LIGHTS OUT!

The ROBERT R. McCAMMON Newsletter

Vol. 1 No. 4
June 1990

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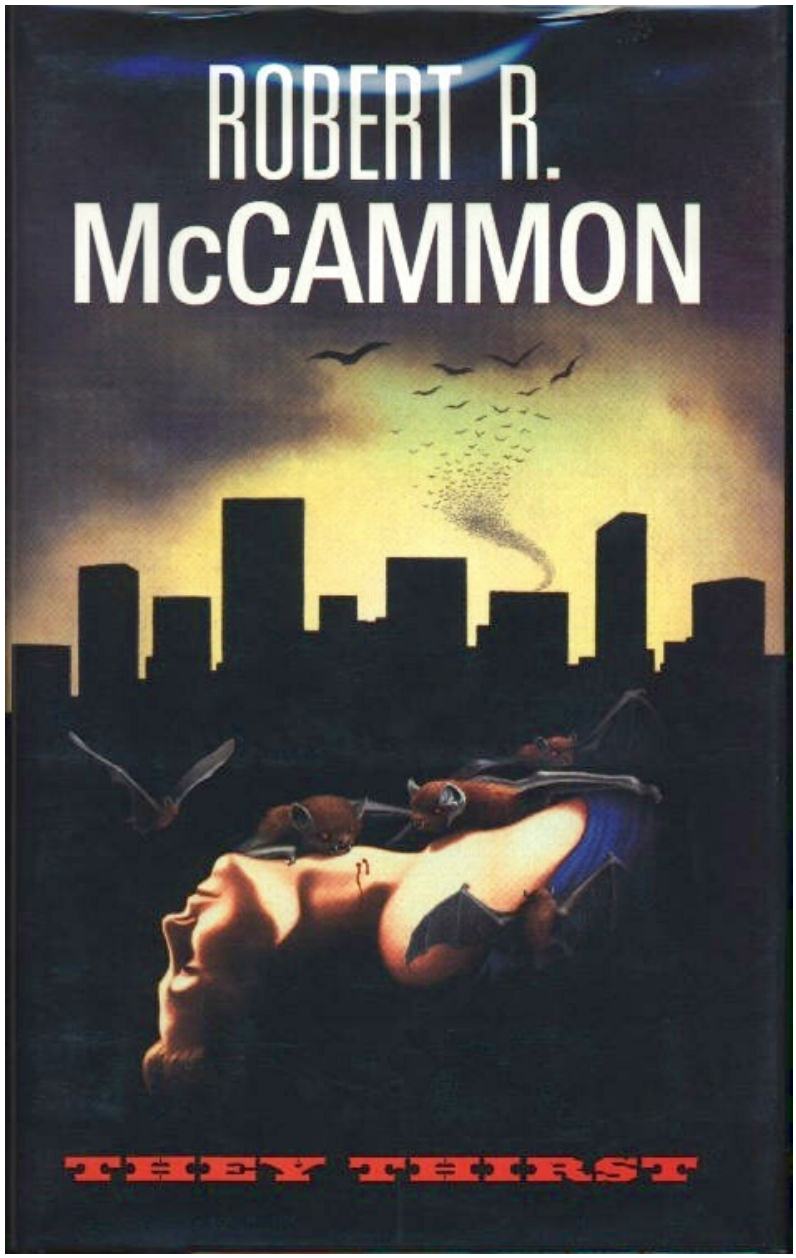

Inside This Special "Talking" Issue

Lights Out!

The
Robert R. McCammon
Newsletter

Vol. 1 No. 4 June 1990

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This newsletter was typeset on a DEC VAXstation 3100 using the TEX typesetting system developed by Donald Knuth at Stanford University. TEX is a trademark of the American Mathematical Society.

Goat Busters

A Message from the Editor

Finally! For those readers who don't subscribe to *Lights Out!*, this issue is a couple of months late because my family and I moved from Orem, Utah, to Knoxville, Tennessee—a bit of a change! My voluntary job change came as a surprise at the end of April and the move across the country necessitated putting this issue on hold. I appreciate your patience and understanding. Please note the new address given below.

This issue could very well be subtitled "The Talking Issue" since it contains transcripts of several discussions with Robert R. McCammon and others. One of the highlights of this issue is a discussion with McCammon and Joe Lansdale on limited editions and signing books. Recent trends in the publishing industry have seen an enormous growth in the number of collectible states of books. I recently received a catalog from a press known for lengthy delays on their well-produced books; the catalog described an "auction" of several collectible books, including some of those produced by the publisher. Featured among the items for sale were multiple states of several books (as many as five states per book) and the first three numbered editions of several titles (numbers 1–3 of the limited editions). All at escalated prices, naturally.

In the "good old days," there were usually two states produced of a book: the limited edition, which was signed, numbered, and frequently bound in leather, and the trade edition. Recently, some of the small presses have added "super-limiteds" to the list; these books may be bound in leather, stored in a wooden box, and lettered A–ZZ. Some have taken this even farther to produce books signed in different pen colors, bound in different materials, and bound in different colors. Meanwhile, the completist collector is finding it more difficult and *much* more expensive to collect.

Another alarming trend, in my opinion, is the selling of advance reading copies and review copies of books. Another catalog I recently received listed the "hardcover review copy" of McCammon's *Mine* for sale; the book is exactly the same as the book you can buy off the shelf at your local Waldenbooks, except it has some promotional material that accompanies it. But the implication is that it's a special edition of *Mine*—and someone probably bought it.

Oh well, on to other things. This issue also features a transcript of a panel discussion entitled "Shapechangers," with Robert R. McCammon and fantasy writer Jennifer Roberson; McCammon's original premise for next year's Horror Writers of America anthology, *Under the Fang*; the latest news; and more pictures from the 1989 World Fantasy Convention.

Back issues of *Lights Out!* are available for $3.00 each. We currently have the first three issues available. Also, "The Almost-Complete Robert R. McCammon Bibliography" that appeared in the October 1989 issue of *Lights Out!* will be maintained as necessary. Interested readers can obtain up-to-date listings by sending a self-addressed, stamped business envelope to *Lights Out!* (please specify that you want the bibliography).

The next issue of *Lights Out!* will be the October issue—all subscriptions have been adjusted accordingly. How do you feel about limited editions and the prices of books these days? Write to me at the address below and we'll see if we can get a good letters column started—of course, you can write in about anything you want, so pick up that pen or keyboard today! Please send all correspondence to:

Hunter Goatley
Lights Out!
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Things Unearthed...

News items of interest

Mine Published in May; McCammon's Next Novel: *Boy's Life*

Just in case someone hasn't heard, Robert R. McCammon's new novel, *Mine*, was published in hardcover by Pocket Books; the official release date was May 7, 1990, though the book was available a few weeks before that date. McCammon toured throughout the month of May to sign copies of *Mine*; a couple of bookstores in California reported sales of as many as 200 copies of the book during McCammon's signings there. A couple of quotes from early reviews of *Mine*:

- Feverishly exciting ... McCammon delivers prime suspense and explosive payoffs in the maximum overdrive, page-whipping thriller. *Kirkus Reviews, 3/1/90*
- An expertly constructed novel of suspense and horror. *Publishers Weekly, 3/23/90*

McCammon is already hard at work on a new novel for 1991. Tentatively titled *Boy's Life*, the book is told from the first-person view of a 12-year-old boy growing up in the South in 1964. "It's real, real different," McCammon recently told *Lights Out!* "It's not horror, it's not mystery, but it has elements of both. It's very autobiographical, in that it's everything I can remember from growing up in that era." The narrative consists of episodes linked together to form a cohesive story—though it will be up to the reader to determine what is real and what is imaginary.

The book begins after President Kennedy's assassination, "when darkness came into the world," McCammon said. *Boy's Life* will explore the changes that act brought upon the "fantasy world" Americans lived in. McCammon added, "*Boy's Life* is *very* Southern—it's my most Southern novel. And maybe my most straightforward." The book should be finished in July and will probably appear in Spring 1991.

