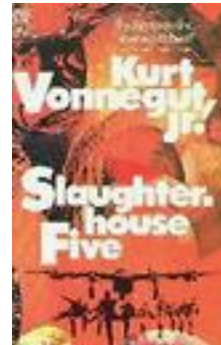
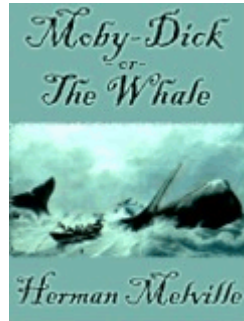
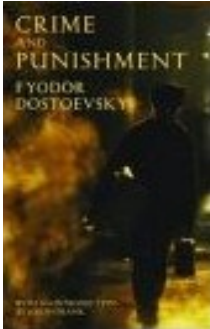
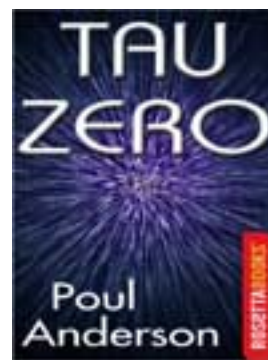
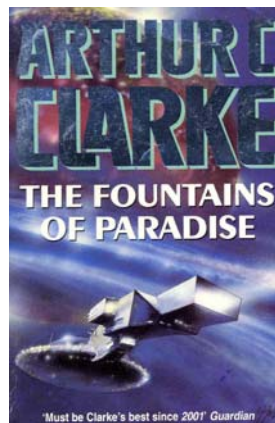
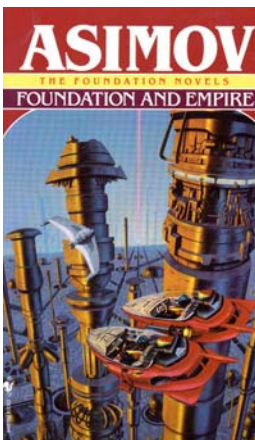


# Visions of Paradise #139



Great Literature!?!?



# Visions of Paradise #139

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### Artwork

Terry Jeeves ..... Page 6

# Out of The Depths

## Some observations on the Hugo nominations

As usual, there were some nominations which pleased me, and some which I consider questionable.

In the *Best Novel* category, **Anthem** by Neal Stephenson, **The Graveyard Book** by Neil Gaiman, and **Little Brother** by Cory Doctorow were three of the four most acclaimed f&sf novels of the year (along with Iain Banks' **Matter**), so it is good to see they all made the Hugo ballot.

Charles Stross (**Saturn's Children**) and John Scalzi (**Zoe's Tale**) make the ballot every year without yet having won the award, which seems to indicate they both have a devoted core of followers who nominate whatever they write, but their overall popularity is not high enough to translate those nominations into an award. On my list of most acclaimed novels of the year, neither of these two novels made the top 25 most recommended novels of 2008.

In the *Best Novella* category, Ian McDonald's "The Tear" has been widely-acclaimed as the best novella of the year, so it would seem to be the favorite in this category. Ironically, when I reviewed **Galactic Empires**, that was the only story which I found mostly unreadable and, in fact, I abandoned it about 1/4 the way through it. Besides making the Hugo ballot, the story has been selected for several best-of-the-year volumes, so I should try reading it again, hoping that after the first 1/4 it gets better.

The other novella nominees include regulars Nancy Kress ("The Erdmann Nexus") and Robert Reed ("Truth") as well as relative newcomers Charles Coleman Finlay ("The Political Prisoner") and Benjamin Rosenbaum & Cory Doctorow ("True Names"). While newcomers do win occasional Hugo Awards (such as Elizabeth Bear's win last year for "Tideline" over big name authors Stephen Baxter, Mike Resnick and Michael Swanwick), that was more the exception than the rule, so the latter authors might have to wait awhile before winning the award itself.

