquired the name Event Horizon from the cur-

rently existing Webzine called *Event Horizon* for their SF/F/H Webzine launching in August at www.e-horizon.com/eventhorizon.

The previously existing *Event Horizon* will change its name. Ellen Datlow's *Event Horizon* will launch in August with fiction by Pat Cadigan [and] a monthly non-fiction column by one of four alternating contributors: Douglas Winter, Lucius Shepard, Jack Womack, and Barry N. Malzberg. Ed Bryant, Jim Freund, and David Thomer will host alternate weekly author interviews. There will be links, and a bulletin board. Ellen Datlow will write reviews that will later appear in her upcoming *Year's Best* antho.

She may also regularly commission a collaborative short story that will be written over a month or two by four writers. *EH* will have monthly contests and will launch with a mega contest sponsored by most of the major SF/F/H publishers."

◆

Hellnotes horror NL is looking for a new columnist; pay: 5¢/word. Query Editor David B. Silva at dbsilva@hellnotes.com. URL, www.hellnotes.com. No street address given.

◆

From *Inklings* via *DarkEcho*: *Murderous Intent Mystery Magazine* seeks cozy/softboiled mystery/suspense stories (250-5000 words, pre-

fers 2000-4000); also publishes columns and interviews. Pays \$10/story or article, \$15-\$20/interviews. "Buys FNASR. Simul. subs OK if informed. No reprints. Encourages new/unpublished writers. No e-mail" subs. Ms. Margo Power, Editor, Madison Publishing Company, PO Box 5947, Vancouver, WA 98668-5947; www.teleport.com/~madison/minm.htm.

◆

A writer withdrew a sub to *Odissey* (UK) after 11 months, after submitting a hardcopy that "was evidently lost in moving snafus"; an electronic re-submission lost in a computer glitch; and numerous queries which were all replied to, but "without resolution." He/she was finally asked to send another hardcopy (from US to UK), which he/she declined to do. A second author reports a "similar" experience.

◆

Scav reports *Pulp Eternity* #1 ("Time...A Retrospective") and #2 ("I am Dragon") are now "closed... We are now reading for [#3] 'Alternatives I' [alternative sexualities] and [#4] 'The Price of Magic.'" 3500 words max. Read GLs before submitting. Eternity Press, PO Box 930068, Norcross, GA 30003. New URL: www.pulpeternity.com.

Talebones #13 will be released in Oct. Coeditors Patrick and Honna Swenson are "reading for #14, due out [1/99]...#12 should be out by the time you read this.

"We're looking for more SF, dark slant or not. We're not a horror magazine. We publish a wide variety of genre fiction now, and we're looking for the best stories we can find. Starting with issue #14, we will pay 2 cents/word for one story per issue (our lead story), with a maximum payment of \$100, minimum \$50. That should allow for a little friendly competition for that lead spot!

"We take e-mail subs [talebones@nventure.com], but please send as an attached text file, or send in the body of an email (the preferred method). We will also respond via e-mail on snail-mail subs if you want to save some postage." 10531 SE 250th Place #104, Kent, WA 98031; www.nventure.com/talebones.



"The magazine *Wetbones* has ceased publication for financial reasons. Refunds have been mailed to all subscribers. Submissions still trickling in...will be considered for *Gothic.Net* [e-zine, now edited by *Wetbones* publisher Paula Guran] and responded to as time allows. Questions can be sent to bonesmail@aol.com or snailed to *Wetbones*, POBox 5410, Akron, OH 44333."



Anthology News:

DarkEcho lists 2 new anthos, both from **Chameleon Publishing** (Jane Hubbard, editor, 3430 Salem Drive, Rochester Hills, MI 48306). *Cemetery Sonata* "[n]eeds ghost stories and 'things that go bump in the night.'"

The second antho, which is untitled, "[n]eeds Civil War ghost stories or ghost stories relating to that era...Length: 500 words to...6,000 words or more 'depending on the quality of the story.' Payment: .03 per word plus copies. One time rights revert to author after publication. Previously published pieces OK with mention of previous publication. 'No unnecessary violence please. Haunted houses, graveyards, etc. Make me sleep with my the light on!'" E-mail (queries only), WZTT67B@prodigy.com "Deadline: 9/30/98 for year-end publication."



Per *GQ*, *Storisende Verlag* (Michael Plogmann, Editor) is "still looking for stories. They will appear for one month on our Website [www.storisende.com] and will then be collected in an antho which will appear in the autumn (trade PB format). We pay 2 Pfennig/word (slightly over 1 cent/word) for First German Rights.

"We were trying to get a balance between SF/F/H, but we got a lot more H stories than other stuff, so at the moment we're closed for H (at least if it's not borderline H that spills over into SF or F). Any other stuff welcome, either as e-mail sub [to mplogmann@storisende.com]...or

as [hardcopy] (disposables only, please) [to Postfach 1238, 32132 Spenge, Germany]...Authors recently featured include Brian A. Navarro, Stephen Dedman, Yvonne Navarro, and Paul di Filippo."

mailed to this address by" 1/2/99, so send CoA. "Please write 'Short-Story Award' on the envelope and send it to: Glimmer Train Press, 710 SW Madison St., Suite #504, Portland, OR 97205."



Publishing News:

From *DarkEcho*: "According to *Publishers Weekly*, [bookstore chain] **Crown Books** [has] filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection."

DarkEcho is running a contest in conjunction with *Gothic.Net*. Prize: "Publication by *Gothic.Net* webzine at 3 cents/word and additional goodies...Deadline for entries is August 20, 1998." Query DarkEcho@aol.com for full rules/GLs.



Contest/Fellowship News:

Glimmer Train literary magazine's "Short-Story Award for New Writers" is open 'til 9/30/98 (postmark date) "to any writer whose fiction hasn't appeared in a nationally-distributed publication with a circulation over 5,000."

From *GQ*: The annual **James Jones First Novel Fellowship** "[a]wards \$2,500 for first unpublished novel." For rules, send SASE to The James Jones Society, English Dept., Attn: Chairman, Wilkes University, Wilkes-Barre, PA 18766; e-mail (queries only) shaffer@wilkes1.wilkes.edu; or see the Web page at <http://wilkes1.wilkes.edu/~english/jones.html>.



Length: 1,200-8,000 words; standard MS format; story must be unpublished; "no theme restrictions." They're not fond of SF, but nongenre fantasy is OK. Standard MS format. Staple the MS! Cover letter optional. No SASE necessary; MSs not returned. Prizes: 1st: \$1,200, publication, and 20 copies of that issue; 2nd: \$500; 3rd: \$300. "All entrants will receive a copy of the Spring issue in which the winning entry will be published and the 2nd- and 3rd-place winners announced.

"Reading fee is \$12 per story. Please be sure the address on your check is correct. Results will be

Electronic News:

A daily journal of Clarion West '98 (now in session) is being posted at www.sff.net/people/diana/journal.htm.



Brett A. Savory (klune@total.net) says, "I run a Website called *The Chiaroscuro: Those Who Walk Alone*...a forum for dark fiction, art, poetry, prose, and ideas. We...presently [have] 362 members in 27 countries, including such well-known authors and editors as Peter Crowther, Philip Nutman, P.D. Cack, Edward E. Kramer, Ken Abner, Brian A. Hopkins, Owl Goingback, Barry Hoffman, Jack Ketchum, Gerard Houarner, Ken Wisman, Tom Piccirilli, Ray Garton, Nancy Kilpatrick, Scott Urban, Gary A. Braunbeck, Yvonne Navarro, Michael Marano, S. P. Somtow, John Pelan, Edward Lee, Edo van Belkom, David Niall Wilson—the list goes on...[C]ome by the Website [www.geocities.com/SoHo/Cafe/9742/chi.htm] and check it out...If you like what you see and would like to become a member also, just [e-mail]."



DarkEcho reports "New speculative fiction magazine resource site. **Spicy Green Iguana** (members.aol.com/mhatv) contains over 206 links to SF/H/F magazine sites."



From *DarkEcho*: "Andy Cox (editor of UK's *The Third Alternative*) and others are considering organizing a 'Society of Fantastic Literature' and are currently soliciting opinion. Info and e-mail messages are posted on... members.aol.com/

ttaldyer/soc.html. The proposed society would be trans-Atlantic and they are particularly interested in receiving opinion from US-based writers and readers."



More URLs to Worry About:

Ask Miss Grammar

www.protrainco.com/info/noframees/grammar.htm

NECon H convention (Jul 30 - Aug 2) www.para-net.com/~necon

Salon e-zine

www.salon1999.com

Strunk and White's The Elements of Style www.columbia.edu/acis/bartleby/strunk

Tachyon Publications

www.tachyonpublications.com

Write Market Webzine

www.writemarket.com

WritersNet

www.writers.net

Writing a Story Synopsis

www.teleport.com/~bjscript/wsynop.htm



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Market Reports And Response Times

Randy A. Dannenfelser

Professional Magazines

Aboriginal SF—Mr. Charles Ryan, P.O. Box 2449, Woburn, MA 01888-0849. \$4.95/\$15. SF/P. 2,500-4,500 words. Hard SF, action & adventure, space opera, science fantasy. \$200/story OP. 28/78/114

Adventures of Sword & Sorcery—Mr. Randy Dannenfelser, P.O. Box 807, Xenia, OH 45385. \$6/\$17.50. SS. 1k-20k words. S&S action & adventure like Tolkien, Leiber, or Kurtz, but with 90's sensibilities, sexual content only as required by

the story, but not excessive/porn, wants unusual settings. Include cover ltr w/credits, e-mail subs (ASCII text only, please): double_star@yahoo.com. 3-6¢/word OA. 57/214/387

Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Magazine—Ms. Cathleen Jordan, 1270 Avenue of the Americas, 10th Floor, New York, NY 10020. SF/F/DF/H. To 14k words. Ghosts, futuristic, atmospheric, suspense, must contain a crime or suggestion. 7¢/word OA. 23/35/65

Ye Jargon Key:

SF: Science Fiction **F:** Fantasy **DF:** Dark Fantasy **H:** Horror
SS: Sword & Sorcery **YA:** Young Adult **P:** Poetry.