Miscellaneous Updates

Kinnell Publishes British Hardcovers of They Thirst *and* The Night Boat

British publisher Kinnell published a hardcover edition of McCammon's 1981 vampire epic, *They Thirst*, in May and is planning to produce a hardcover edition of *The Night Boat* in June. Rumor has it that Kinnell kept a lid on their edition of *They Thirst* to keep Dark Harvest from stepping up the production schedule of their edition (making the Kinnell edition the first "world" hardcover, for whatever that's worth). An interesting note—Kinnell printed their edition of *They Thirst* using the old Avon plates, which were laden with typographical errors.

The covers for both editions were painted by Colin Sullivan, the same artist who was responsible for the covers for Kinnell's 1988 edition of *Stinger* and 1989 edition of *Bethany's Sin*.

Dark Harvest's They Thirst

Robert R. McCammon, Pocket Books, and Dark Harvest have all agreed upon a contract for a Dark Harvest hardcover edition of *They Thirst*. It's just a matter of scheduling now, though it's safe to assume the book won't appear before 1991.

The Dark Harvest edition of *They Thirst* will be printed from the corrected plates used by Pocket Books for their 1988 paperback edition. The artist for the project has not been selected yet.

New McCammon Short Story: "Beauty"

The latest edition of Charles L. Grant's "Chronicles of Greystone Bay" anthology series features a new McCammon ghost story. The story, entitled "Beauty." appears in *The SeaHarp Hotel*; the anthology has just been published by TOR Books. "Beauty" is McCammon's third "Greystone Bay" short story.

McCammon Writes Introduction to Dark Harvest's Night Visions 8

The eighth edition in the Dark Harvest *Night Visions* series will feature 30,000 words each from Stephen Gallagher, John Farris, and Joe R. Lansdale. Robert R. McCammon will be contributing the introduction to the book, which will probably be published in early summer.

Grafton to Publish Paperback Editions of Two McCammon Novels

British publisher Grafton Books, responsible for the British hardcover editions of *Blue World* and *The Wolf's Hour*, will be publishing mass market paperback editions of those novels in 1990. *Blue World* was reprinted in March and *The Wolf's Hour* is scheduled for publication in October.

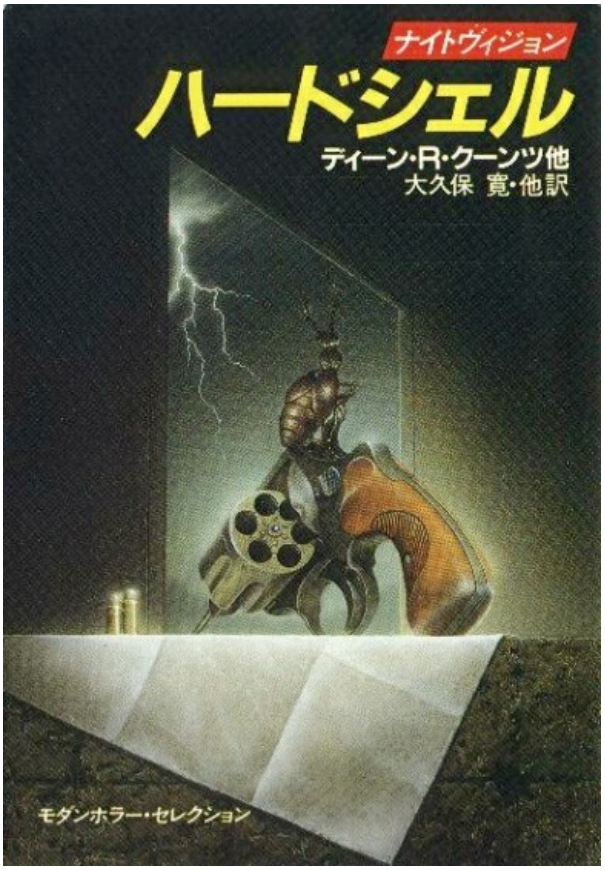
McCammon's Novels to Be Published in Japan

Reprint rights to Robert R. McCammon's novels were recently sold to publishers in Japan. All ten of McCammon's novels will appear in Japanese editions over the next couple of years. McCammon's short stories in *Night Visions IV* have already been printed in a Japanese translation of the book; several of his other short stories have been published in Japanese magazines. The *Night Visions IV* stories were translated by Kazue Tanaka, who recently subscribed to *Lights Out!* and says McCammon is one of the few American horror writers who are popular in Japan (which can probably be attributed to cultural differences more than anything else).

The 1991 World Horror Convention:
Barker Is Out; Yarbro Is In

The first annual World Horror Convention is scheduled to take place February 29–March 3, 1991, in Nashville, TN. Horror writer/director Clive Barker was supposed to be the Guest of Honor, but he recently changed his mind about attending. Horror writer Chelsea Quinn Yarbro, who is currently serving as president of the Horror Writers of America, will replace Barker as Guest of Honor. See *Lights Out!* issue 3 for more information about the World Horror Convention, or write to World Horror Convention, P.O. Box 22817, Nashville, TN 37202.

Cover Artwork for Japanese
Paperback of *Night Visions IV*



Additions to the October 1989
Robert R. McCammon Bibliography

The following are additions to the Robert R. McCammon bibliography that appeared in the October 1989 issue of *Lights Out!*:

- Robert R. McCammon collaborated with 11 other authors on *The Monitors of Providence*, a pamphlet produced for the 1986 World Fantasy Convention. The pamphlet consisted of twelve chapters, each written by a different author. The contributors were Robert R. McCammon, Dean R. Koontz, Joe R. Lansdale, David B. Silva, Michael Blaine, James Kisner, William F. Nolan, Alan Rodgers, J.N. Williamson, Chelsea Quinn Yarbro, Dennis Etchison, and Richard Christian Matheson. *The Monitors of Providence* tells the story of a small town's residents being turned into hamburger—people living in Lovecraft, just outside Providence, where the convention was held. The pamphlet was limited to 1,000 copies for free distribution at the convention, plus 10 copies per contributor. Thanks to John and Roxanne Fredericks for sending in this information.
- "Beauty," in *The SeaHarp Hotel*, ed. Charles L. Grant. New York: TOR Books, June 1990.

McCammon Snubbed by Birmingham Media
at Continuity 1990

Cathy Brown of Baxter, Tennessee, wrote in describing how Robert R. McCammon was snubbed by the Birmingham news media at the recent Continuity 1990 convention (Richard Kaapke also mentioned this to me). Brown writes:

> The controversial incidents began early in the convention prior to Rick McCammon's reading of the first chapter of *Mine*. A reporter from Channel 13 interviewed Jennifer Roberson, creator of the *Chronicles of the Cheysuli*, and then Allen Hammack, the convention organizer. Afterwards, Allen turned to Rick and introduced him as, "This is our local author." The reporter stated "we have enough coverage." Rick would not have thought much about the snub if

Channel 6 had not done the same thing during his reading of *Mine*.

According to Brown, the snub may have been a case of mistaken identity, with the Birmingham media confusing McCammon with a controversial author who attended the convention. She concludes, "In Rick's own words, upon realizing that his hometown media had snubbed him, 'I guess when you're from Birmingham, the local media don't believe that you can ever amount to anything.'"

Nancy A. Collins' *Tempter*
To Be Published in September 1990

Nancy A. Collins, author of last year's exceptional vampire novel *Sunglasses After Dark*, will have her next book published in September by NAL/Onyx. *Tempter* mixes vampires with some New Orleans voodoo—*not* the typical Hollywood-style voodoo. A resident of New Orleans, Nancy says the voodoo in *Tempter* will be a more accurate picture of the voodoo religion as it is practiced in Southern Louisiana.

Meanwhile, the contracts have been signed for *In the Blood*, the sequel to *Sunglasses After Dark*. Also to be published by NAL/Onyx, *In the Blood* is slated for a 1991 release. British publisher Ventura-Orbit reprinted *Sunglasses After Dark* in paperback in April.