Overall, the short fiction nominees include 9 stories from the traditional prozines (7 from **Asimov's** and 2 from what I consider the superior **F&SF**), 5 from original anthologies, four from continuing series (**Eclipse**, **The Solaris Book of New Science Fiction**, and **Fast Forward**), one from original anthology **Galactic Empires**, and one from online zine *Baen's Universe*. This differs from the best-of-the-year volumes which have been gradually leaning away from the traditional prozines and towards anthologies and online zines. I do not know whether this means the Hugo Award nominators are more conservative, or that the other outlets do not have audiences large enough to receive enough nominations. In any case, it raises the question of whether the Hugo Awards are actually honoring the best stories of 2008 or just the best stories from widespread sources.

*Best Dramatic Presentation, Long Form* is an interesting group of nominees: Two incredibly popular super-hero movies (**The Dark Knight** and **Iron Man**) which are only f&sf peripherally,

another popular movie which is more sfnal if less omnipresent (**Hellboy II: The Golden Army**), an audio group-novel by well-known f&sf writers (including the very popular John Scalzi and former nominees Elizabeth Bear, Jay Lake, and Tobias Buckell); and one of the most acclaimed sf movies of recent years, **WALL\_E**. While I lean towards the latter nominee, its heavy competition might knock it out of the running.

I have always had issues with the “continuing” categories *Best Editor--Short Form*, *Best Editor--Long Form*, *Best Professional Artist*, *Best Semi-Prozine*, *Best Fanzine*, *Best Fan Writer* and *Best Fan Artist*, since from the beginning the awards have tended to go to the same small handful of winners every year. While there are some fine nominees this year, there is not much difference in this year's ballot than those of recent years, so is there much chance the winners will not be repeats from past years as well? For what it's worth, were I attending the worldcon in Montreal, my ballot would be topped with Gordon Van Gelder, Lou Anders, **The New York Review of Science Fiction** (I love **Locus**, but enough is enough!), **Challenger** (my choice as the best overall genzine), Steven H Silver (because I favor sf reviews and criticism rather than faanish talk), and Brad Foster (I know he won last year, but he does such excellent work, some of it for my own zine; is this bias? If so, I never claimed to be without sin myself).

Good luck to all the nominees!

## Great Literature

by Thomas D. Sadler

In his *Rat Stew* column which Gene Stewart writes for my fanzine **The Reluctant Famulus**, he quotes Kurt Vonnegut as having written, “Listen. All great literature is about what a bummer it is to be a human being . . .” Then Vonnegut goes on to list examples: “*Moby Dick*, *Huckleberry Finn*, *The Red Badge of Courage*, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, *Crime and Punishment*, the *Bible* and *The Charge of the Light Brigade*.” Oh, **really**? Defoe, Twain, Dickens (I know: he didn't mention anything by Dickens, but I'm sure the man's work is considered great literature.), Crane, Homer, Tennyson? Those writers' works are about what a bummer it is to be human?

That's interesting to hear. It almost makes me glad I haven't read much great literature. Not if it is about what Vonnegut claims it is. That's certainly something to think about. “All great literature is about what a bummer it is to be a human being . . .”.

I don't think so. I've read a good amount of Twain, am familiar with Defoe, Crane, and Tennyson and have never felt that way about what works of theirs I've read. They're realistic, maybe. They deal with unhappy and unpleasant aspects of life. But with what a bummer it is to be a human being? I find myself skeptical of that. Unless I'm very dense when it comes to understanding what I'm reading (and I don't think I am).

I've never gotten that impression from the works Vonnegut mentioned. In fact, I've read a lot of Vonnegut's fiction and have many of his books in my personal library. I've never felt any of

those were about what Vonnegut claims. Could it be that he didn't class any of his own writing as great literature? Maybe. Admittedly, his works contained some less than optimistic parts but on the whole I found his books interesting and entertaining.

I'm beginning to wonder if the late Mr. Vonnegut was spouting hogwash or was just in a particularly pessimistic mood. If not, then I think I've found another reason to avoid "great literature" if that's all it does. Incredible that "great literature" should set out to tell us all what we already know.