XX/YY/ZZ=shortest, average, longest recorded response time.

\$?/\$?=US Sample/Sub cost.

OA: pays upon acceptance.

OP: pays upon publication.

☞ indicates a new entry.

Please send any additions, corrections, and recent (two months old or less) response times to Randy A. Dannenfelser, PO Box 285, Xenia, OH 45385.

Altair—Mr. Robert N. Stephenson, PO Box 475, Blackwood 5051, South Australia, Australia. \$10/\$40. SF/F/DF. 2k-10k words. Needs more F stories, willing to respond via e-mail on foreign subs. E-mail (for guidelines only): altair@senet.com.au. 3¢/word OA, \$30 min & \$250 max. 14/30/54

Amazing Stories—Mr. Kim Mohan, P.O. Box 707, Renton, WA 98057-0707. \$4.99/\$9.95. SF/F/DF. 1k-10k words. Prefers SF rather than S&S or rehashes of myth & legend, no gratuitous vulgarity or excessive gore. 6-8¢/word OA. 42/58/79

Analog Science Fiction And Fact—Dr. Stanley Schmidt, 1270 Avenue of the Americas, 10th Floor, New York, NY 10020. \$22.97. SF. To 20k words. Science fiction, with equal emphasis on both words. 5-8¢/word OA. 24/38/56

Artemis Magazine—Mr. Ian Randal Strock, 1380 East 17 St, Suite 201, Brooklyn, NY 11230. \$24. SF/P. To 20k words. Upbeat near-term hard SF involving lunar development or life on the moon. E-mail (queries only): irs@panix.com. 5-8¢/word OA.

Asimov's Science Fiction—Mr. Gardner Dozois, 1270 Avenue of the Americas, 10th Floor, New York, NY 10020. \$22.97. SF/F/DF/P. To 20k words. Character-oriented, tight prose, well paced, literate, thoughtful, wants more hard SF, doesn't like extreme graphic violence unless really essential to the plot. No multiple submissions. 5-8¢/word OA. 21/59/86

Brutarian—Mr. Dominick Salemi, Box 25222, Arlington, VA 22202-9222. \$5/\$12. DF/H. E-mail (queries only): brutarian@juno.com, no standard genre fiction, very heavily stocked. 10¢/word. 9/28/67

Cemetery Dance Magazine—Mr. William K. Schafer, Associate Editor, P.O. Box 190238, Burtin, MI 48519. \$4/\$15 to P.O. Box 943, Abingdon, MD 21009. DF/H. To 5k words. Horrific, suspense, cross-genre, dark mystery, disturbing, supernatural, likes Halloween themed stories, but no cliches. 3-5¢/word OP. 64/163/328

Century—Mr. Robert K.J. Killheffer, P.O. Box 150510, Brooklyn, NY 11215-0510. \$5.95/\$27 to P.O. Box 259270, Madison, WI 53725-9270. SF/F. 1k-20k words. Literate, intelligent speculative fiction, strong characterization, tight/focused prose, not too heavily steeped in the genre perspective, wants fiction with a crossover feel, very heavily stocked. 4-6¢/word OA. 57/136/264

Crank!—Mr. Bryan Cholfin, P.O. Box 1110, New York, NY 10159-1110. \$4/\$12 to Broken Mirrors Press. SF/F/DF. 3k-10k words. Imaginative literature, surrealism, magic realism, humor, would like to see more straight SF, e-mail subs (ASCII): cranked@earthlink.net. 8¢/word. 15/31/57

Dragon Magazine—Mr. Dave Gross, 1801 Lind Ave SW, Renton, WA 98055. F/SS. 1,500-8k words. Quests, battles, magical warfare, but not cliched D&D

stuff or oriental fantasy, PG-13. Send SASE (w/\$0.50 postage) for Disclosure Form which must be included with submissions, e-mail (queries only): t.s.r.mags@genie.com. Very heavily stocked. 5-8¢/word OA. 37/68/135

Interzone—Mr. David Pringle, 217 Preston Drive, Brighton, BN1 6FL UK. \$7/\$56. SF/F. 2k-6k words. Intelligent, unusual, innovative. £30-35/1k words. 40/77/106

The Magazine Of Fantasy & Science Fiction—Mr. Gordon Van Gelder, P.O. Box 1806, New York, NY 10159-1806. \$4/\$25.97 to 143 Cream Hill Rd., West Cornwall, CT 06796-9975. SF/F/DF. To 25k words. Strong characterization, literate, quirky, buying very selectively, wants more SF. 5-7¢/word OA. 7/11/52

Marion Zimmer Bradley's Fantasy Magazine—Mrs. Marion Bradley, P.O. Box 249, Berkeley, CA 94701-0249. \$4.95/\$20. F/SS. To 5,500 words. Action, adventure, strong characters, no sexism, strong language or child protagonists, PG-13. Send SASE for guidelines before submitting, prefers disposable submissions. 3-10¢/word OA. 18/52/113

Membrane—Ms. Jacqueline Ching and Mr. Daniel Fingerroth, 393 W 49th St, Suite 7G, New York, NY 10019. SF. To 10,000 words. Hard SF stories that explore the hard sciences and their relationship with the human element, an understanding of current or plausible scientific theory

essential, stories must be clear and comprehensible to the non-scientist, limited jargon, sociological and humorous stories welcome. Subs not returned, send copies only, e-mail queries: Membrane98@aol.com. 3-5¢/word OA.

Non-Stop SF Magazine—Mr. Luis Ortiz, P.O. Box 981, Peck Slip Station, New York, NY 10272-0981. \$5.95/\$20. SF/F/DF. To 9k words. SF and modern F, literate, effect of technology. Include cover ltr. E-mail (queries only): NonStop@compuserve.com. 2-6¢/word OA. 78/378/612

Odyssey—Ms. Liz Holliday, 31 Shottsford, Wessex Gardens, London W2 5LG UK. SF/F. 1500-12k words. Also one 750 word short-short per issue, read guidelines before submitting, needs more SF. E-mail (queries only): liz@gila.demon.co.uk. £20-40/1k words. 26/91/128

Playboy—Ms. Alice K. Turner, 680 North Lake Shore Dr, Chicago, IL 60611. SF/F/DF. 1k-6k words. Serious, contemporary. Include cover letter. \$2,000-\$5,000/story OA. 32/56/73

Pulp Eternity—Mr. Steve Algieri, P.O. Box 930068, Norcross, GA 30093. \$4/\$10. SF/F/DF/H. To 3,500 words. Each issue will feature a specific theme, so must send for guidelines, no needless gore, violence, or porn, must send cover ltr. E-mail (submissions or queries): eternityol@aol.com. 3¢/word OP. 3/20/62

Realms Of Fantasy—Ms. Shawna McCarthy, P.O. Box 527, Rumson, NJ 07760. \$4.50/\$14.95 to ROF P.O. Box 736 Mt. Morris, IL 61054. F/DF/SS. To 10k words. All types of fantasy, preferred length is 5k-8k words, wants unusual stories, not standard fantasy/horror, new settings, exotic mythologies, not into stories with a joke/pun as primary thrust. Put your name in envelope return address. 4-8¢/word OA. 15/44/124

Science Fiction Age—Mr. Scott Edelman, 11305 Sunset Hills Rd, Reston, VA 20190. \$5/\$16.95 to SFA P.O. Box 710 Mt. Morris, IL 61054. SF. 1k-22k words. Hard/soft SF, magic realism, no contemporary F, literate, ambitious. 10¢/word OA. 7/13/30

Terra Incognita—Mr. Jan Berrien Berends, 52 Windermere Ave #3, Lansdowne, PA 19050-1812. \$5/\$15. SF/P. To 15k words. Earth-centered stories about cybertechnology, apocalypse, sociological extrapolations, gender and race issues, biotechnology, information technology, human evolution, aliens, oceanography, non-Western cultures in the future, E-mail (for guidelines only): terraincognita@writeme.com. 3¢/word. 18/68/97

Whispering Willows Mystery Magazine—Ms. Peggy D. Farris, P.O. Box 890294, Oklahoma City, OK 73189-0294. DF/P. 500-2,500 words. See *Magazine News in The Market Maven* for important news. 4¢/word OP. 29/80/105

Weird Tales—Mr. George Scithers, 123 Crooked Lane, King of Prussia, PA 19406-2570. F/DF/H/SS/P. To 10k words. Fiction in the *Weird Tales* style, likes fantasy-world and sword-&-sorcery, but sees too many generic ones. E-mail (queries only): owlswick@netaxs.com 3-6¢/word. 20/42/72

Semi-Professional Magazines

Aberrations—Mr. Richard Blair, P.O. Box 460430, San Francisco, CA 94146. \$4.50/\$31. SF/F/DF/H/SS. To 8k words. Stories for adults that are too much for most other magazines, graphic sex/violence OK, but not gratuitous, no violent/sexual abuse of children, overstocked and very slow responding. 1/4¢ word OP.

Absolute Magnitude—Mr. Warren Lapine, P.O. Box 910, Greenfield, MA 01302. \$5/\$15. SF. To 25k words. Likes action & adventure like Heinlein, hard SF, prefers over 5k words, no time travel, alt-history, humor, or stories about law enforcement agencies, hard-boiled detectives, religious overtones, looking for more space opera, doesn't like present tense stories. 1-5¢/word OP. 14/36/69

Agony in Black—Ms. Pamela Hazelton, 360-A W Merrick Rd #350, Valley Stream, NY 11580. \$4.95. DF/H. 500-7,500 words. Wants dark psychological fiction similar to tone/mood of film SE7EN, no humor, dislikes vampire stories. E-mail (only ASCII submissions): chntngmknks@aol.com. 1-3¢/word, \$75 max. 31/47/70

Back Brain Recluse—Mr. Chris Reed, P.O. Box 625, Sheffield, UK S1 3GY. SF/F/DF/H. Wants experimental and literary speculative fiction, familiarity with the magazine strongly advised, e-mail queries: bbr@fdgroup.co.uk. \$15/1k words OP.