A number of Nancy's short stories will be appearing soon. Her stories have been picked up by *Hot Blood 2* and *Shock Rock*, both edited by Jeff Gelb; Harry Harrison's *There Won't Be War*; *Pulphouse*; and, tentatively, *Midnight Graffiti* and *Book of the Dead 2*.

Upcoming titles from Dark Harvest
and Mark V. Ziesing

Small press publishers Mark V. Ziesing and Dark Harvest have released their planned schedules for 1990. The following lists are subject to change and should not be considered final.

Mark V. Ziesing
P.O. Box 76
Shingletown, CA 96088
(916) 474-1580

- *Trade Secrets*, by Ray Garton. A new suspense novel. February 1990.
- *A Short, Sharp Shock*, by Kim Stanley Robinson. A new fantasy novel. April 1990.
- *Cold in July*, by Joe R. Lansdale. A hardcover edition of 1989's Bantam paperback. July 1990.
- *Savage Season*, by Joe R. Lansdale. A new suspense novel, also scheduled as a Bantam paperback this fall. July 1990.
- *The Off Season*, by Lucius Shepard. New horror novel.
- *The Hereafter Gang*, by Neil Barrett, Jr. Novel.
- *Wetbone*, by John Shirley. Novel.
- *Alarms*, by Richard Laymon. Novel.
- *Cold Blood*, edited by Richard Chizmar. A new anthology of horror/suspense stories.
- *Live Girls*, by Ray Garton. The revised and expanded hardcover edition. Planned for late 1990 or early 1991.
- *Lot Lizards*, by Ray Garton. A new vampire novel. Planned for 1991.
- *Git Back Satan*, by Joe R. Lansdale. A new short novel. Planned for 1991.
- *The Second Coming*, edited by Pat LoBrutto and Joe R. Lansdale. 1991 anthology.

Dark Harvest
P.O. Box 941
Arlington Heights, IL 60006

- *The Leiber Chronicles*, by Fritz Leiber. Fifty years of Fritz Leiber. February 1990.
- *Reborn*, by F. Paul Wilson. The first of a three book thematic sequel to *The Keep*. March 1990.
- *Methods of Madness*, by Ray Garton. A new short story collection featuring the short novel *Dr. Krusadian's Method*.
- *Fiends*, by John Farris. New novel.
- *Urban Horrors*, edited by William F. Nolan and Martin H. Greenberg. With stories by Ray Bradbury, Richard Matheson, Joe R. Lansdale, Ramsey Campbell, and fourteen others.
- *Reign*, by Chet Williamson. New novel.
- *Shadowfires*, by Dean R. Koontz. The latest in the reprints of novels published as "by Leigh Nichols."
- *Night Visions 8*. All new stories by John Farris, Stephen Gallagher, and Joe R. Lansdale. Introduction by Robert R. McCammon.
- *Prayers to Broken Stones*, by Dan Simmons. A new collection.
- *Obsessions*, edited by Gary Raisor. A new anthology of stories by Dean R. Koontz, Rick Hautala, F. Paul Wilson, Joe R. Lansdale, Chet Williamson, Dan Simmons, and *twenty-three* others.
- *Dead Ladies of the Night*, by James Kisner. A new vampire novel. Tentatively scheduled for December 1990.

■

Under the Fang

The HWA Anthology Edited by Robert R. McCammon

Way back in issue number 1 of *Lights Out!* we told you about the Horror Writers of America (HWA) "shared world" anthology series. In a shared world anthology, different writers contribute stories that share settings, situations, and/or characters with the other stories in the collection. The series is a promotional venture for the HWA.

As we previously reported, McCammon developed the "world" setting for the first book, entitled *Under the Fang*. McCammon is serving as co-editor with Martin H. Greenberg; the book will be published by McCammon's publisher, Pocket Books, and is scheduled to appear in August 1991.

The basic premise for *Under the Fang* is that vampires have taken over the world and there are pockets of humanity living "under the fang." The anthology is the first book McCammon has edited. "It's been a blast for me to do this. It's been exciting, with so many good ideas, and I wish I could have asked to see more stories," McCammon recently told *Lights Out!*

The anthology will feature stories written by the HWA's lesser-known authors and such "established" members as Thomas F. Monteleone, Al Sarrantonio, Brian Hodge, Lisa Cantrell, Nancy A. Collins, and Richard Laymon. HWA president Chelsea Quinn Yarbro collaborated with Suzy McKee Charnas on a tale bringing together the two main characters from their vampire novels.

Robert R. McCammon's original premise for *Under the Fang* has been reprinted below with his permission.

Under the Fang

They've won.

They came in the night, to the towns and cities. Like a slow, insidious virus they spread from house to house, building to building, from graveyard to bedroom and cellar to boardroom. They won, while the world struggled with governments and terrorists and the siren song of business. They won, while we weren't looking. And now that we see them—now that we know them—it's much, much too late.

The ancient hordes are the conquerors now, and the remaining herds of humanity are living under the fang. From Moscow to Tokyo, New York to Los Angeles, the vampires have come to power, and what will they do with the world they've won through years of nighttime combats and bloodsucking in the dark?

Some humans have become their allies, walking an uneasy razor's edge of truce. The vampires need them, to watch the hiding places by day. Some humans will do anything for a taste of power—even power reflected from those that cast no reflection. But it's whispered through the villages and towns, from Europe to America, that the vampires are at work in the halls of science. They're creating hybrids of human and the living dead, and what might come of that combination no one knows. The vampires are creating their own economy, with their own structure of society: a nightmare world, with unholy religions and barter for blood and other things best kept secret. The vampires have their own entertainments, events that would make the most debased emperors of Rome blanch and sicken. The vampires have created coliseums and "entertainment" spectacles that harken back to the days of gladiators and Christians versus the lions, only these "entertainments" have a decidedly wicked vampiric bent.

But a few ragtag armies of humans remain, scattered in the desolate places. They vow to fight on, against overwhelming odds. The stories abound: some say the vampires, over the course of many years, have built underground railroads that carry cargoes of blood from point to point. Some say not all the vampires are evil, but that there are those in high places that are actually helping the human cause. And what of vampiric politics? Kingdoms rise and fall, cities become fortresses, wars between vampires are common horrors, and God help the human herds who get in their way.

Love among vampires? Is there such a thing? Perhaps there is. Hate there certainly is, and plenty of that. The vampires have taken control of television networks, satellite systems, radio stations, newspapers and magazines; they've created their own fads and sports, they make movies and write books in a bizarre mockery—some would say a twisted memory—of what it was like, a hundred years ago, to be human.

When did this begin? It's lost in myth. When will it end? That is a wish, as yet unknown. Until then, the society of vampires thrives on the dwindling human herds and the human soldiers captured in the endless war between the living and the dead. The vampires have their own version of a judicial system, their own torture chambers and executioners. It's said that some of the vampires have studied the black arts well, and have learned to truly hold hands with the Devil, while others curse the darkness and long for light. But, as in any species, the vampiric strain has a predominant need for survival, for the conquering of their environment and the continuation of their way of life—even if it is a life

lived as a terrible echo of what humanity used to be.

Away with moldering caskets! Away with crucifixes and holy water! No garlic served here! The vampires are of the computer age, and the hideous future yet to be. Vampires in space? Exploring other worlds? Space stations and Star Wars manned by the undead? Vampiric scientists, creating what kinds of blasphemy in the labs? Vampiric ad agencies, promoting what products for the masses?

And where do we go from here, those humans who are left? Do we die as cattle, hanging from our heels and bleeding into bottles on assembly lines? Do we rise up and try to fight, or is fighting a useless dream? Where do we go, in a world transformed into a cauldron of black magic, dark hearts, and unholy desires? Is there any hope for humankind, crushed under the fang?