There seems to be some sort of perverse notion that because being a human is such a bummer, writing fiction dealing with just how much of a bummer it is makes for great literature.

Anyone who has successfully grown to adulthood is already aware of just how much a bummer being a human is. The evidence is all around them and, of course, shown in their personal lives. But just because that assessment is true I don't see any rational reason for having great literature focus on that particular aspect.

I don't know about anyone else, but I'm not masochistic enough to want to experience the miserable condition of being human in both real life and in fiction. Experiencing it in the real world is quite enough for me, thank you. I never did like people shoving things in my face to make a point or, rather, to make **their** point.

I'd like to know who it was who decided that "great literature" has to deal with how lousy it is to be human? I have a feeling it was some sort of committee that's to blame. **Why** did they decide literature **had** to focus on that aspect? I'll admit that a large part of human existence is unpleasant but that doesn't mean **all** literature should deal with that. It's like how people are fond of a particular kind of food and eat it every chance they get. A steady diet of the same thing isn't good. One needs to alternate their favorite food with other kinds. So too with "great literature" and its focus on how bad it is to be human. Any reader with good sense (and I would suppose there are readers who do possess such) would "dine" on a variety of literature.

I know that being human is a often difficult, but I'd like to think that maybe, just maybe, there are a few positive aspects that make our existence more bearable. I know most humans' lives are far from perfect (mine certainly is) and often sucks, but why be constantly reminded of it in fiction? Shouldn't it be possible for fiction to be considered great literature without always delving into the depths of misery? What would be wrong with writing stories that say, yeah being human sucks but you know maybe there are ways to rise above that condition. People can and do find purpose in their lives or live lives that are good in spite of the bummers. What is wrong with a little optimism about the human race now and again, of finding light at the end of the tunnel and happiness in simply being the best one can be?

Even as pessimistic as I can often be, I manage to find pleasant moments, periods of happiness,

and, yes, even wonder on most days. If being human is so bad, maybe it's because too many people perversely make it that way intentionally. Even to the point of carrying it over into so-called "great literature," which elevated writing is thought of as being far above science fiction, a bastard child.

One of the things I like about science fiction is its optimism and sense of wonder, its attitude that humans are capable of good and great things in spite of human nature. Science fiction is large enough to encompass stark realism, bright optimism, a sense of wonder and awe, and even escapism and in doing so be good, worthwhile reading.

There are some who believe that science fiction would greatly benefit from applying the standards of mainstream fiction, whatever those standards are. Maybe so, at least in part. But whatever SF borrows from mainstream fiction, I hope it continues to keep its core values and principles, the things which made so many of us fall in love with the genre: optimism, sense-of wonder, the exploration of possibilities in the future and the overall notion that, yes, life is lousy from time to time and the future looks grim but somehow there might be a chance for something better that there is hope if only we look for it.

But as for the idea that "all great literature is about what a bummer it is to be a human being", well I guess it's all in how one looks at it.



## The Passing Scene

March 2009

The annual statewide High School Proficiency Assessment took place the first week of March. This is the graduation requirement for all high school students, taking three days to test them in Reading, Writing and Math. I missed my AP Calculus class those three mornings, which is not good for their preparation for the upcoming AP test, plus I ran around for an entire week getting calculators ready since every student taking the HSPA requires a graphing calculator which must be reset and put into degree mode. This is the most stressful week of the entire school year.

Every year I give my Honors Algebra 2 classes a reading and a writing assignment, and this year I combined them into one project. First, each class was assigned to write a short 500-word paper examining a mathematical question. One class got “How much money can one person possibly win on Jeopardy on one show?” while the other got the infamous “If I packed Room 510 with dimes, how much money would I have?” Every afternoon after school the latter students were in my room doing measurements.

Both classes also had to read two math articles from among “The Day The Wizard Tackled Mathematics,” “Tales From the Transfinite Hotel” and “It Came From the Fourth Dimension.” These were articles which I wrote for **The New Jersey Math Teachers’ Journal** in the 1990s. Overall, I think these are good thinking assignments for the honors students.