Cabaret Magazine—Mr. Jon Keeeyes, P.O. Box 331775, Fort Worth, TX 76163. SF/DF/H. To 2,500 words. Likes suspense, stories may use profanity and erotic themes, include cover ltr. E-mail (submissions): gentcab@flash.net. 1¢/word OP.

Dark Regions – Mr. Joe Morey and Jordan Stoen, PO Box 6301, Concord, CA 94524. \$5.30. SF/F/DF/H/P. 1,000-5,000 words. Inventive tales that push the boundaries of originality, depth, theme, suspense, and excitement. Include cover letter with credits. 1-4¢/word OP.

Dreams of Decadence—Ms. Angela Kessler, PO Box 910, Greenfield, MA 01302. \$5/\$15. DF/H/P. 1k-5k words. Looking for atmospheric, well-written vampire stories, emphasis is on F rather than H, elegantly crafted poetic prose with a Gothic feel. 1-5¢/word OP. 8/23/43

The Edge—Mr. Graham Evans, 111 Guinness Bldgs, Fulham Palace Rd, London W6 8BQ, UK. \$6/\$20. SF/F/DF/H. To 8k words. Wants SF/modern H/slipstream or nongenre imaginative fiction. 1-2¢/word OP.

Epitaph—Mr. Tom Piccirilli, P.O. Box 329, Brightwaters, NY 11718. \$3.95/\$12. DF/H/P. 750-5k words. Eerie stories, supernatural, occult, offbeat, darkly psychological, ½-2¢/word. 7/22/35

Fantasy Macabre—Ms. Jessica A. Salmonson, P.O. Box 20610, Seattle, WA 98102. \$6.50/\$18. DF/H. To 3k words. Morbid, loneliness, supernatural, menacing atmosphere rather than gore, beauty of terror. 1¢/word. 12/31/72

The Fractal—4400 University Drive MS 2D6, Fairfax, VA 22030-4444. \$5/\$8. SF/F/DF/H/P. Wants work that leans away from the commercial and toward the literary, very heavily stocked. E-mail for submissions: TheFractal@aol.com \$25/story.

Horizons SF—Ms. Linda Miller, Box 75, Student Union Bldg, 6138 S.U.B. Blvd, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, V6T 1Z1 Canada. SF/F/DF/H. To 15k words. Various genres, long response times, very heavily stocked. 1-2 (Can)¢/word.

On Spec—P.O. Box 4727, Edmonton, Alberta, T6E 5G6 Canada. \$6/\$19.95. SF/F/DF/H/SS/P. To 6k words. Preference given to Canadian authors, must be in competition format (author name & phone # only in cover letter, not on story). 2 ½ (Can)¢/word. 5/17/5/218

Pirate Writings—Mr. Edward J. McFadden, P.O. Box 329, Brightwaters, NY 11718-0329. \$5/\$15. SF/F/DF/P. 250-8k words. Cutting edge, radical, PG-

13, particularly looking for mysteries, doesn't like stories with cats, werewolves, or southern/western slang. 1-5¢/word OP. Include cover letter w/credits, e-mail pwpubl@aol.com 9/27/51

Pulp Fiction Magazine—Mr. Clancy O'Hara, P.O. Box 548, Hermosa Beach, CA 90254-0548. \$5/\$20 (payable to editor). SF/F/DF/H. To 2k words. Looking for genre fiction with a spin, that transcends its humble origins, likes 'Lurid Tales of Adventure' and crime fiction. 1¢/word. 9/43/97

♣ **The Silver Web**—Ms. Ann Kennedy, P.O. Box 38190, Tallahassee, FL 32315. SF/DF/H. To 8k words. Wants stories too bizarre for mainstream publications but do not fit the standard mold of the genre, no traditional storylines, deadline Sept. 30. 2-3¢/word.

Space & Time—Mr. Gordon Linzner, 138 W 70th St, Apt 4B, New York, NY 10023-4468. SF/F/DF/H/SS/P. To 10k words. Hard/soft SF, supernatural & mysterious horror and that which defies categorization. Heavily stocked. 1¢/word OA. 21/62/114

Talebones—Mr. Patrick J. Swenson & Ms. Honna Swenson, Fairwood Press, 10531 SE 250th Pl. #104, Kent, WA 98031. \$4.50/\$16. SF/F/DF/P. To 6k words. Stories with a "dark" slant, but not straight horror, wants psychological, experimental, black humor, fiction that blurs the boundary between darkness and SF/F, stories must have an element of supernatural or fantasy, doesn't like cat stories, vampire stories, or stories told from POV of young adults or

children. Include cover ltr, e-mail subs to: talebones@nventure.com 1-2¢/word OP. 5/12/25

TransVersions—Mr. Dale L. Sproule & Ms. Sally McBride, 216 Woodfield Rd, Toronto, Ontario, M4L 2W7 Canada. \$5/\$18. SF/DF/H. To 12k words. Wants strange, adventurous, humourous, weird, kinetic, jazzy, fun, and quirky fiction, ambitious, literary, stylish & entertaining with resonance, wants more SF & F, but not cliches. 2 (Can)¢/word. 12/73/109

The Urbanite—Mr. Mark McLaughlin, P.O. Box 4737, Davenport, IA 52808. \$5/\$13.50. SF/F/DF/H/P. To 3k words. Theme for #10: Wicked Love, #11: Strange Nourishment, #12: The Zodiac, stories and poetry in unusual, creepy, exotic, and weird settings, seeking character-driven surrealism, slipstream fiction, no formulaic H stories, wants thought-provoking, surreal stories with rich characterization, SF but not hi-tech SF, bizarre humor, subtle/sly H, not gore. 2-3¢/word OA. 30/69/153

Wicked Mystic—Mr. Andre Scheluchin, 532 La Guardia Place #371, New York, NY 10012. \$5.95/\$23. DF/H/P. Around 3k words. Explicit, gut-wrenching, brutally twisted, warped, sadistic, deathly, provocative, nasty, blatant stories, heavily stocked. E-mail (queries only): Scheluchin@WickedMystic.com 1 1/4¢/word + free ad. 18/57/85

XOddity—Ms. Carol C. MacLeod & Ms. Cathy Strachan, P.O. Box 61736, Boulder City, NV 89006. \$4. SF/F/DF. 500-5k words. Also likes paranormal, anything with a twist, odd, different, or exotic, no porn or abuse stories, include cover ltr. ¼-1 ½¢/word OA.

Year 2000—Ms. Blythe Ayne, P.O. Box 55, Washougal, WA 98671. SF/F/DF/P. To 3k words. Literary, but accessible, myths, magic realism, positive, ethnologic insights, no active participation of weapons, wants to see more than one poem at a time. 1¢/word OP. 42/164/217

Electronic Magazines

E-scape—Ms. Marie Loughin & Mr. Dave Phalen, 1228 Westloop #356, Manhattan, KS 66502. SF/F/DF/H/SS. 500-5k words. No gratuitous sex, violence, or gore, needs horror stories for Halloween issue. Magazine in electronic format at www.interink.com/escape.html, include e-mail address on ms if available. E-mail (queries & subs): escape@interink.com. 1¢/word OA. 19/58/80

♣ **Exodus**—Exodus Magazine, 1959 N Peace Haven Rd #317, Winston-Salem, NC 27106-4850. SF/F/DF/H/SS. 500-5k words. Webzine www.blindside.net/Exodus wants believable characters, no excessive obscenities, violence, gore, sexual/child abuse, or eroticism, doesn't like space opera, time travel, alien encounters, cyberpunk, or cliched SS.

Do not include a bio or any credits, email submissions to: exodus_zine@blindside.net. 1-3¢/word.

Gothic.Net Webzine—Ms. Paula Guran, 1368 Fulton, San Francisco, CA 94117 (include copy on 3.5 inch disk in MS Word format). DF/H. 1k-5k words. Biweekly e-zine (www.gothic.net), read guidelines before submitting, disturbing, thought-provoking, even humorous stories that deal with the unknown, the unknowable, the twisted, true fear, bitter truth, a variety of styles: surreal, psychological, noir, eerie, new wave, transgressive, modern, post-modern, cyberpunk, slipstream, traditional, visceral, but not gross. E-mail subs (ASCII files): submit@gothic.net. 3¢/word OA.

Jackhammer—Ms. Raechel Henderson, 9220 Jill Lane #2E, Schiller Park, IL 60176. SF/F/H/SS. To 2k words. New e-zine (www.eggplant-productions.com), accepting only electronic subs (ASCII only, no attachments) around the Question of the Week found at the website, wants more F/H. E-mail (subs & queries): jackhammer@eggplant-productions.com. 1¢/word OP. 2/4/10

Millennium SF & F—L.D. Van Valkenburg, GlobalNet Productions, 3507 Tully Rd Suite E2-130, Modesto, CA 95356. SF/F. Around 2,500 words. Web-magazine interested in interdimensional,

alternate history and F stories, e-mail (queries only, please): globalnet@earthlink.net, www.gnpl.com/magazine. \$25/story OA.

Speculative Fiction & Beyond—John Bradt, 4 Tonada Dr, Irvine, CA 92720. SF/F/DF/H. To 5k words. Electronic magazine (www.johnbradt.com), No YA fiction, wants mystery and suspense also. Include cover ltr, write or e-mail (stark@johnbradt.com) for guidelines before submitting, heavily stocked and slow responding. 3¢/word OP.

TomorrowSF—Mr. Algis Budrys, P.O. Box 6038, Evanston, IL 60204. SF/F/DF/H. An electronic magazine at www.tomorrowsf.com. All submissions must be by snailmail to the address given. Any type of Speculative Fiction, heavily stocked and buying slowly. No cover ltrs, no folded, single-spaced, or simultaneous subs. 4-7¢/word (\$75 min) OP. 7/16/24

Anthologies

Bending The Landscape—Mr. Stephen Pagel and Ms. Nicola Griffith, 2332 Ava Place, Decatur, GA 30033. DF/H. 2k-8k words. Stories must center around lesbian and/or gay characters and themes, be set in a milieu outside our conventional reality, no cliches, avoid stories on AIDs, clones, vampires, revenge, rape, cute F, the gay gene.

SF&F volumes full, H one still needs stories, particularly wants fiction that is surreal and/or has a sense of voice/place, include cover ltr specifying H submission. 6¢/word OA.