Or would it be easier—and so coldly sweet—to offer our throats and wrists and let the humanity rush out of us in a red tide, so we can learn what it's like to live forever? ■

Mini-Interview: Clive Barker

Transcribed by Glen Leon

Editor's note: The following article describes a personal appearance by Clive Barker at the Central Library in Vancouver, BC, Canada. Glen Leon has written for Castle Rock *and sells books through the mail. He claims to have a knack for finding "hard-to-find" items by King, Koontz, Barker, and, of course, Robert R. McCammon. Pricelists are free; his address is Glen Leon, 304 – 7227 Arcola St., Burnaby, B.C., Canada V5E 1H7*

Clive Barker's appearance at the Central Library in Vancouver, Canada got under way at exactly 7:30 PM, February 8, 1990, when he began reading from his latest novel, *The Great and Secret Show*. Dressed in blue jeans and a sport shirt, he could've been anybody who had walked in off the street; he would've fit right in with the crowd on the other side of the podium. The one hundred-plus seats were filled well before starting time, while another hundred-plus stood in the back or

hung over the railing of the second-story balcony.

Barker mesmerized the crowd with the sizzling excerpt, but he read for only ten minutes, providing just a taste of the novel; the full meal was available at the bookstand by the door.

The reading was followed by a question and answer segment, and then a signing until 9:00. For half an hour, Barker voiced his opinions on a wide variety of topics ranging from his new book and new movie (*Nightbreed*), to censorship and the MPAA. The following is an excerpt from the transcript of the question and answer segment:

Q: How long did it take to write *The Great and Secret Show*?

Barker: *The Great and Secret Show* took about a year to write; that's seven days a week, which I find easy. It's not a major drawback—I enjoy it.

Q: Is there going to be a sequel to *The Great and Secret Show*?

Barker: Yes, but I don't want people to enter the book thinking the book doesn't finish; I don't want it to be like a serial, but a series.... Several of the characters will in fact carry on into the next book, and the next book will have as its "star," as it were, a character I've previously written about in two short stories who is a detective who walks out of New York and has the unfortunate talent for mixing himself up with demons. A joke is made in one of the stories that all his divorce investigations end up as exorcisms. So Harry D'Amour comes in at the very end of this book and his adventures in New York with the creatures of this book—and the mythology of this book—will be the substance of the next book. But before that I have a massive tome about ... *sex!*

Q: Is there going to be a Clive Barker newsletter, such as *Lights Out!* and *Castle Rock*?

Barker: There will indeed be a Clive Barker newsletter at some point, though it will be very different from *Castle Rock*. We are just working on that at the moment, and probably it will be one place where we will start to publish my plays and a lot of illustrations that nobody's seen.

[Editor's note: the newsletter is called Dread *and is edited by Mike Brown, 455 Ocean Parkway #17-A, Brooklyn, NY 11218.]*

Q: What kind of music do you listen to, and does it have any influence on your writing?

Barker: I never listen to music when I'm writing; I think it actually changes the rhythm of what I'm writing. I think my style speeds up when I'm playing the Samba. That may seem like nonsense, but I genuinely think that's the case. In the last year I've been making a movie, so I've been playing a lot of movie music, but I will play just about anything except very heavy metal and very heavy classical stuff. I'll play just about anything else, and I do have a great passion for the great singers. I love songs. I'm an incredible sentimentalist—it's painful sometimes!

Q: What are your favorite movie and book from last year?

Barker: My favorite book was *The Silence of the Lambs*, by Thomas Harris, which is a very scary book, and my favorite movie—*without question*, and I don't mean this ironically—is *The Little Mermaid*, which I loved! ■

The Robert R. McCammon Calendar

June 1990:	Article on *Mine* in *Mystery Scene* #26 Attending HWA Bram Stoker Awards Banquet
July 1990:	Attending NECON 1990 in Providence, RI
November 1990:	Attending World Fantasy Convention in Chicago
August 1991:	HWA Shared World Anthology, *Under the Fang*

Good Luck!

Robert R. McCammon has been nominated for 3 Bram Stoker Awards in the following categories: Outstanding Novel (*The Wolf's Hour*); Outstanding Short Story ("Eat Me," from *Book of the Dead*); and Outstanding Collection (*Blue World*). Good luck to Rick and *all* of the authors nominated for the awards.

Shapechangers

Featuring Robert R. McCammon and Jennifer Roberson; transcribed by Richard Alan Kaapke

Editor's note: The following is a transcript of a panel discussion at the Continuity 1990 convention in Birmingham, Alabama. This panel was held on Saturday, February 10, 11 AM, in the Atlanta room of the Parliament House hotel. The panelists were Robert R. McCammon and Jennifer Roberson. The title of the panel was "Shapechangers," and both panelists had much to say about the subject—McCammon because of his recent work, The Wolf's Hour, *and Roberson because of her fantasy series,* Chronicles of the Cheysuli.

The reporter, Richard Alan Kaapke, was late to the conference. We begin with McCammon commenting on the main character from The Wolf's Hour.

RM: ... In my case, my character would rather be a wolf than a human being, because he saw more nobility in being an animal than being human. Jennifer?

JR: My characters can change into more than just wolf-shape. Not wanting to go into a lot of detail here, they bond with an animal, like a killer mammal, in a way—they have an ability to assume a like shape. They don't become that animal, but they assume a like shape. I deal with wolves, falcons, hawks, eagles, and bears. I've had some people try to psychoanalyze me. You know—why is it that I'm dealing with predatory animals? It's like, well, I'm basing this on a warrior race, and I just have a lot of trouble with werebunnies.

But there is, I think, a certain nobility about these animals. They're beautiful, they're magnificent; they're very powerful, and very elegant at the same time.

RM: How do you deal with the physicality of that change? I mean, it's like an instantaneous change—how does somebody change from being a human to being a bear, for instance?

JR: Well, I don't believe in explaining in great detail, mostly because I think movies have more to do with blow-by-blow descriptions. I don't know how many of you saw *An American Werewolf in London*, which was really the first—that and *The Howling*—the first two movies that really went into all the details. And it was tremendous at first, because I hadn't seen that before. But after awhile, anytime I see a wolf transformation, it's like, "It's been done; I'm tired, let's see something new." And consequently, I don't get into it as much.

RM: Mine's really kind of blow-by-blow. It's difficult to do something like that when there is a standard of the *American Werewolf in Paris*—I mean *London*—and *The Howling*. I think that's the standard in special effects. So when you're dealing with a change like that, you've got to think of those things because they were so well done. I try to get more into the character of what the guy was feeling as he changed, and also the fact that he didn't really have a handle on changing all at once. The first time, it kind of came upon him without his willing it to come upon him. Half of him changed, and half of him didn't. So he just flopped around a little bit, until he got himself under control. It seemed like something you would have to learn. He got a lot of false starts. And when he finally did become a whole wolf, he didn't know how to run. He had to learn how to run. [My character] could change into a werewolf without benefit of the full moon or even without dark. He could change back and forth almost at will. But he really loved being a wolf so much that if he was a wolf for three or four days, when he turned back into a human, he couldn't walk! He had to kind of learn how to walk again. You see, he was so immersed in being a wolf; he really enjoyed it.

JR: What he just explained is a great example of an author always saying "What if?" He followed it through. I think there's a lot of overlap with fantasy novels, because [the characters] are changing into all kinds of different animals. I don't dwell on a lot of them, but what he's done is he's gone straight through—I mean, how many people would think about it? The guy forgets how to walk if he's been a wolf for four days. That's the sort of thing for anybody who's tried to be a writer, or just getting started or whatever; constantly ask yourself, "What if?" "What's it like?" Try to put yourself into the individual's place. Thank you for sharing that.

RM: I had a sexual scene where the hero, this young boy, is seduced by a girl who's a werewolf. He lives with his family of wolves that live in that area—the woods of Russia, right after the Czar's fallen. So she seduces him, and as they're making love, they turn into wolves. Which is sort of a demonstration of their joy. [It was a difficult] scene to write, because the mechanics of this and the mechanics of that as they're embracing nude, [growing] claws and other changes.

JR: There seems to be, I think, probably some form of underlying sexual tone of changing shape, in regard to the animals. Some people explore it more fully, but I think, subtly you may not even be aware of it.