I visited my foot doctor since my right shin, ankle and knee have been bothering me recently. As I expected, my right orthotic was wobbly, so he did a repair on it to make it more secure. If that does not help, I will need to return to have more extensive repairs done to it.

My Physics teacher friend George gave me his old Ipod awhile ago, and I have finally begun filling it with music by the Strawbs, Kinks and Renaissance. I bought a connector between it and my car radio, so I’m anxious to see how it sounds driving to school. Andy also bought a newer model with considerable more memory, which he is filling with music too.

The Asian-American Club held its annual *Sushi-Tea Dance*. I stayed at school that day until 4:00 pm tutoring the club president in Calculus (although she is not my student this year), then I picked up our taxes (and found that our entire refund is being applied to next year’s quarterly estimated payments \*sigh\*), after which I drove to Borders where I returned a defective copy of Ray Davie’s cd *Working Man’s Café* and replaced it with Bob Dylan’s *Tell Tale Signs*. Then I met Jean at Olive Garden for dinner. She had shrimp and risotta, and I had manicotti.

The dance itself was very enjoyable because Sun Hee came to visit me and we chatted for nearly two hours. We discussed everything that is currently happening in her life, both at Rutgers and with her family. She has obviously been very stressed recently, so it was good we had this chance to have this long talk.

The week after the dance was Spring Break for state colleges, so I had several visits from students, including two long talks with Shiva who wants to minor in mathematics along with her major in finance so she can then go to grad school in mathematical finance. Unfortunately, her Multivariate Calculus teacher is terrible, but she is not giving up on math and will take four more courses next year.

I spent one afternoon counseling the top-ranked sophomore who is both a delightful girl and a brilliant student, but her grades have been dropping this semester so she had a bit of a crying session as we tried to figure out how she can stop her slide. I think her main problem is that her

parents do not get home from work until 7pm each day, so she goes home after school and takes a long four-hour nap, then is up much too late doing her homework and studying, so that she is extremely tired during the school day. She needs to normalize her schedule more so she can focus better during tests and schoolwork.

We had a teachers' association executive committee meeting at which the negotiating team told us they have accepted a contract offer from the Board of Education. We have been working without a contract all year, and under the current economic conditions I am surprised we settled at all. It is a fair contract, although we did give up some benefits which we already had in the spirit of compromise. Of course, that did not stop townspeople from standing up at this week's Board of Ed meeting and harassing teachers for being overpaid for doing such little work. Obviously, those people have absolutely no idea how hard teachers work during the 10-month school year, nor do they seem to value their children's education since they are willing to drive all the good teachers out of district (especially the math, physics, chemistry and language teachers who are in big demand statewide) to save a bit of tax money.

We had our last NJ Math League competition of the year and my two best team members ever, Li Li and Jiang, should end the year ranked among the top 25 students in the state (among several thousand competing students). This is also the fourth consecutive year that they are the highest scorers on the math team (yes, they were the top scorers as freshmen!). Going into this last contest, my team is tied for first place in the county and #12 in the state (among 200+ competing schools). I am hoping our score on this contest will help us retain both positions.

I have been thinking about completing another collection of my sf prozines. I started subscribing to **F&SF** in 1971, so I would have to find 246 back issues to complete it. My first issue of **Worlds of IF** is November, 1961, so I would only need 65 prior issues to complete that collection, a much saner endeavor. Admittedly, **IF** is not as high-quality a zine as **F&SF**, being only the fourth best prozine of the 1960s (after the "big three" of **Galaxy**, **F&SF** and **Astounding/Analog**). I saw a comment by Frank Robinson stating that he also considered **IF** the 4<sup>th</sup> best zine of the 1950s behind the same three, so I will complete **IF**. I found 14 issues for sale at Ray Bowman Books, which I ordered. I don't know where I'll find the others though.