Cemetery Sonata—Ms. Jane Hubbard, 3430 Salem Dr, Rochester Hills, MI 48306. DF/H. 500-7k words. Civil War ghost stories or ghost stories relating to that era, no unnecessary violence or gore. E-mail (queries only): WZTT67B@Prodigy.com 3¢/word.

The Plastic Smile—Mr. Mark McLaughlin, P.O. Box 4737, Davenport, IA 52808. SF/F/DF/H. 2k-3,500 words. Fiction about surrealistic bendable dolls, like plastic-jointed dolls, rag dolls, puppets, etc, but no robots, sex-dolls, statues, figurines, brand-name dolls (like Barbie or Cabbage Patch dolls), gore, or porn, query about reprints. 3¢/word.

Vampire Anthology—The Design Image Group, P.O. Box 2325, Darien, IL 60561. DF/H. 3k-7k words. Vampire stories only, include cover ltr. 5¢/word.

Writers Of The Future—Contest rules & entries: P.O. Box 1630, Los Angeles, CA 90078. SF/F/DF/SS. \$500-\$5,000 plus anthology payment for winners. Must send SASE for format/info, or obtain info from published antho. Reports in 12-15 weeks after each quarterly deadline (deadlines at end of Jun./Sept./Dec.).

Major Book Publishers

Ace—Ms. Anne Sowards, 200 Madison Ave, New York, NY 10016. SF/F/DF. First 3 chapters, cover ltr, and synopsis. 36/82/312

Avon Eos—Ms. Jennifer Brehl, 1350 Ave of the Americas, New York, NY 10019. SF/F. 80k-100k words. At least first 3 chapters and synopsis. 6/42/112

Baen Books—Mr. Jim Baen, P.O. Box 1403, Riverdale, NY 10471. SF/F. 80k-110k words. Complete MS & synopsis, buying slowly. 29/189/422

Bantam Spectra Books—Mr. Pat LoBrutto, 1540 Broadway, New York, NY 10036. SF/F/DF. Query first. 29/102/155

DAW Books—Mr. Peter Stampfel, 375 Hudson St, New York, NY 10014-3658. SF/F/DF. 80k+ words. Complete MS, cover ltr & synopsis, heavily stocked. 30/135/367

Del Rey Books—Ms. Shelly Shapiro, 201 E 50th St, New York, NY 10022. SF/F/DF. 60k-120k words. Query first, first 3 chapters & synopsis, only responds if interested. 52/114/345

Harperprism Books—Mr. John Silbersack, 10 E 53rd St, New York, NY 10022-5299. SF/F/DF/. 70k+ words. Query first.

Roc Books—Ms. Jennifer Heddle, 375 Hudson St, New York, NY 10014-3657. SF/F/DF. 80k-150k words. Query first.

St. Martin's Press—Mr. Gordon Van Gelder, 175 Fifth Ave, New York, NY 10010-7848. SF/F/H. Complete MS, cover ltr & synopsis. 37/51/78

Tor Books—Mr. Patrick Nielsen Hayden, 175 Fifth Ave, New York, NY 10010. SF/F. 80k-150k words. At least first 3 chapters, cover ltr & synopsis. 21/157/538

TSR/Wizards of the Coast Books—Manuscript Submission, c/o Book Publishing Team, Wizards of the Coast, PO Box 707, Renton, WA 98058-0707. SF/F. Hard SF & traditional F. First 3 chapters, cover ltr & synopsis. Very heavily stocked.



Staying Alive

Writers Loving Non-Writers

Bruce Holland Rogers

As you might guess, domestic unions between a writer and a non-writer are loaded with advantages that are pretty much the flip side of a writer-writer partnership's disadvantages. Non-writers (by which I really mean non-artists) aren't given to a writer's obsessions. They're more likely to notice the pile of dishes in the sink and do something about it, even if it's only to say, "Honey, did you notice how bad the kitchen's getting?" At least there's some adult supervision in the house. Non-writers are also more likely to earn a reliable income, possibly putting them in a position to subsidize the writer's efforts. And whatever ego issues there are in the relationship at least aren't issues of artistic rivalry.

There are other advantages. A non-writer is probably in solid contact with the extra-literary world, so even if the writer spends long hermetic stretches inside her own imagination, she's not as isolated as she'd be with another writer. For her part, the writer gives the household some status diversity. Whatever cool things the partner does in the world, there are plenty of people who think that doing those cool things *and* living with a published writer is cooler still. Some non-writing partners even get a creative buzz from subsidizing a

lover's writing—they had a hand in bringing that work into the world, and they're proud.

But there are disadvantages, too. In a partnership between a writer and a non-writer, worlds collide. The negative products of that collision, from most to least serious, are *The Poisonous Problem*, *Ordinary Problems*, and *The Itchy Problem*.

The Poisonous Problem is deadly, a serious impediment to a healthy relationship.

Here's a true story, in disguise. A group of us were having lunch, talking about a party planned for the weekend. Hugo confided to us that his girlfriend didn't want to come to the party. Most of the people there would be writers. She didn't like writers.

All of us, Hugo's friends, his *writer* friends, had heard this before. Someone said, "She doesn't like *us*? That's a bad sign, Hugo!" We laughed. If that had been the whole story, we would have left it at that. A joke.

But there was more. "She keeps bugging me about how much I write," Hugo said. "She keeps asking why I'm banging my head against the wall, since I've only sold a couple of stories. We've been going out for a year, but she acts

like writing is a bad habit she can talk me out of. She says, 'You're not succeeding, so why do you torture yourself this way?'"

"Dump her."

Although I'd been thinking the same thing, I was surprised that anyone had actually spoken the words. But after a moment's hesitation, the rest of us chimed in. We qualified the initial harshness of those two words, acknowledged that the relationship might be good in other ways. Then all of us, men and women, straight and gay, partnered and single, advised Hugo to cut his losses and leave this woman. She didn't get what he was about, we told him. Probably she never would.

Did our harsh reaction serve Hugo's best interests? I think it did. Had they stuck it out, I imagine Hugo and his girlfriend would have had the same fight day after day for as long as they were together. They might be arguing about the unwashed dishes, what kind of car to buy, where to go on vacation, or whether Hugo should seek a promotion at work. But in every case, the real argument churning beneath the surface would be over whether or not Hugo was okay, whether he had the right to be who he was.

Having to fight again and again with your closest companion over your basic values makes for a poisonous relationship. Eventually, with that much poison around, something dies. Sometimes it's the relationship. Sometimes it's the writer's devotion to writing.

In theory, the non-writer could change, could develop a true appreciation for the writer's identity and work. In theory.

Personally, I suspect this third outcome happens about as often as abusive spouses are changed by their partner's love. I wouldn't want to risk my life or my creative fire on it.

More often, the collision of worlds is less extreme and leads to more **Ordinary Problems**. Each partner has to bend a little to accommodate the other's assumptions about what matters and how things should be done, which is, of course, what any couple does, but everything is worked out in the context of one partner's writing. How are you going to divvy up the traditional sex role assignments to carve out some time for the writer to write? To what extent do you both agree that writing is "real work"? Under what circumstances would it be reasonable to expect the writer to write less and earn a more reliable income or do more around the house? What matters more, dinner or a finished poem? In short, how are you going to collaborate on a relationship that gives you both what you need and enables the writer to write?

I'm not going to say much here about Ordinary Problems, but not because they aren't important. Indeed, even though Ordinary Problems don't threaten the foundations of the relationship or the roots of the writer's identity the way that the Poisonous Problem does, they can gradually corrode a union in which they aren't addressed.

But I've already said most of what needed saying about these problems in the first "Writers and Lovers" column. Every issue that I discussed there is liable to need working out in a writer/

non-writer partnership. Unlike a writer/writer pairing, there aren't a lot of things that a non-writing partner will easily and automatically understand about what a writer needs.

One Ordinary Problem that I didn't cover previously is how egos can be bruised when only one partner writes. While it's true that a writer and non-writer don't compete directly, one partner's success can still leave the other feeling diminished. The writer who is struggling in obscurity can feel left behind by a partner whose hard work is more apparent and legitimate in the Wider World. And the non-writer can feel left behind, too, if the writer publishes successfully and the couple increasingly enters a social milieu of publisher's parties and awards banquets at which the non-writer, who is used to having the most outward status, has none. It helps if you're both successful in your respective spheres. Realistically, success isn't likely to find you both at the same moment.

Finally, there's the **Itchy Problem**, which isn't likely to destroy a relationship even if you ignore it. And for some couples, ignoring it is the easiest thing to do. But there is one wrinkle to watch out for.

I call it the Itchy Problem in honor of my ex-mother-in-law, who gave me a sweater every birthday and most Christmases. A wool sweater. I'm allergic to wool. Wearing it makes my skin itch. Inhaling the fibers makes me wheeze. So for five years, I collected sweaters I couldn't wear.

Did my ex and I tell her mom that I couldn't wear wool? I'm sure we did, though it's possible that we did so timidly and apologetically. We went along to get along. The sweaters themselves weren't really important. The two cotton sweaters I already had suited me fine, so I lost nothing by accepting these useless gifts and eventually giving them away. It was a little irksome not to have this aspect of who I am recognized, but I could deal with that lack of recognition from in-laws. It's not like I lived with them. It's not like having allergies is a treasured part of my self-concept.

The Itchy Problem is the lack of recognition from people outside of your primary relationship. If you're a writer, single, unattached, it's a problem you're going to have to deal with on your own. The main thing you do is just get used to it and hang out with other writers and artists who can validate your identity as friends. The source of potential tension in a relationship is how the *partner* deals with the wool sweaters that other people hand you.

As I noted two columns back, you can make all sorts of creative arrangements for the division of labor and other responsibilities, for nourishing each partner's needs in the relationship. You and your partner control the shape of your relationship. What you can't control is how your relationship is perceived.

Sometimes it seems like it's the partnership against the world. If your in-laws don't understand your arrangements, how much less likely are your workaday colleagues and neighbors to understand?