RM: An admission of the animal element. The bestial element. Which can be noble—and gentle. It can really be a gentle feeling. As I said, my guy really enjoyed being a wolf—much more than being human. The book's

wolves view humans as being wasteful. One thing I realized in my research about wolves, wolves are not wasteful. They're just not wasteful. They just attack and kill [in order to feed the pack]. So they're very beneficial animals, very noble animals. And that's what I tried to make my character.

JR: I was talking to a friend of mine about what it is about shapechanging that appeals to me. Where did the legend really start? And his explanation was that in the dark ages or in prehistoric times, you'd have an enemy who's sneaking up on an enemy camp, and he kept a wolf pelt, or bear pelt, or something like that—something that belonged—and he kind of hunches down and peeks up. When the tribal member who survived the attack is going to explain what happened, he's not going to say, "Some guy wearing a bear suit snuck up on me." He's going to say "A bear snuck up on me, and attacked and stole the horses," or "stole what they were after." It's really a simplistic explanation, but it makes all the sense in the world! That's where the legend really started.

RM: There's one book I did called *Mystery Walk* in which I have an evil shapechanger. He's called a shapechanger from Indian mythos. This creature doesn't necessarily change into an animal; he changes shapes, he changes into different people. Ever dealt with that kind of shapechanging?

JR: I never had changing into people's shapes because I just felt that's the be-all, do-all-powerful if you could do that. It's a real good, fundamental thing to use in a lot of different books. But I didn't want to get into that. I already had some powerful guys running around. Think about it; if somebody assumes a human form, they can do anything they want to. . . .

RM: It's scary when you create a villain like that that's almost all-powerful. Then you can't get rid of him. I mean, how do you get rid of a villain that does all this stuff? Sometimes you can write yourself into a corner. You have to always find some sort of weakness. The villain has to have some sort of weakness, even though he may appear to be all-powerful.

But I enjoyed that idea of a shape-shifter. This thing, whatever it is—it's not an animal, it's not a human, it's some kind of entity—whatever it is, it can take different forms and turn into people. It can tap into your life and pinpoint a face that's of importance to you, and it can assume that face. That was kind of different.

JR: I know the kind of animal commonly used is the wolf. Whether it's a werewolf or just another wolf-sort of creature. And I wonder if perhaps that has to do with the fact that they're often perceived more dog-like than anything else. They seem to be easiest for humans to understand. They're somewhat dog-like human forms. I mean, after all, the paws have more connection with a wolf than with a bear, or perhaps a bird or something like that. If any of you have had any contacts with wolves at all, you'd see that they're really not like dogs. They have certain dog-like traits, but they're a very different animal.

Q: It seems that the most dangerous creature in an area usually ends up as a were-creature—were-tigers, were-bears, were-wolves. . . .

RM: I think there's a were-tiger in India, also. I think that has a lot to do with the fear of what's out there, the unknown—what's there between towns. It used to be—at least in Europe—that people had to travel between towns by carriage. The wolves were predatory out in the mountains, and people were terrified of being caught by wolves. So they gave wolves an extra strength, to justify such horror and fear about being attacked by wolves. Actually, I can't recall a case of people being attacked by wolves. It might have happened in dire circumstances where the wolves are driven to a frenzy, and they couldn't get any other food, but it's extremely rare.

Q: The wolf has a lot in common with man: they mate for life, their social structure is similar. . . .

RM: The wolf's social structure that you mentioned—I think that's what drew me to the werewolf idea. [The fact] that wolves do have a strict social structure.

JR: They are again more dog-like, more human-like, in many of their behavior systems. The dominance issue is very important to wolves, more so than it seems to be to humans. Their structure is extremely limited. They do have their Alpha leader, and that's it.

Q: How did you decide to write the transformations? How much artistic license was involved?

RM: It's like what we were talking about in those transformation scenes in these films. You can't help but be influenced by what's gone before. I think you really have to get down and try to put your own stamp—your personality—on what's happening. But you can't help but be influenced by what's gone before.

We were talking last night about being a method actor—a male writer putting himself in the place of a female character, or vice-versa. This is another example of method acting: to put yourself in the position of transformation and get into the character as deeply as you possibly can. Feel what that must feel like. You know, the changing of the bone structure. The pain that you've got to feel as that tail sprouts. The lengthening of the jaw. The whole idea of how you see things differently now. Things that you've never noticed before. You see things *clearly*. Much more clearly....

JR: Yeah, that's something you have to do, and any writer really has to work at his or her practice. That's what you have to do, and the shallowness comes through when you can't put yourself into the other person's mind. And even when you're dealing with animals, you're doing the same thing. Of course, they think differently—there's no way a human being can feel exactly what an animal's feeling, what they're thinking. But there have been studies done as far as vision—you know, they've dissected the eyes, trying to figure out exactly how an animal can see, whether they can see color or not. I happen to disagree; I think they do see color....

RM: Somebody pointed that out to me quite vocally in a letter: "The wolves don't see color; now they don't see color."

JR: There's quite a controversy about that. I have dogs—I've dealt with dogs, spent a long time in training—and I think they respond. I really think they differentiate. And it may just be the value of the colors—the red, blue, green, yellow and so on. But I think they see something. If you're living in the wild—for those of you who've done any studies in biology at all—there's the moth, and some of the animals that know what the landscape is around them. Why would they do that if color didn't matter? If pattern didn't matter? I think that a lot of scientific studies are just too scientific.

RM: In part of *Wolf's Hour*, my hero's head is creased by a bullet and he has amnesia for a short time. He forgets he was human. So then I had to—from that point on—really focus on what an animal's viewpoint would be like. He has a feeling that he knows something is going on inside, but he's not sure what he is. A plane passes by and he sees this big crow—this big silver crow goes across—and so he knows that something is wrong, and he's supposed to do [something]. But he's forgotten that he's human.

I was going to ask you, you said you deal with other types of animals other than wolves. Have you ever had a character turn into a bird, or anything like that?

JR: I've had a hawk and a falcon, that sort of thing. And what I emphasize there is the freedom of flight. I don't fly myself, other than in an airplane. I'm not a pilot. And I can't physically fly, but I just think it would be such wonderful freedom to be able to go and just float around, and hit the thermals and stuff like that, soaring around. And it's wonderful. It's a method I use when writing such feelings. I write about emotions more than a lot of physicalities.

> I think it's a challenge to see the world through different eyes. And I think that's what writing, in a way, is all about. ROBERT R. MCCAMMON

RM: I wonder what the physicality of that would be? Somebody turning into a bird would be a pretty good special effect, I'd say!

JR: One thing I did, because a lot of people do change into animal shape; I felt that if the human form had lost a limb or part of a limb, it would affect your bird-shape as well. I had one character lose a hand, and I thought if you took the same amount of mass off a bird, the bird's wing, it would affect the bird's ability to fly. So he could do short hops like a chicken. But when you've been a hawk, up in the sky, you don't really want to be a chicken, so he no longer would [change into a hawk].

I think you'll find that writers look for things that seem to be hard to do. It's a way of mental exercise. You get to stretch yourself. It's very easy to fall into a rut; you develop certain catch phrases, certain ways of saying things. It's very easy to keep repeating them. Consequently, through this sort of mental exercise—stretching our wings, so to speak—we try things that might be difficult on the surface, but are great fun.

That's how we work. But I think the idea behind trying to write—the feeling, both physical and emotional—the feeling of an animal is one way of dealing with it.

RM: I think it's a challenge to see the world through different eyes. And I think that's what writing, in a way, is all about. It's seeing life in the world in a different perspective. I think that's fun; that's the most fun about writing, to me. To view the world through different eyes, different perspectives.

JR: Yeah, I don't know how many of you out there are either trying to get published, or are writing now, or have thought about it but have never done it. We can turn this into Writing 101, too, if you want to, because these are all good exercises. But everything kind of affects everything else. And I think if you practice in one particular field, you can sort of flop over into another one. For instance, my characters maintain their human awareness when they're in animal form. So I don't have to deal with "what is the animal thinking?" all the time. Although I do have them walk a fine line, where if they lose their balance—they have this thing called balance—and step over the line too far, they can forget

> I think we relish the idea of turning ourselves totally loose, and not having to take responsibility for our actions.
>
> Jennifer Roberson

their humanity. And they're stuck in animal form, or something in-between. So there has to be an edge built into it.