## Listmania

*Best F&SF of 2008*

For the second consecutive year, I kept a tally of various critics' choices for the best science fiction and fantasy books of the previous year, from websites such as BookSpot Central, Torque Control, Pat's Fantasy Hotlist, io9, Bookgasm, SF Signal, Strange Horizons and SF Site, as well as critics and writers including Don D'Amassa, Lou Anders, Jeffrey Ford, Lisa Tuttle, Tobias Buckell, Jonathan Strahan, Dave Truesdale and many others.



So here is the composite list of the most acclaimed f&sf books of 2008. As I mentioned in “Out of the Depths,” three of the top four choices made the Hugo ballot, so it should be interesting to see which of them wins.

| Title                           | Author                 | # of lists |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|------------|
| Anathem                         | Neal Stephenson        | 17         |
| Little Brother                  | Cory Doctorow          | 15         |
| Matter                          | Iain M. Banks          | 9          |
| The Graveyard Book              | Neil Gaiman            | 7          |
| Tender Morsels                  | Margo Lanagan          | 6          |
| The Quiet War                   | Paul McAuley           | 6          |
| Implied Spaces                  | Walter Jon Williams    | 6          |
| City at the End of Time         | Greg Bear              | 5          |
| The Gone Away World             | Nick Harkaway          | 5          |
| Sly Mongoose                    | Tobias S. Buckell      | 4          |
| Toll the Hounds                 | Steven Erikson         | 4          |
| The Shadow Year                 | Jeffrey Ford           | 4          |
| Pandemonium                     | Daryl Gregory          | 4          |
| The Steel Remains               | Richard Morgan         | 4          |
| Liberation                      | Brian Francis Slattery | 4          |
| The Dragons of Babel            | Michael Swanwick       | 4          |
| Flood                           | Stephen Baxter         | 3          |
| Ink and Steel                   | Elizabeth Bear         | 3          |
| All the Windwrecked Stars       | Elizabeth Bear         | 3          |
| The January Dancer              | Michael Flynn          | 3          |
| The Temporal Void               | Peter F. Hamilton      | 3          |
| How to Make Friends With Demons | Graham Joyce           | 3          |
| The Night Sessions              | Ken MacLeod            | 3          |
| Last Dragon                     | J.M. McDermott         | 3          |

|                 |                   |   |
|-----------------|-------------------|---|
| The Devil's Eye | Jack McDevitt     | 3 |
| House of Suns   | Alastair Reynolds | 3 |

## Wondrous Stories

I have always enjoyed original anthologies series, having been a faithful reader of *Orbit*, *Universe* and *New Dimensions* during the height of such series in the 1970s. Two years ago I bought George Mann's **Solaris Book of New Science Fiction** which I also enjoyed.

When Jonathan Strahan's **Eclipse One** was published a year ago, I did not buy it for two reasons. First, the reviews indicated it was heavily fantasy-oriented rather than science fiction, and I am not so much a fantasy fan as an sf fan. Second, while I share much of Strahan's taste in fiction, he is much more likely to be enamored by a story which is primarily surface flash and clever writing than I am. Each of his **Best Short Novels** volumes contained a few such stories. So those two facts made me wonder how much I would enjoy **Eclipse One**.

**Eclipse Two**, however, had a considerably higher percentage of science fiction stories, so I decided to give it a try. Overall, my reaction to the book is mostly positive. Strahan manages to get stories from some of the biggest names in f&sf and, not surprisingly, they provided most of the book's highlights.

Stephen Baxter's "Turing's Apples" is a SETI story set around two brothers' sibling rivalry. One brother Wilson is part of a project set on the far side of the moon which has received a one-second message six thousand light years away near the core of the galaxy. The message is repeated once a year, as if it were being sent by a rotating lighthouse-type signal. In the second message more data is compressed than in the **Encyclopedia Britannica**.