"She works so hard," some gossip says, "and he just stays at home, sitting around, I guess. He says he's writing a book. Do you know I went by there in the afternoon once, and he answered the door in his bathrobe?"

Or alternatively, "He's an engineer. As for her, well, she doesn't work. Have you ever been in there? With all the time she has on her hands you'd think she could do something about that house!"

To put this in practical terms, let's say you write best after midnight, when the rest of the household is sleeping. As a result, you sleep until noon every day. You and your partner have resolved this Ordinary Problem. It works for you, and it works for your partner. But your parents don't get it.

Your mother calls at eleven in the morning and is aghast to hear your partner report that you're still in bed at such an hour. Mom wants to talk and suggests that your partner wake you up. Your partner can (A) wake you up and let you deal with your mother, (B) refuse to wake you but, for the sake of good in-law relations, agree that sleeping until noon does seem pretty slovenly, (C) fight the good fight by explaining to your mother that you were up late working because that's what you do, you write, and the best hours for it are from midnight to four.

What I want in a partner, and what Holly would do for me in such a case, is C. And bully for the partner who defends you vigorously. But mine is a two-writer relationship, and the refusal to recognize one of us is

effectively a refusal to recognize either of us. Vigorously defending our identity comes naturally. We're both oddballs. When only one partner is the oddball, the outside social forces tend to line up on one side, trying to enlist the partner in pressuring the oddball to be more ordinary.

It's important for a writer/non-writer couple to understand that this pressure is going to come. And then it's important for the writer to not worry, since worry about itchy sweaters is just about the only way that they can become a real problem.

Will the litany of disapproval eventually convince the writer's partner that the writer is indeed a bizarre loon whose habits ought not to be tolerated? Does the partner's unwillingness to tilt at every windmill of disapproval indicate an imperfect commitment to the relationship?

No.

Explaining why you live the way you do is your job and no one else's. If you aren't persuasive, don't blame your partner if she or he isn't persuasive either. As long as your partner believes in you, count yourself lucky.

You and your partner are swimming against the mainstream. You do this because you must. Your partner does it because he or she wants to be with you, strange as you are.

I don't think you should ask for more than that.



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“Mommy, Can I Eat This Alien Bug?”

Wolf Read

Biology is one of the “soft sciences,” and this softness offers a certain leeway, or “fudgefactor,” that writers—including yours truly—sometimes take advantage of. Yes, the plasticity of biology is a wonderful opportunity for creativity, one that should be used in an effort to make an interesting story. But there are certain trends in the sf literature that our current knowledge of biology tells us are unlikely to happen. I’ll outline a few.

Furries in Space

Furries: basically alien creatures with naturally evolved mammalian characteristics, including fur, endoskeleton, and two adorable big brown eyes. Talking kangaroos, gazelles, and wolves. Warm and furry and all that.

Due to the random nature of mutations, it is unlikely that there’s an alien out there with *all* the characteristics of mammals. This would require the coincidental development of so many different features, such as the complex mammalian ear, which is derived from specific bones of the mandible, which is further derived from an endoskeleton (internal skeleton), etc., that this is impossible. However, aliens with some specific mammalian features are within the realm of possibility:

Fur seems likely to be repeated on alien worlds, as do feathers and scales. All three types of body cover are a product of specific types of skin folding in utero. Since any organism, by definition, will have a surface made of something, then it wouldn’t be too difficult to repeat the folding process and get structures similar to hair, scales and feathers. However, note what a small percentage of animals on Earth have bird-like feathers and mammal-like fur: the vast majority have nearly bare chitin and sclerotin (insect shells, which serve as external [exo]skeletons), like the hundreds of thousands of identified beetle species. There are only about 4,400 mammal species and a little more than twice as many birds.

An endoskeleton is a big problem for furries in space. The chordates are derived from a little worm-like creature that lived in the Cambrian seas among a whole slew of wild and wicked organisms. If that single worm hadn’t survived—maybe from a local asteroid crashing into the Earth at an inopportune time—*bam*, there’d be nothing resembling an endoskeletal creature on Earth today. More likely, we’d be some kind of intelligent slug slapping away at a slime-resistant keyboard.

And if endoskeletons did evolve on an alien world, the likelihood of repeating the mammalian tetrapod (four-leg) body plan is quite low. Again, random mutations. An alien might have extra limb sets, or its vertebral column might be arranged down the ventral (bottom for a quadruped, "front" for humans) side of the torso instead of the dorsal (back) side. The alien might not have anything like the many-segmented mammalian vertebral column, or the mammal jaw, or a skull with two cheek bones. It might even be lacking inner ear bones, and a tail. Because there're often only a few good ways to build a structure, an alien could possibly have some of the mammalian endoskeletal traits, but they wouldn't show up in the exact combination we see in tetrapods. "Willie the talking fruit bat from Alpha Mensae" is very unlikely.

Now, on to eyes. Depending on which evolutionary biologist you talk to, terrestrial eyes either evolved independently many times, or only once so that all things with eyes have lineages tracing back to a single common ancestor. If the former, we can assume eyes are an easy thing to evolve, and that they will be produced rather quickly, as they are obviously quite useful. If the latter, then it possibly bespeaks the powerful survival value gained by having eyes, because so many animals have them. And it also suggests the possibility of Earthly life never having sight: if that single eye-bearing ancestor hadn't survived, would eyes have ever evolved again?

Interestingly, having two eyes isn't a hard and fast rule, though it's common enough to suggest that there is good reason to reduce the number of eyes to

the fewest required. Even so, there are abundant exceptions to this rule. Spiders have eight eyes. Praying mantises have five; two compound, and three simple. Some creatures from our distant past, like the prehistoric crustacean-like predator *Opabinia*, have had five as well.

An example of a plausible furry alien:

While exploring the "woods" near his research colony home on Epsilon Eridani II, Johnny encounters Wn'naw the furrywug and sees: a furry caterpillar-like beastie that has a worm-like body. Johnny pokes his finger between sparse, colorful hairs and tests the furrywug's tough, yet flexible skin. Being an astute student, Johnny immediately understands that the thick leathery skin serves as the furrywug's exoskeleton. The fuzzy creature has six sparkling eyes in a perfect rosette on top of its naked basketball head. Is having a head and being a worm universal? See the next section . . .

Cranial-Caudal Orientation and Bilateral Symmetry

Not all animals on Earth have a cranial-caudal (head-to-tail) orientation. There are beasts with radial symmetry, like jellyfish and sea urchins, or things that seem to have little symmetry at all, like some sponges. Terrestrial plants and sessile (immobile) animals seem to prefer various types of radial symmetry. So I wouldn't expect all the galaxy's aliens to have the kind of head-to-tail symmetry we humans do. With that said, it is good to keep in mind a few things:

Earthly land-based animals seem restricted to cranial-caudal orientation. Only animals which developed a cranial-caudal organization while living in the sea moved onto land. Maybe this is because the 2D terrestrial environment more solidly forces a need for a "direction" on a creature than does water's 3D environment. So an animal might have to be predisposed to directionality before it can survive on land. There is also the possibility that pure happenstance determined the types of creatures that became terrestrial. Many biologists, however, suspect the former—that there's a reason for all the "cranial-caudalness" we see in the terrestrial world.

One idea is that cranial-caudal orientation helps terrestrial animals find all-important sources of water: ponds, lakes, streams. Land-based water is a commodity that may not seem rare to us, for we have the benefit of being evolved to find it. For creatures just moving out of the ocean, it is pretty scarce. A cranial-caudal orientation may be required for the creature to understand direction, for having a fixed orientation may aid the animal in developing a mental map of its territory by virtue of giving the creature a reference frame. In the sea, finding water isn't an issue, and food isn't a big problem, for it's literally everywhere, so the need for a specific orientation just isn't as strong.

Considering that fish and crustaceans, with their cranial-caudal orientation, evolved in the sea, it may

appear that the above argument is weak. Why evolve a unidirectional orientation in the ocean, if it doesn't convey an advantage? Maybe it *does* offer a slight edge in obtaining food in the sea, one that is dependent on the organism's specific roll in the food web. Still, the fact that cranial-caudal orientation evolved in the sea does not rule out the possible requirement of having just such an orientation for creatures who move onto land.

Sea stars (also known as starfish) offer nice insight into the question of the survivability of radial symmetry. After all, they are radially symmetrical and somewhat "terrestrial" in nature, though they live on the sea floor and littoral (coastal) regions, instead of deep into continental mainlands. The most fascinating part about sea stars is that they evolved from a cranial-caudal oriented ancestor. This is evidenced by their larvae, which share the same symmetry as you and I. As the larvae develop, they go through a complex metamorphosis that reorients their bodies 90 degrees and gives them the beautiful radial symmetry we see in an adult sea star. If radial symmetry were not survivable for free-moving animals, then sea stars wouldn't have evolved, nor would they have lasted for as long as they have—at least 500 million years, as indicated by rare fossils.

The longevity of the sea star lineage brings up another important fact: sea stars had ample opportunity to move onto land long before some vertebrate mud skipper look-alike called, "Land ho!"

It's possible that the sea star's reproductive methods kept them bound to the sea, but probably not. Vertebrates found a way around that problem by returning to water to deposit their eggs, and subsequently have their young develop within the nurturing confines of water: the all-familiar amphibians. So maybe there *is* a disadvantage for an animal with radial symmetry in a terrestrial environment, all based on the creature's ability to understand orientation and locate sources of water. But it's still not one-hundred percent certain, leaving the opportunity to throw away the all familiar cranial-caudal appearance of humanity, and develop alien worlds that harbor things quite different in basic form.

Cranial-caudal orientation does not require a human-like bilateral (two even sides) symmetry. The bilateral orientation of vertebrates is purely a legacy¹ of ancestry, and easily could have been something different. There are many other symmetries that would work with the head-to-tail design: trilateral, quadrilateral, pentilateral, etc. Especially if most life starts in the ocean, where the almost weightless 3D environment allows a significant degree of freedom. Indeed, a close look at things like whales, dolphins and sharks suggests a weak trilateral con-

figuration: single dorsal fin, and two pectorals. Due to gravity, the terrestrial environment seems to force a kind of bilateral symmetry on creatures: an animal needs legs on both sides to stand evenly, right? Not always. A single leg in the middle could work. And who's to say a row of legs couldn't run down a creature's midsection, or that the limbs that were once fins on the back couldn't evolve into something useful, such as radiators or free arms?