RM: You know, that's good. I think there should be an in-between. You know, something where you're neither human or animal. You're kind of struggling; you don't know what's going on—physically, what's that like?

Any comments or questions?

Q: What are your favorite shape-shifting motion pictures? *Wolfen*? *The Howling*? *The Wolf Man*?

RM: Now, that Larry Talbot thing that is so dated, you know; those were great movies in just terms of [storytelling]. You mentioned a neat movie called *Wolfen*. I didn't really like the movie, but they did something interesting there about the wolf's vision. The scenes they did with the different effects—you don't see that very often. It pictures an animal seeing things that humans can't. That's something I try to get across in *The Wolf's Hour*. Have you ever dealt with an enhanced sense of perception?

JR: Yes, I dealt with that, particularly in the first book, because it was an introduction to the whole idea of shapechanging. But my personal favorite movie that comes the closest to something that I like about the shapechanging theme is *Ladyhawke*. It's similar in tone to what I write, and I just like the romance of it. You know, they didn't go into a lot of detail of the change—you just saw her in the one scene where she's falling from the tower, the sun comes up, and she changes. You don't see, like, wings sprouting, and talons coming out of toes and fingers, and things like that. First time I saw *An American Werewolf in London*, I thought it was tremendous. I also saw *The Howling* when it first came out. You got an idea of the pain. The transformation is not a nice thing, and it's very painful, like you were saying earlier. You know, the sprouting of the tail, the racking of the bones. . . .

RM: But I think it's got to be wet, and sloppy, and slobbery. Just really . . . you know, it's got to be tough!

Q: Do you think Jekyll and Hyde is shape-shifting?

JR: Certainly, as far as emotions and personality go. I think it deals with the theme. But physically, he didn't change very much—he was still identifiably human, even if a little bit warped. But I think it could be [shapechanging] because it was a massive change.

RM: Yeah, I say it could be also, because it unleashed that animal—the animal part of a human being. I think a lot of the literature of shape-shifting concerns releasing that animalish part of a human being. So I definitely think so.

JR: I think we all sort of relish—maybe one of the reasons we like books about shapechangers and things—I think we relish the idea of turning ourselves totally loose, and not having to take responsibility for our actions. You know, it's the baser side of man, if you will. And I think that's why, for so many years, shapechangers have represented evil—because they go out and rend throats, and do this horrible, messy stuff. They are just about unstoppable. They are very difficult to deal with. You have to get all these little rituals—your silver bullets and stakes, and all that sort of thing.

Q: What are your favorite shape-changing books?

JR: Which ones would I recommend? Andre Norton did a couple—something about the unicorn rider, something like that. Something with unicorns. *Tapestry*? That may be; I'm not sure. But off the top of my head, I can't think of anything right now. I'll think of it as soon as I get out of the room.

RM: Oh, I can't think of anything, either. And that's because I'm not just going to go and buy a book if it's a shapechanger book. I mean, that's just not

necessarily what appeals to me. The story appeals to me; I'm not going to go read a book just because it is about shapechangers—the plot either appeals to me or it doesn't. And I think that's another thing to remember: when we wrote these books, it wasn't because we wanted to write a shapechanger novel. It wasn't because "now, I need to write a werewolf novel," or "we need to write our shapechanger novel." It's because we had the plot, we had the character, and this fit right with what we wanted to do. So, that's a long way of saying I can't think of any books that I can recommend. . . .

Q: Do you prefer real world settings over made-up ones?

RM: Yeah, I think that's pretty fair to say.

JR: I deal more with fantasy worlds . . . something that doesn't really exist. But I would say that [Rick] deals with an identifiable world much more than I do.

RM: Yeah, but I think it's much harder to create a fantasy world.

Q: The werewolf in Steve Vance's 1986 novel, *The Hyde Effect*, changed minds rather than form. Is that still shape-shifting?

JR: He's asking if we'd consider changing—shifting of minds—is that shape-shifting, [since it's not] physical? I think that goes back to the Jekyll-and-Hyde thing. It's not shape-shifting maybe, in the pure sense of the word, because physically you still are the same, but what we are is determined by what's up here [tapping skull], basically. So I would say that it plays a big part of it.

RM: Yes, shifting perspective is shifting of the viewpoint. But I guess, per sé, it's not shape-shifting, but kind of like perspective-shifting. Anyone else?

Q: You mentioned point of view. How would a wolf's point of view differ—or be the same as—a human's? Wolves do seem to see themselves as responsible. . . .

JR: Well . . . humans have something called a conscience. And it seems like we have to make a definite determination. We decide what we're going to do; we're going to go out and kill somebody. It may be on the spur of the moment, but nonetheless that's your decision, whereas an animal—they say that animals do not kill for sport; I think there actually are a couple that will—but primarily, animals are killing for defense, or food, protection, that sort of thing. I think it's a cleaner way of thinking; it's like you said, it's a matter of perception. It may be wreaking havoc, but within their own mind it's something that needed to be done.

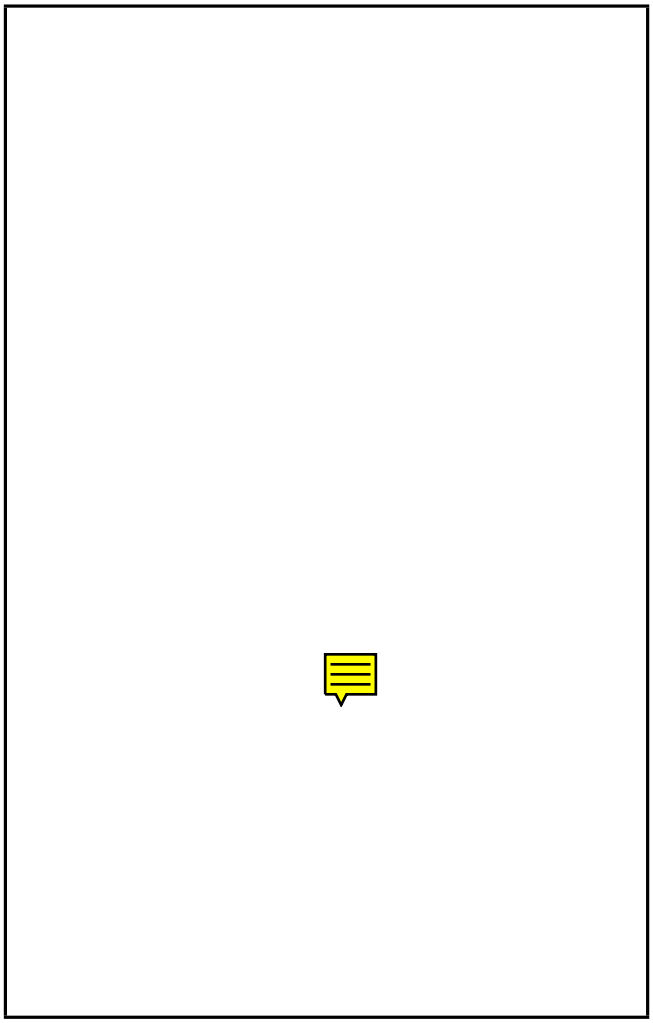
Q: It's easier to identify with characters when they retain their willpower after changing.

RM: Yeah, [in *The Wolf's Hour*, Michael Gallatin] is in control of what he's doing, and he does feel a sense of responsibility, too. There's a certain point where he's atop the opera house, where he could've killed somebody, and then he held himself back from killing, because he realized this person is really not necessarily evil. They're in an evil circumstance, but he's selective about who he kills. It's like I think real wolves are selective. I didn't want this character just to be a kind of a whirlwind of destruction, evil destruction—it's not like a wolf.

Q: Is there an internal conflict between instinct and conscience?

RM: Yes, because when he does kill, it's almost a religious experience, I think. It feels good to do this. The blood, the smell of the blood—he loves it. And that's almost religious. But he's responsible, also.