The storyline about the signal illustrates Baxter's strength as a writer, scientific extrapolation which blends into philosophical extrapolation. The climax of the story takes place in the passage

*We don't know anything about what they look like, how they live—or even if they're corporeal or not. But they are old, vastly old compared to us. Their cultural records go back a million years, maybe ten times as long as we've been human...But they regard themselves as a young species. They live in awe of older ones whose presence they have glimpsed deep in the turbulent core of the galaxy.*

If that paragraph excites your sense of wonder, then Baxter is the writer for you. While personal interactions are his weakness, the brothers' sibling rivalry does not interfere with the thought processes at the heart of the story.

An Alastair Reynolds story is generally part police-procedural and part human interest story, and “Fury” is both. Mercurio is the security expert for an emperor who has ruled all the colonized worlds in the galaxy for tens of thousands of years. When an assassin inside his own palace shoots the emperor through the head, it assassinates his body, but his mind is quickly downloaded into one of dozens of available replacements.

However, investigation of the assassination attempt indicates that the bullet had the potential of being lethal to both emperor and body, but was not used so. Obviously, Mercurio is anxious to learn why the assassin would commit such a half-hearted murder and sets out across the galaxy to learn why. What he uncovers is totally unexpected, and raises ethical issues which Mercurio must deal with. The story raises the question of how much punishment for an evil deed is just, especially when that punishment might cause repercussions far worse than the original evil act. And is there a statute of limitations not only on legality but also on justice and morality?

“Fury” is a more thought-provoking story than usual for Reynolds, almost slipping into Baxter territory, and still manages to include a satisfying ending.

Richard Parks usually writes fantasies set in the Far East, but “Skin Deep” is a rural tale about a young witch who, in addition to her herbs and medicinals, also has inherited four skins from her grandmother, each of which infuses the girl with the body and traits of its original owner, such as a worker and a soldier. But the girl has never worn the fourth skin sitting high on the top shelf, and she has no idea of its power even as it calls to her repeatedly to don it.

Several short stories are also enjoyable. Margo Lanagan’s “Night of the Firstlings” tells about a strange plague which strikes all the first-born sons of families, leading into a famous climax. Nancy Kress’ “Elevator” is a Thomas Disch-like story about seven people trapped in a stalled elevator overnight, while one of them, a senile old lady, babbles comments which have particular resonance to each of the other people trapped with her.

Jeffrey Ford’s “The Seventh Expression of the Robot General” is a serious look at a robot who led a nation’s forces in war, interesting more because Ford is an excellent writer rather than for the story itself. Ted Chiang’s “Exhalations” creates a fascinating world whose beings replace their lungs periodically when they run out of air. While the story is not as detailed as Chiang’s best stories, nor as outstanding as many critics have claimed, it is still a worthy addition to his slender group of superb stories.

And then I reached Peter Beagle’s “The Rabbi’s Hobby.” It begins as a cute story about a 12-year old boy studying for his Bar Mitzvah with a rabbi, but the boy is not particularly thrilled about learning Hebrew, nor is he very good at it, while the rabbi is both patient and demanding. Then they both discover a thirty-year old magazine cover with a beach scene where off to the side of the scene a not-particularly-pretty girl strikes both their fancy.

Thus begins a mystery as the rabbi and boy try to learn the identity of that girl. They learn the name of the photographer and that he kept precise records of all his models, yet for some reason there are no records of the mysterious girl. The photographer is dead, so they contact his

daughter who gets drawn into the mystery and goes through her father's records and contacts his friends, eventually finding another photograph with the same girl off to the side of the picture.

Do you ever read a story when abruptly halfway through it you realize that this story really appeals to you, that for some reason it has struck a particular emotional chord? That happens to me occasionally. In recent years I got that feeling from Jeffrey Ford's "The Empire of Ice Cream" and Robert Reed's "Good Mountain." I had that feeling again with "The Rabbi's Holiday", beginning when the photographer's daughter took a plane flight to bring the rabbi and the boy something special she had found. And the story continued on that high level the rest of the way. For me, at least, "The Rabbi's Hobby" is worth the entire cost of the book.