As for worms being a possible "universal," a worm could be made out of any of the symmetries listed, and a simple tube is a very efficient shape for housing the internal organs. Worm-shapes are so common on the Earth—even vertebrates couldn't resist the temptation, making snakes—that they may indeed be a universal form for life.

Are heads universal, too? Evolving a head is a logical step for an oriented creature: it's good to get your sensor housing in the lead, where it's needed the most. For a radially symmetric beast a head is not as important, because its "front" can be changed at any moment, though there may be some advantage in getting some sensors close to the brain for reaction-time reasons. A definable head may not be present on everything we encounter, but they will probably be pretty common.

¹ Legacy can create evolutionary limitations: for vertebrates, which in evolutionary terms are a highly conserved group of organisms, when something like a limb is atrophied, it seems there's little chance of it being re-evolved. A classic example of this is with birds that have returned to a terrestrial existence, ostriches and emus being well-known examples. The wings of these birds, instead of reverting back to the set of arms and five-fingered hands that they are derived from, have become highly atrophied and nearly useless.

Johnny notices that Wn'naw has six skeletal arms arranged in a neat rosette about its head, one for each eye, yet only two lines of stubby legs. But wait, there are four rows of delicate fan-like organs with colorful plumes of hairs . . . maybe they were legs or fins once, and now are used as radiators. The fans pulse slowly, and he realizes that they might mark breathing pores. In any event, the furrywug is definitely a hexilateral creature with cranial-caudal orientation. "Boy, are you cute," says Johnny, taken by the furrywug's appearance.

Monoculture and Dominant Species

Worlds that are covered in basically one thing, like perpetual seas of grass, or having only an assortment of plants without animals, or only big animals, will be incredibly rare at best, and impossible in most cases. A planet's surface environment is so varied—look at all the wonderful variety we're discovering on each of the solar system's worlds—and competition between life forms is so high, that a very complex mix of organisms will be the likely result.

Life's always looking to take advantage, and if you have static photosynthesizers, some mobile beastie will develop that can take advantage of the easy meal. Then some other beast will find the grazer quite palatable, and a parasite or two will join in. It's just a matter of time, and on the geologic scale there's plenty of it.

Of related note, "dominant this" and "dominant that" sometimes appears in stories. Dominant life-form, dominant terrestrial fauna, etc., are all really misnomers—certainly in the way most

people think of the term "dominant," the implication isn't true. Dominant is a paleontological term that reflects on the most prevalent fossils within a given geological stratum. Dominance does not describe the life forms present, save that something made them most likely to be preserved in the fossil record. Maybe they had hard shells, or bones, and preserved more easily than a host of soft critters that were actually more common at the time.

Some might think that humanity is a good example of a "dominant life-form." Even with today's technology backing humanity up, the case would be weak. What about rats, cockroaches, and coyotes? Or, how about our lovely little pals like lice, fleas and ticks? And, even with our robust population of more than six billion, there are easily one million ants for each of us, happily living in our homes and backyards as we try to fend them off with one nearly worthless deterrent after another.

I suggest that the next time you're out in the wilderness, take a close look at what's out there. Write down the organisms you see. Plan on getting writer's cramp, for the list should become long.

Consider what you've encountered. Is there really only one kind of tree present, or grass, or cactus? Unless you're on a monoculture plantation, it's not likely. Is one species really "dominant" over the others? How would you define "dominant"—a species that's big and appears to be occupying the most space, the species that catches your eye first, a species that has the greatest number of individuals, or is it a class of organisms with the greatest number of spe-

cies? In short order, you will see the logic in dropping the idea of a dominant life form. Write about the variety that is likely to exist on your alien world. If anything, a much more interesting setting will result.

Johnny is taken by the beautiful furrywug with all its neat red, yellow, and white furry rows, and jewel-like eyes. The beast "dominates" his vision. A breeze whispers past Johnny's ears and shakes the five-branched springpole trees that surround the sunny glade Johnny and the furrywug are in. Johnny's attention is drawn to the springpole trees' broad, square leaves—not to be mistaken for the square leaves of the mimicvine that is often climbing the trees' five straight branches, and easily distinguished from the triangle leaves of the pom-pom trees that're intermingled with the springpoles (there's more than one way to make a light collector). The large leaves cast dark, shimmering shadows on the shade-loving popcorn flowers, which aren't really a flower, but look like one, and the chin-whisker grass, which isn't really a grass, but its bluish blade-shaped leaves make it resemble Kentucky bluegrass, and it doesn't contain the silica of Earthly grass but a keratin-like substance that gives the grass the lovely rough feel of hubby's stubble against wife's soft cheek. Blue-black exoskeletal critters flit about under the sun, and a few buzz past Johnny's ears, apparently running away from the sky-blue two-winged pincerbugs that are plucking the hapless black "bugs" out of the air. With one of its many arms, Wn'naw snares a pincerbug and chomps down on it with conical teeth....

The Alien Plague, and "Mommy, Can I Eat this Alien Bug?"

Johnny, of course, wants to do what the furrywug just did: eat a bug. But he'll have to wait a few more moments.

After its meal, Wn'naw and Johnny partake in a bit of romping. Johnny's "it" and Wn'naw runs. Johnny chases. During the run, Wn'naw regurgitates indigestible portions of its recent meal: the furrywug turns, opens its simple iris-ing mouth and coughs a green, pincerbug-leg-filled loogie onto Johnny. Johnny wipes the slime from his shoulder and then smears it on his pants in an effort to clean his hand. Later on, he goes home to eat lunch and ask Mommy his all-important menu question—but he forgot to wash his hands with antibacterial soap.

Is there a chance that Johnny could catch something from the cute and oh-so-cuddly furrywug?

No.

On Earth, viruses have evolved in lock-step with their host organisms. Viruses are so intimate in their attack that they utilize the host's DNA for replication of their own RNA strands. If an alien virus infected a human cell, it would not have the proper tools to cause harmful machinations: our RNA or DNA. For the same reasons, our own viruses would be harmless to alien flora and fauna. Sorry H. G. Wells.

This holds especially true for alien "infections" that in some way modify or enhance some aspect of human physiology: pure fantasy. Aside from the above mentioned problems, this

kind of useful symbiosis takes a long time geologically to develop between sympatric (species with overlapping ranges) organisms.

As for eating aliens, sure, Johnny can eat the alien bug, but what would he get out of it? Not much.

Biological poisons, similar to viruses, are things that have evolved in lock-step between defender and attacker. A plant will only bother to make a poison that's going to work on its assaulter, and that assaulter will either develop methods of resisting that toxin, find a new food, or die. If the assaulter develops immunity, then the plant will have to make a new toxin, or make its current one more potent, or it, too, will die. Alien flora and fauna will not have developed in response to Earthly life, and the variety of proteins is so great that the likelihood of encountering an alien plant that coincidentally developed something like cyanide is remote at best.

Now, if the alien plants and animals incorporate something of basic elemental nature in their systems that is poisonous or dangerous to humans, like lead or a strong acid, then indeed, it can be a problem.

The above holds true for getting nourishment from an alien life form—the bug Johnny wants to eat is not likely to have the kind of complex proteins and carbohydrates Johnny's body can process effectively. If the alien bug had calcium in its shell, or zinc in its body, then those things can be processed and utilized—but they are hardly enough for a well-balanced meal.

Mommy, having studied Epsilon Eridani II's biochemistry, says, "Yes," to Johnny's question, and Johnny eats the bug. Nothing happens. "This bug doesn't even have a flavor!" he complains. But it had a texture. A hearty crunch with a nice spot of goo in the middle (sort of like fast food French fries).

In Conclusion

Many things that seem possible between organisms from different worlds are not likely—and I've just covered a few. Biology is a very complex phenomenon, and an examination of all its parts would fill volumes. It seems that with a little effort, careful consideration of plausible alien biology could lead a prospective author into an alien realm that no one has ever considered before, and find that elusive foundation for a fresh and wonderful story.

Indeed, the ideas in this essay shouldn't be seen as a creative block, but more as a door to greater creative potential. For example: You're considering a plot that requires humans to eat alien life for survival. Maybe, to make their lives easier, the protagonists can be physically altered to survive on the fruits of the alien biosphere. This kind of physical alteration would be in the realm of possibility for an interstellar culture, and be interesting to read about. And just think, if these people are altered enough to acquire nourishment from an alien planet's life, then they might just become susceptible to a few of its microbes.

Have fun!



Alien Languages 101

Lawrence M. Schoen

Why is it that most aliens speak either unintelligible gibberish or, worse, slightly accented English? If you go to the trouble to create plausible technology to get your humans to an alien world, or generate wonderfully different cultural contexts for your extraterrestrial society, or craft biologically viable and yet dramatically different intelligent lifeforms, then why not produce some good alien dialogue? You don't need an advanced degree in linguistics or philology (though it didn't hurt Tolkien), you just need to know what some of your options are.

Fictional languages exist on a continuum, ranging from incomprehensible blathering to full blown linguistic systems complete with mutually intelligible dialects and both related and unrelated languages. The former is a complete cop out and the latter will almost certainly pull you too far away from your plot to justify that kind of detail. You want to aim somewhere in the middle. To accomplish this let's examine some of the components that define language, both the naturally occurring kind and the constructed.

Phonology

The first thing you notice about a language is how it sounds, what kind of funky clicks and pops and whistles your aliens use as part of their repertoire of speech sounds. Regrettably, this is often the extent of the language development in fictional languages. Humans can make a wide range of noises with their mouths, lips, tongues, and noses, but any given language uses only a small subset of these, and there are some sounds that, while possible, simply don't show up in the construction of words (e.g., the "raspberry" or "Bronx cheer" sound). Each of us begins life with the potential to produce and distinguish the full possibility of human speech sounds. Research suggests that as we develop we focus on those sounds which are in our environment (i.e., being spoken around us) and let our facility with the unused sounds slip away. Think of any foreign speaker who can't quite pronounce (or perhaps even hear) a given consonant in your native language and you're seeing the effects of phonology. Your aliens, despite spending years studying Earth's radio and television signals, can be reasonably expected to have similar problems.