Q: How do your shapechangers eat while in a different form?



JR: If my character is in the guise of a wolf, that's how he eats. If he's in his wolf shape for any set length of time, he will physically eat and kill just as the wolf does. For me, personally, that's role-playing. You have a good time imagining things, like I said earlier, as a sort of exercise. I'll make believe I'm a wolf, and yet it's not real.

RM: You kind of put yourself in the place of the character, and you're ripping his face off? Or if you were to take a bite out of somebody's leg, and pull the flesh out?

JR: I like my meat very rare, anyway.

RM: I like mine raw.

JR: People who deal with shape-shifting, maybe we like our meat raw. Or rare.

RM: Raw fish, raw meat, and bloody.

Q: Disney's *Never Cry Wolf* featured a man eating like a wolf.

RM: Well, they think you'll eat anything if you're hungry enough. There's a scene in *The Wolf's Hour* where a guy's sick—one of the werewolves is sick—and he's dying and begins to throw up, and he throws up worms. Because his wolf disease has affected his human form. So he's got these worms in his stomach, and he's just full—full of worms. So I thought that would be really, *really* visceral.

> And I know what they're thinking is, "Fantasy? What's this? Some sort of adult, erotic entertainment?"
>
> Jennifer Roberson

JR: It is!

RM: I wanted it to be really visceral, and brutal in a way. Bloody and violent. That's not necessarily the way I write, but that's what the story called for. That's what the character called for.

JR: Again, back to Writing 101 here. There are a lot of things that we're required to do in our real life that we don't necessarily like thinking about. But you really do put on your little hats as God. You can do anything you want to. And it's here that the creative muse really takes over. When you do a lot of these things, it has to be done for the sake of the story. You can be a butcher, if you have to be—it's for the sake of the story. That's what it's like to be a writer.

I guess writers are basically schizo. You pull out the emotion—you really reach a reader—or you create a button and you push them to get these visceral responses. We're schizo, I guess. But it's necessary, I think, in any case.

Q: How do you get into your characters?

JR: When I write a male's point of view, I sort of steep myself in that individual. Whenever I write a female point of view, I actually have a harder time. And I don't know why—maybe because I don't think about things. When I write from a male point of view, I'm working very hard, because now I'm thinking like a man. You know, how to capture his image to get it down in print. And it's hard for me to do with the female because these things are automatic. But as far as the animal parts go, I don't know. I don't think there's really an explanation for it. I think it's just wishful [thinking] in a way. Yes, I would think it'd be fun! I'm serious. Although I've had a father of a friend of mine, when the first book [*Shapechangers*] was published, say "Oh, you've written a diet book!" Swear to God!

RM: The raw meat and blood diet.

JR: We have about twenty minutes left; if you have questions on other topics or other themes, feel free. . . .

Q: Do you have any new books coming out?

RM: Yeah, I have a new book called *Blue World*; it's a book of short stories that'll be out in April. And my next novel, called *Mine*, will be out in May.

JR: I have the fifth book in the *Shapechanger* series, *Flight of the Raven*, coming out in June. And then, I'm doing the fourth *Sword Dancer*, which is called *Sword Breaker*; it's been scheduled for next summer, even though I haven't written it yet.

RM: One thing I'd like to add is that it's a lot of fun to do this. I think it's a lot of fun to put yourself in the form of an animal. And one thing that I've learned, talking to other writers, is that most writers are really children at heart. I think we are really kids at heart, and this is fun for us. You know, it's a lot of fun, and we get to play-act, and just play!

JR: Especially if you're growing up. I started writing very young. We all do "What I Did On My Summer Vacation," and that sort of thing. But I really was writing real neat little stories and I was fourteen when I wrote my first novel! And somehow, when you're sneaking in your bedroom, or whatever room you have—a corner of the living room or something—and you're typing away on your typewriter or longhand, or laboriously writing this out on your yellow legal pads—however you do it—somehow it doesn't have legitimacy.

Because you say, "Well, I'm a writer." "Oh, are you published?" "Well, no." The first question is "Are you published?" then you get the "Oh, well." Therefore, you are not a good writer. You are not dedicated to your craft. And yet, it's *amazing* the sort of thing that everyone, after your first book is sold—your family, you know, friends, other people—all of a sudden, you've gained legitimacy in the world.

RM: Yeah, another question is, "What do you do?" and then you say, "Well, I'm a writer." And they pause for a second. "Yeah, what's your real job?" That's when you wish you had the ability to turn into a wolf!

JR: I think you can manage, because the sort of literature [you write] is a little more identifiable. Most of the time I have to say "science fiction," because if you say "fantasy" you can tell—unless they're into science fiction and fantasy, and understand the distinction—there's this kind of glazed, bewildered look in other people's eyes. And I know what they're thinking is, "Fantasy? What's this? Some sort of adult, erotic entertainment?" So I say science fiction, and if I get feedback like, "Oh, well yeah, but I like fantasy," then I'll go, "Great!" And I'll push them into a corner, "Let me tell you what I really do."

Q: Can you name any movies that scared you?

RM: Well, I have two answers for that, okay? The first answer to your question is *The Haunting of Hill House*. That's one that really scared me. Also, the one where the people got sucked into the sand on the beach, remember that? *Invaders from Mars*—the original; that was scary.

The second answer to that is, I don't go to horror films. I don't like them. 'Cause what interests me about this is characters—characters are interesting. Horror movies by and large don't do any characterization; I just don't like that. Unfortunately, in our business, we're judged not by the best artwork, but the worst. The number of people who go to see horror movies are a thousandfold greater than the number of people who read. So you do horror novels, and they say, "Oh, like *Friday the 13th*?" And I say, "No." So I don't really like horror films—personally, I think they're cheap.

JR: For me, I don't like watching films. I don't like horror movies. I don't like gore with an "E" on the end—or Gor with no "E" on the end! For those of you who read Gor novels, sorry about that. But for me, the psychological thrillers—psychological horror, if you like—is much more frightening than buckets of blood and guts falling out. And Hitchcock did some wonderful, wonderful movies. The tension is so incredible! The movie *Alien*, the first one? I preferred the second one, but the first one was a movie I tend to leave, because the tension was drawn so taughtly that I was just—ooh, I was just crawling and itching. I was so uncomfortable, I couldn't stand it!

That's what good psychological horror does. Terror, whatever label you want to put on it, makes you dither and go, "I can't watch this anymore," but it's so good and so compelling that you can't leave. You can't stop reading the book, or you can't stop watching the movie. You know *Wait Until Dark*? A tremendous psychological thriller, horror, whatever you want to call it—a blind woman trapped in her apartment in New York City, and the bad guys come to get her. And you are put in her place. You experience that attack of the movie through her eyes, and she's blind! So, you have to use all the other senses. I'm not a screamer, but boy, I did a job on my mother and my aunt—they were on either side of me. One particular scene, everybody in the audience screamed. And that, I think, is a lot more effective than when blood gets poured all over the screen.

RM: It's kind of redundant when you do that scene after scene; it shouldn't support the film. But evidently, that satisfies some sort of need. They've done great. They've made a lot of money. Anyone else?

Q: Do you have any stories optioned for the movies?

RM: Yeah, and I dread to go see what's going to happen. I probably won't go to see the films, actually. Because I did something called "Makeup" that was out on ABC's *Darkroom* series a long time back. And they just totally changed everything. They changed the names of the main characters, secondary characters—they changed everything! Because they have a big table full of people who make those decisions. All these people have to justify their existence, so they make all the

changes. But I really enjoy writing; that's my child. My books are my children, because I'm in sole control. I write in what I call "splendid isolation," and sometimes isolation can be pretty tough. Because nobody can help you write when you're in isolation. You may have a problem, and you say, "I wish somebody could help me do this scene," but you can't. It's just you and the paper. But that's the way I prefer it. And I think writing a screenplay would be hell. You do write, and somebody who doesn't know jack crap would say, "I want you to change this guy to have red hair, not brown hair," and "I want this guy to wear a green tie," crap like that. So that's just not my thing. If it happens, that's somebody else's baby—my children are books.