As in previous Strahan volumes, I could not finish reading several of the stories in **Eclipse Two**, struggling through several pages before it became obvious that in those stories the medium was the entire message. Still, the good stories by Baxter, Reynolds, Park, Lanagan, Kress, Ford, Chiang, and, especially, Beagle made for a worthwhile volume, especially if you enjoy the wordplay stories as well.

\*

When Harry Harrison was selected as the 2009 SFWA Nebula Grandmaster, my first thought was that he did not seem to have the credentials for such a status. In my column *The Old Kit Bag* for **The Reluctant Famulus** I decried Harrison being so honored instead of more deserving writers such as Greg Benford (16 Hugo and Nebula nominations, 2 wins), Michael Bishop (24 nominations, 2 wins), C.J. Cherryh (9 nominations; 3 wins), Samuel R. Delany (30 nominations, 6 wins), Joe Haldeman (17 nominations, 10 wins), George R.R. Martin (30 nominations, 6 wins) Larry Niven (27 nominations, 6 wins), John Varley (24 nominations, 5 wins), Kate Wilhelm (24 nominations, 5 wins) and Gene Wolfe (28 nominations, 2 wins).

I have always considered Harry Harrison a typical example of a "B" writer, whose fiction is enjoyable but not in the category of a Grandmaster. I consider other examples of "B" writers Christopher Anvil, Chad Oliver, A. Bertram Chandler, Michael Coney, Suzette Haden Elgin, Randall Garrett, Keith Laumer, James H. Schmitz, Bob Shaw, James White, S.M. Stirling, and David Weber. Enjoyable work, but generally not the type of "A" material as can be expected by such grandmasters as Heinlein, Asimov, Clarke, Bradbury, Simak, Norton, Bester, Silverberg, you get the idea.

Most of the fiction I have read by Harrison was in **Analog** in the late 1960s when he was one of John W. Campbell's stable of authors. Stories with titles such as "The Man From P.I.G." and the serial **The Horse Barbarians** (which I believe became **Deathworld 3** in book form). Enjoyable stuff, but not the type of fiction I would rave to my friends about.

To be fair though, I decided I should read more Harrison fiction to see if my impression of him based on a handful of **Analog** stories perhaps underrated him. People who responded unfavorably to my column in **TRF** mentioned such Harrison works as **Make Room! Make Room!** and his *Deathworld* series. Since both were currently available in the Science Fiction

Book Club, I decided to read three Harrison novels and ordered **Deathworld**.

The first book, aptly entitled **Deathworld 1**, started out simply enough as the protagonist, a professional gambler named Jason dinAlt, is basically forced by a man calling himself a planetary ambassador to win a billion credits which the man plans to use to buy weapons for the settlers on his planet to use against the native plant and animal life in their struggle to the death on their adopted world. Initially the story is an easy-paced thriller which bore resemblances to Jack Vance's *Galactic Cluster* stories. I anticipated this was how the entire novel would be, nor was I surprised when it sequéd into a Vance-like mystery as to why the nonintelligent life on a planet continually mutates into deadlier forms for the sole purpose of destroying the human inhabitants.

Unlike Vance though, the mystery was not just a thin hook to hang a planetary adventure on, but was the main focus of the novel, and a fairly interesting mystery at that. DinAlt dealt with the inhabitants of the deathworld's only city as they were inundated with plant and animal attacks daily. He found a way to leave the city and contact the "grubbers," whom the city dwellers considered savages who had somehow found a way to survive in the midst of the native life. DinAlt was surprised to find they were not savages at all, nor were they under attack, but instead had found a way to live peacefully alongside the native life whose attacks were focused solely on the city dwellers.