However, phonology refers not just to the particular sounds a language uses, but, more interestingly, to the rules governing their combination as well. Just because a language makes use of certain sounds does not mean it uses them in all possible combinations. For example, although English uses the nasal sound represented by the letters *ng* at the end of words (e.g., *sing*) and in the middle of words (e.g., *singer*), our phonology doesn't allow us to begin a word with this sound. Unless you're familiar with a language that does have initial *ng* words you'll probably have difficulty even attempting to pronounce them, at least at first. It's simply not permitted according to the rules of English. Or consider Spanish's rule against certain initial consonant clusters; the language has no problem with two consonants occurring together (e.g., *s* and *p*), but this particular pairing cannot *begin* a word. A native Spanish speaker possesses all the sounds in words like "spouse" and "special" but will automatically insert a short vowel at the start of them. Your aliens might operate under similar conditions, making it difficult for them to speak certain terrestrial languages, and for humans to be comfortable with theirs.

Syntax

A second aspect of grammar is syntax, or what we normally think of as word order. A nice alien feeling can be achieved just by tweaking the syntax of a language, even if all you do is carry that syntax over into your alien's use of English. Think of the curious way that Yoda spoke and you'll begin to see some of the

possibilities; the path of a Jedi knight includes an understanding of syntax.

The first step is being clear on what kinds of word you have, before you begin ordering them. English syntax, at its most basic, tells us that the subject of the sentence (the person or thing, usually a noun, doing the action) comes first. This is followed by the verb, describing the action of the subject. Where applicable, the verb is followed by an object (again, usually a noun). In syntax shorthand this makes English a subject-verb-object (S-V-O) language. This is pretty common, and may not seem that important, but it actually is. Syntax sets you up for what to expect, and arguably the order of a sentence's components influences the way in which you process information and view the world. Consider the sentence *The author shot the editor*. Because of syntax we know who is doing what, and to whom. Reverse the syntax to object-verb-subject (as it happens to be in Klingon, my favorite O-V-S language) and the sentence becomes *the editor shot the author*. Although it looks strange to our S-V-O trained eyes, since this is an O-V-S sentence, the author is still the one doing the shooting. Because of the syntax, we don't find out who did the shooting till the very end of the sentence. Every O-V-S reads like a mystery, and certainly that ought to influence the way you view the world. (This is more than simply transforming the sentence into the passive voice. *The editor was shot by the author* still has the subject appearing before the verb. It's passive, but it's still the same English syntax we're used to processing. Our O-V-S sentence is very different.)

And it gets more complex; there are other parts of speech as well. Your aliens' dialogue would be pretty boring if it were limited to just subject, verb, object (regardless of the order you pick). Where do the modifiers of these words go (e.g., adjectives and adverbs), before or after their respective words, or somewhere else altogether? This gets particularly important when you are relying on syntax to tell you what part of speech a word happens to be. It's your knowledge of English syntax that allows you to tell the difference between a *light orange* and an *orange light*.

There's plenty left, but in the interests of space I'll only give you one more. Where do your aliens like to place their prepositional phrases (assuming they have them), at the beginning of the sentence, at the end, somewhere in the middle? If your aliens are producing sentences like *throw momma from the spaceship a kiss*, and they're not planning on jettisoning your mother out the airlock, then you're looking at yet another difference in syntax.

If phonology is about the sounds of a language and the allowable patterns of those sounds, then syntax can be thought of as the rules that describe the placement and relation of words in that language, based upon their function. And, as with terrestrial languages, the rules can get very complex. Keep in mind that so far we've only talked about declarative statements; the rules may change dramatically for asking questions, speaking in the passive voice, and so on.

Those rules are up to you. Your aliens might conceivably use the familiar S-V-O syntax for statements, but form questions by reversing the order. If your humans don't know this, the aliens may never appear to be asking questions, and are surely going to be making some strange statements. Subplots abound.

Semantics

The study of meaning is the least understood area of linguistics. Some of the issues that lend themselves well to constructing alien languages include how two words can mean the same thing; how two words can refer to the same thing but not mean the same thing; how one word can refer to the same thing as another word, but not vice versa; and how some words seem to be more closely related to one another than to a third word. All in all, it's quite a mess.

When talking about meaning we can focus on the "sense" of a word or phrase, as it occurs in a language. Problems in lexical ambiguity come up to a greater or lesser extent in all languages and have great potential for use in your alien language. Given a finite number of speech sounds and ways of combining them, your language is going to have multiple instances of words which sound alike but mean vastly different things. This has the potential for problems not just for humans trying to understand your alien language, but for your aliens understanding English. Consider a simple sentence like *the alien stood*

on the bank. The ambiguity might not be immediately obvious to you if you simply picked one meaning for "bank" and ran with it, but the question remains, is our alien standing alongside some water or on top of a financial institution? A little more context would help. *The alien stood on the bank, baiting a hook.* Now you're fairly certain the alien is going fishing, and is near the water; however: *The alien stood on the bank, baiting a hook. With a little luck he would catch himself a loan officer.* And now we're even more confused. English is lush with just this kind of lexical ambiguity, why shouldn't the alien language you construct be so as well?

Synonymy, antonymy, and hyponymy are also sources of confusion and subtlety. Two words are synonyms when they appear to have the same meaning or sense. This may be true in many contexts, but not all. Consider a pair of synonyms such as *large* and *big*; you can use these words interchangeably in most situations without altering the sense of your remarks. The key word here is "most." Although a *large dog* and a *big dog* may be seen to mean the same thing, a *large brother* and a *big brother* are not. Despite the use of synonyms different meanings have emerged. A native speaker knows these exceptions about her own language and would not make this kind of mistake, but may not be consciously aware of the underlying rule or able to warn others about it.

In contrast, antonyms are usually thought of as two words with opposite meaning, but that is somewhat vague. Some antonyms describe a binary state; that is, something is either one way, or the other, e.g., *alive* or *dead*. Other antonyms exist on a continuum, with alternative states lying between them, such as exist between *hot* and *cold*. Still other antonyms describe relationships between two or more things and must adhere to a certain logic; for example, if your alien floats *above* the human, then the human must be *below* the alien. The different types of antonyms show us something of how we choose to divide up reality. Perhaps in your alien language the antonyms *alive* and *dead* are not binary at all, but exist on a continuum. Perhaps there is no middle ground between *hot* and *cold*. Or perhaps concepts which to us are not antonymical are profoundly so for your aliens.

Lastly, hyponymy reflects the way some words contain within themselves the meaning of other words, typically in a superordinate/subordinate fashion. We can say *all humans are mammals* but the reverse, *all mammals are human*, is not allowable. In fact, any given superordinate usually contains several subordinates (and they in turn can be superordinate to their own respective subordinates). Assumptions made in an alien language based upon perceived hyponymy may not map perfectly back on to terrestrial languages; the potential for some serious and embarrassing confusion exists.

Finally, no discussion of semantics would be complete without a few remarks on *entailment* and *presupposition*. The former refers to information that follows necessarily from a sentence. The sentence *the alien was vaporized in the explosion* entails that *the alien is dead*. Or leastwise, it should. Issues of entailment can get pretty strange in science fiction, and the possibilities for miscommunication should not be ignored. Please note that entailment works in only one direction. Reversing the order of the sentences does not work. Just because *the alien is dead* does not ensure that *the alien was vaporized in the explosion*; he could be dead from some other cause.

Presupposition works the other way; some information is assumed, in order to allow sense to be made of a subsequent statement. Thus *the alien is dead* presupposes an unspoken sentence such as *there is an alien*. If this second sentence is false, then the first one doesn't make any sense at all. Again though, from the perspective of your aliens all sorts of things might be presupposed which the humans trying to understand the language are completely unaware of. Lacking the background, everything your alien says may sound like a collection of non sequiturs, syntactically well formed but lacking any semblance of sense.

Summary

The point of this mini grammar lesson is that there's a lot more that should be going on in your alien languages than just mapping funny sounds onto the names of things. All languages are striving toward the same goal, communication, but they get there by very different routes. The trick—and it really is just a trick—is to go in with a map, know your options, and choose the route you want. Think of the preceding phonological, syntactic, and semantic descriptions as choices that will allow you to create your alien language a la carte. Pick and choose, balanced or unbalanced depending on just how alien you want it to feel. You'll end up with an internally consistent system ready to become a new language.

Certainly there's a lot more to grammar than can be relayed in a couple thousand words, and if you really want to delve into constructing a language any basic linguistics text will be helpful, but you've got more than enough to begin creating a compelling grammar, and in short order your alien characters will have a language of their own to speak. Of course, that assumes your aliens are basically humanoid and converse through audible speech. What do you do if your aliens are a different shape or use another kind of communication system? Well, that's a topic for another article.



Trusting Your Instincts

Geoffrey A. Landis

My first short story was published ten years ago now. Forty-seven published stories and half a dozen awards later, it seems strange that I can recall in precise detail how I wrote the story, from the first notes about characters on to the final polishing of the rewrite. I am quite sure that you could show me any sentence at all from the story, and I would be able to tell you why I chose those particular words instead of some alternate phrasing, tell you how the sentence functions in the story and exactly what part it played in reaching the intended goal of the story.

Or perhaps not so strange at all.

That story ("Elemental," for the record; it appeared in the December 1984 issue of *Analog* magazine—it was nominated for a Hugo the year it appeared, but has never been reprinted) was put together painstakingly, in much the same way as a carpenter putting together a chest of drawers, each piece of wood—each scene—carefully cut to size and shaped to fit, then dovetailed in to the other pieces according to plans drafted before the first piece—the first word—was cut.

I don't usually plan out stories that thoroughly any more, at least, not on paper. I have a bit more faith in the powers of my subconscious, trusting that if I know the starting point and the general tenor of the conclusion, the details of how to get to the finish from the starting line will resolve themselves as I write.