While I enjoyed **Deathworld 1**, it was still a "B" novel which did not stand up to a lot of thought. How could a mere gambler suddenly become brilliant enough to determine the solution to the inhabitants' endless war with the native life, when for generations they had not only been unable to reach any similar conclusions themselves, but had also devolved almost into fighting machines virtually devoid of any thoughts not completely related to their survival? This was not a deep book, nor was it intended to be, but the type of light reading good for passing a few evenings after work is over. I recommend it to people looking for enjoyment on the level of Chandler/Schmitz/Laumer/White who will not be disappointed in it.

## On The Lighter Side

*Jokes by Will Sabella*

A golfer is in a competitive match with a friend, who is ahead by a couple of strokes. 'Boy, I'd give anything to sink this putt,' the golfer mumbles to himself.

Just then, a stranger walks up beside him and whispers, 'Would you be willing to give up one-fourth of your sex life?'

Thinking the man is crazy and his answer will be meaningless, the golfer also feels that maybe this is a good omen so he says, 'Sure,' and sinks the putt.

Two holes later, he mumbles to himself again, 'Gee, I sure would like to get an eagle on this one.'

The same stranger is at his side again and whispers, 'Would it be worth giving up another fourth of your sex life?'

Shrugging, the golfer replies, 'Okay.' And he makes an eagle.

On the final hole, the golfer needs another eagle to win. Without waiting for him to say anything, the stranger quickly moves to his side and says, 'Would winning this match be worth giving up the rest of your sex life?'

'Definitely,' the golfer replies, and he makes the eagle.

As the golfer is walking to the clubhouse, the stranger walks alongside him and says, 'I haven't really been fair with you because you don't know who I am. I'm the devil, and from this day forward you will have no sex life.'

'Nice to meet you,' the golfer replies, 'I'm Father O'Malley.'

\*

Here are comments made by NBC sports commentators and athletes at Summer Olympics that they should probably have thought about before saying in public:

1. Weightlifting commentator: 'This is Gregoriava from Bulgaria. I saw her snatch this morning during her warm-up and it was amazing.'
2. Dressage commentator: 'This is really a lovely horse and I speak from personal experience since I once mounted her mother.'
3. Paul Hamm, Gymnast: 'I owe a lot to my parents, especially my mother and father.'
4. Boxing Analyst: 'Sure there have been injuries, and even some deaths in boxing, but none of them really that serious.'
5. Softball announcer: 'If history repeats itself, I should think we can expect the same thing again.'
6. Basketball analyst: 'He dribbles a lot and the opposition doesn't like it. In fact you can see it all over their faces.'
7. At the rowing medal ceremony: ' Ah, isn't that nice, the wife of the IOC president is hugging the cox of the British crew.'
8. Soccer commentator: 'Julian Dicks is everywhere. It's like they've got eleven Dicks on the field.'

\*

A teacher was doing a study testing the senses (taste) of first graders using a bowl of lifesavers.

The children began to identify the flavors by their color:

- Red = Cherry;
- Yellow = Lemon;
- Green = Lime;
- Orange = Orange.

Finally the teacher gave them all HONEY lifesavers. After eating them, none of the children could identify the taste.

'Well,' she said, 'I will give you all a clue. It's what your mother may sometimes call your father.'

One little girl looked up in horror, spit out her lifesaver out and yelled, 'Oh my God!! Spit them out! They're ass-holes!'

\*

Ed and Dorothy met while on vacation and Ed fell head over heels in love with her. After a couple of weeks in which Ed took Dorothy out to various dance clubs, restaurants, concerts, etc., he was convinced that it was true love. And so, on the last night of his vacation, the two of them went to dinner and had a serious talk about how the relationship would continue.

'It's only fair to warn you, I'm a total golf nut,' said Ed to his newfound lady friend. 'I eat, sleep and breathe golf, so if that's going to be a problem, you'd better say so now!'

Dorothy took a deep breath and responded, 'Since we're being so honest with each other, here goes...you need to know that I'm a hooker.'

'I see,' Ed replied. 'That's a problem, for sure.' He spent some time looking down at the table, deep in thought.

Then he added, 'You know, it's probably because you're not keeping your wrists straight when you tee off.'