For my first story, though, it was the right choice to outline it before writing the first word. A master carpenter may be able to build a deck, or even a two-story house, without ever consulting a set of plans, but the apprentice needs the guidance of a set of blueprints to have some confidence that the words being written actually make a story. I had fifteen pages of notes, outlines, and character sketches before I wrote a word of actual story prose.

What surprised me, though, was the surprises. Right from the first word, the characters that came out of my typewriter weren't the ones that I'd outlined into the story. The first scene introduced characters who weren't even in outline at all. Where did they come from? And what the heck were they doing in my story?

My instincts told me to do some subtractions, as well. The first draft had the major female protagonist seduce the male protagonist by use of a technological magic trick. It was a good scene, I thought; it fit the nature of the characters, advanced the storyline, and gave a bit of razzle-dazzle to add color for the readers.

And stopped the action dead. It had the characters spending all their time thinking about the repercussions of the scene, the morality of it. Too many issues were raised and not resolved, and it completely overshadowed the rest of the story. My characters had deadlines to meet; actions to accomplish; instead they were spending scene after scene cogitating over the implications of a throw-away sex scene. It was a good story, but it was the wrong story for this story.

So I dropped the scene, and the action flowed much more smoothly.

The conclusions here is, when you have instincts about a story, trust them.



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Editor's note: this article first appeared on the author's Web page, at www.sff.net/people/geoffrey.landis. We strongly recommend a quick trip through the author sites on sff.net; you'll uncover many buried treasures there.

Have you registered for the Online Update yet? If not, you could be receiving twice as much market information as you are now. Please visit www.speculations.com to register, or drop us a line at kent@speculations.com.

Nuts & Bolts

Kent Brewster, publisher

First things first. If you've never been a member of the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America, you haven't experienced some of the most bizarre political theater the universe has to offer. After a series of lurching spasms reminiscent of Captain Queeg's quest for the missing strawberries in *The Caine Mutiny*, SFWA's new brass has managed to rip the guts out of the *SFWA Bulletin*.

Up until two days ago, we considered it the only other general-interest publication for writers worthy of inclusion in our Other Important Resources sections. This is no longer true, since much of the staff of the *Bulletin*—including editor Mark J. McGarry, business manager Kevin O'Donnell, Jr., and ad director Sandra Morrese—has resigned or been summarily dismissed.

We're sorry to have to say it, but until the dust settles, we cannot recommend that anyone not presently a member of SFWA subscribe to the *Bulletin*.

Nice Round Number Department Checking In:

On a much more pleasant note, we recently passed a milestone. Our 1,000th subscription came in in

mid-June, from DiAnne Berry of Bush Prairie, WA. As our way of saying "thanks," we're going to add a free year to both her subscription and that of Judy Tucker of Salem, OR, the subscriber who recommended us. It's been a long haul to a thousand readers; here's hoping the next thousand doesn't take another four years.

As always, we remain ready to add one extra issue to the subscription of any current reader who sends us a new subscriber, so get busy out there. There's a handy "I Heard About *Speculations* From" blank on every subscription form; if you happen to be making copies for your friends, be sure you fill it in beforehand.

Good News From The Ego Shelf:

Tippi N. Blevins sold short story "The Ancient Order of Charming Princes" to *Prom Night* and "Legends" to *Spacer's Digest*.

Michael A. Burstein sold collaboration "Nor Through Inaction" (with **Charles Ar dai**) to *Analog*. Three *Analog* stories are on the way: "Cosmic Corkscrew," "In Space, No One Can Hear," and "Absent Friends."

Elizabeth Dearl saw "The Case of the Disappearing Dimes" in *The Case for Kids*, article "Don't Pull That Trigger Yet" in *Writer OnLine*, "Love Is Blind" in *Woman's World*, and "Same Old Henry" nominated for a Derringer Award.

Charles D. Eckert saw "To Feast In Fires" in *Weird Tales*. **Timons Esiais** sold short story "The Mars Convention" to *Interzone* and poems "The Last Word" and "I Must Admit" to *Asimov's* and "Endgame" and "All Day I Waited" to *Eternity*.

Jonathan Fesmire sold short story "Spicing Up Professor Sullivan" to *Jackhammer*. **Paula L. Fleming** sold "The Third Maiden" to *Eternity On-Line* and "Masking" to *Exodus*. **Ken Goodman** sold short story "Dawn's Anchor" to *TransVersions*.

James A. Hartley sold story "Pffhht!" to *Cabaret*, "Mandragon" to *Pulp Eternity*, "Grievous Music" to *Altair*, and saw "Pesticide" in *Visionair*. **Chris Markwyn** sold story "Overlay" to *Spaceways Weekly* and an article to *Jackhammer*.

Ann Marston won the HOMer (CompuServe) Award for Best Novel, for *Broken Blade*. **Lee Martindale** saw "Neighborhood Watch" in *MZBfm*, with illustrations by **Vincent Di Fate**.

Scott Nicholson won first place in the second quarter Writers of the Future with "The Vampire Shortstop" and sold short story "Dead Air" to *Blue Murder*. **Wolf Read** sold novella "The Trees of Verita" to *Analog*.

Louise Rowder won the HOMer award for Best Short Story, for "The Symmetry of Duty."

Jackie Shank sold article "You're Never Too Old to Start Writing" to *MZBfm*.

Mary Soon Lee sold reprint rights to a revised version of "Ebb Tide" to *Between the Darkness and the Fire*, "Courtly Love" to *TransVersions*, and was a finalist for the Sturgeon Award with "Universal Grammar."

Marcie Tentchoff sold article "Ethics in RPGing" to *Shadis*, short stories "Kathleen," "Rules," and "Trees" to *Jackhammer*, and poem "Game Over" to *The Orphic Chronicle*.

Judy Tucker sold poem "A Warm Welcome" to *Eternity*, short story "Summer Doings" to *Jackhammer*, and was hired as contributing editor for *Phantastes*.

Jim Van Pelt sold short stories "O Tannembbaum" to *Weird Tales*, "The Death Dwarves" to *Talebones*, "Never A Lender" to *Analog*, saw "Happy Endings" in *Realms Of Fantasy*, and tied for third in the 1997 AnLab poll with short story "The Big One."

Susan Williams sold story "Lilac Mist and the Butterfly Boy" to *Pulp Eternity*. **Curt Wohleber** sold short story "Mysteries of My Toaster Oven" to *TransVersions*. **Sue Wolven** sold short story "Taking Flight" to *Sword & Sorceress 16*.

And that'll just have to do until October. Until then, everybody get back to work!



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About the Authors

Amy Sterling Casill wrote and illustrated her first novel at age five, the 50-word *Freddy The Friendly Butterfly*. She was a finalist in the Writers of the Future Contest in 1995, 1996, 1997 and 1998, and her short fiction has appeared in *F&SF*, as well as smaller sci-fi publications, including *Talebones*. A novelette, "Chromosome Circus," will appear in an upcoming issue of *F&SF*.

Randy Dannenfelser edits and publishes *Adventures of Sword and Sorcery*; maintains the best market list in the business, and writes science fiction in his spare nanoseconds.

Alice Fish grudgingly shares her Toronto home with two cats and one rocket scientist, all of whom she's had neutered over the years. In spite of an almost infinitesimal amount of published prose to her credit, she enjoys scaring new writers with her reputation as "somebody you'd better be on the right side of."

Geoffrey A. Landis is a Hugo- and Nebula-winning science fiction short-story writer. He has published over 50 stories in various magazines and anthologies. Recent short-stories include "Approaching Perimelasma" in *Asimov's* and "Ecopocesis" in *Science Fiction Age*. In addition to writing science fiction, Dr. Landis is a scientist at the NASA Lewis Research Center. As a part of the Pathfinder team, he gave names to several rocks on Mars, including "Yogi." For more information, check his page at www.sff.net/people/Geoffrey.Landis/

Bridget McKenna lives in Seattle and supports her cats by writing for the entertainment software industry. Her short stories have appeared in *Asimov's*, *Amazing*, and *F&SF*, among others. Her mystery novels are published by Berkley Prime Crime.

Wolf Read is a Senior Illustrator at the Lawrence Hall of Science, though his education is in paleontology (paleo is a much harder field to make a living in than the field of art).

He's a contributor of fact, fiction, and visual art to *Analog*, including several cover stories and illustrations. As of late, his art sales have expanded to include the covers of *Talebones* and *Transversions*.

Mike Resnick's latest novels are *Kirtysage* (del Rey, April), *A Hunger In The Soul* (Tor, May), and the forthcoming *The Widemaker Unleashed* (Bantam Spectra, September). His novelette "Card Shark" appeared in the May *F&SF*, and his short story, "The 43 Antares Dynamics," is a 1998 Hugo nominee—the 10th year in a row that his fiction has appeared on the Hugo ballot, and his 17th Hugo nomination.

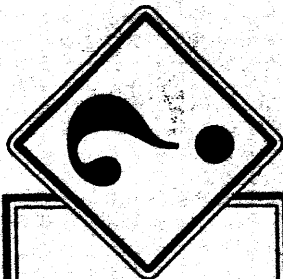
Bruce Holland Rogers lives in Eugene with his outrageously pampered wife, Holly Arrow. He has new stories in *Warrior Princesses* and *Black Cats and Broken Mirrors*, both from DAW.

Kurt Roth has had stories in magazines and anthologies such as *Odyssey* and *The Chronicles of the Round Table*, interviews, essays, and reviews in *The New York Review of Science Fiction*, *Speculations* and *Tangent*, is a staff writer for The Sci-Fi Channel's newest original program *Mindprobe*, and had his audio play *Herd Mentality* produced for Seeing Ear Theatre, starring the cast of *Mystery Science Theater 3000*.

Dr. Lawrence M. Schoen has spent ten years as a professor of psycholinguistics and cognitive psychology, and seven as the Director of the Klingon Language Institute. His short fiction will soon appear in *Terra Incognita*. His first novel, *Barak: An Anthropomorphic Romance*, is in search of a publisher.

Cynthia Ward lives in the Seattle area with her husband. She has stories forthcoming in *Bending the Landscape: Horror*, *Marion Zimmer Bradley's Fantasy Worlds*, *365 Scary Stories*, *Aberrations*, *Pulp Eternity*, *XOddy*, and elsewhere.

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