Q: Which ones have been optioned?

RM: *They Thirst* has been optioned. And a kind of tentative *Swan Song* miniseries. Maybe. So, we'll see. But it's an option. Stuff is optioned all the time. It's very rare that anything gets made, so we'll see. Actually, the *Twilight Zone* version of "Nightcrawlers" I was really happy with. And I think I lucked out. I really got lucky, because most things adapted from books or short stories don't turn out very well. ["Nightcrawlers"] turned out pretty well.

JR: Do we have any other questions?

Q: Do you envy any other writer's craft?

RM: Yeah, good question. Yeah, actually, the writer I grew up on is Ray Bradbury. We were talking yesterday at our other session about worldbuilding, about labels. Ray Bradbury's a writer you cannot label. He's neither horror, fantasy, or science fiction. He's just an excellent writer. One of the first stories I ever read by Ray Bradbury was "The Lake," which I think is a marvelous story. Is it a ghost story? Is it—? What is it? I don't know! And I'm not going to say what kind of story it is—it's a wonderful story. That's what I'm trying to do now. I try to do the best I can do with my voice. And make my voice geared toward more horror fiction, or whatever you want to call it. But I'd like to be kind of free of labels, if that's possible. Like Ray Bradbury.

JR: It's really difficult when you're first getting started, because most people who want to write read a lot. At least, you read a lot before you become a writer, because then you don't have any time anymore. The thing I found myself doing is, I had particular writers that I envied, or I just admired, or I just plain enjoyed when I read their work. And I found it cropping up in my own stuff. It wasn't anything I did consciously, but because I liked the way somebody did this, or somebody did that, it would come up in my own work. I received influence into my early stuff, and then later, somewhere down the road, I quit trying so hard. And just sort of let it come naturally. And I discovered my own voice, which I can't tell you what it is. But I don't think any writer really knows. It's try your hardest, and then you work for a certain effect, and then you have to let it go. But I admire greatly Tanith Lee, who's a tremendous writer. She's not incredibly popular—she doesn't do series fiction—but she's a tremendous writer if you want very good, provocative imagery and color. I think C.J. Cherryh is the best practitioner of both genres: fantasy and science fiction. Usually, you're good at one and passable at another. I think she's equally good at both. And Patricia McKillip, I think, is very good, also. I wish she wrote more.

RM: I think ability and style is interesting, because it's hard to do. People by and large think it's easy to do. They discuss natural ability, but it's hard to do. And I think that's touchy. Most times you can't identify your own style. You wouldn't know it if you read it backwards. But it's hard to develop your own style. It's tough. It's taken me a lot of years to develop my own style.

JR: "Style" is one of those buzzwords that a lot of people really don't understand what it has to do with anything, but to me, a definition of style is when you're writing, achieve a certain image, if you will, to where, even without your name attached to it, it's an identifiable woman. A particular writer. Now, we don't all write the same every time. We don't try to regurgitate what we wrote before. But there are certain things that just come out—certain themes that appeal to us, and they keep coming out in the writing. Certain kinds of phrase, certain things like that. But style is one of those really fuzzy, fuzzy things.

RM: Rhythm, too. You've got your own personal rhythm. And I think it's hard to explain—unless you're a writer—what rhythm is. What your phraseology is. What your timing and pacing is. It's all very important.

I guess we should be winding this up. . . .

JR: Thank you all for coming. I'm going to give a blatant plug here: It's not scheduled in the book, but Sunday, in the morning, at 10 AM, in this room, I'm going to be doing a reading if anyone is interested.

RM: Thank you very much. ■

Limited Editions, PCs, and Stuff

A Discussion with Joe Lansdale, Robert R. McCammon, and Hunter Goatley

[L. to R.] Tim Powers, Joe R. Lansdale, Robert R. McCammon, and Nancy A. Collins

Editor's note: This conversation took place at the 1989 World Fantasy Convention in October 1989. Current publishing practices make increased numbers of copies of "limited editions" available but promote decreased quality in those copies. Having spoken with Rick McCammon about these trends, I sat down with McCammon and Joe Lansdale to get their thoughts on the current state of limited editions and signed copies of books. . . .

Goatley: Rick, you and I've talked about how many limited editions are printed now, and about dealers charging more for signed books. You and Joe have both indicated that you may stop signing a lot of things, or some things, or for certain dealers. I'd just like to get your feelings on current publishing practices. . . .

Lansdale: I haven't gotten to the point where there's anybody I'm gonna quit signing for. All I'm saying is, I'm a little bothered by the fact that the trade editions and the so-called limited editions are the same books, with the exception of a cardboard box and an autograph page. I think that if you're doing that, that if they were going to call that the limited, that'd be OK, if you were only charging like about $10 more. Because you're really printing the same book with this one page and this box, which is worth about 50 cents. I just don't feel that jumping something from, say $22, to $50 or $60, is fair to people. I think if you're going to have a limited [edition], and you're only going to have, say, 300 or 600 copies—whatever they're doing with limiteds—that book ought to be *different* from the other one in some special way—I don't know, bound in dog-pecker skin, or something—but something different. If it's got different illustrations, a different artist, or color plates . . . you know, something that makes it special.

The only person I know that's really doing special editions is Joe Stefko [whose Charnel House recently published Tim Powers's *The Stress of Her Regard*, with illustrations by Powers and bound in hand-streaked denim with a matching slipcase—Ed.]. But, of course,

he's not doing trade editions. They're different, they're unique....

McCammon: Yeah, you're not going to go find them in a bookstore.

Lansdale: Yeah.

McCammon: You see, my feeling is that the collectible market is almost out of control.

Lansdale: It is.

McCammon: People are making tons of money off people's names, and everything.... All signatures can't be worth 50, 60, 70 dollars. It just seems to me that the more signatures you have floating around, the less value your signature has.

Lansdale: No, I don't think that has anything to do with it. I think what makes a signature worth more has nothing to do with that at all; it has to do with how bad people want those signatures. What you're forgetting about is most people aren't accessible to us, and they want signatures. I don't have anything against that, because I know that there are people that *I* know that collect [signatures] that can't go to all these things

> The collectible market is almost out of control. — Robert R. McCammon

[conventions]. They're very excited and willing to pay that money.

All I'm saying is that if you're going to have something, if they're going to have people pay that money for it, the book dealers ought to have enough integrity to make those books a little bit more special. So, OK, you're paying for the autograph. And I think the market has to decide how much it's worth. I mean, that's fair enough. I think that it should not be obviously just the same book and you're paying 30 bucks for the autograph.

I don't really like seeing [the price of] books even doubled with my autograph. A couple of dollars more, fine, because you're paying for the accessibility of having it autographed by somebody that you might not have the chance to see, but double?

McCammon: Well, when you open up a book and it's like $100, it's almost shocking to me.

Lansdale: If it was really, really rare, it'd be different.

McCammon: Yeah, but if there's all these copies floating around.... You've got hundreds of these copies floating around that are supposed to be limited editions, and you've got your signature on *all* of them, and each one is like a hundred-and-something dollars....

Lansdale: Yeah. A press that I like—I love Dark Harvest; those guys have done a lot for the field and they've been really good to me and to a lot of other writers—but I'm bothered by the fact that their limited editions, as well as their trade editions, are just *full* of typos. And here are things that are instant collector's items, immediately; I mean, as soon as they come out, they're instant collector's items. That's understandable because, in a sense, they are very limited compared to what New York would be doing. But on the other hand, it's a smaller market. They print about what Doubleday used to print, the old Doubleday hardback line.

If they're gonna do that, the 300 or 600 copies ought to be different in another way. And these things *ought* to be *proofread!* I mean, these are supposed to be special, collectible editions; they ought to have that kind of love and care put into them. And I think that they could spend a little bit more money on their artwork, the interior artwork especially.

Goatley: I don't know if you read the editorial I had in issue 2 of *Lights Out!*....

Lansdale: Yeah, as a matter of fact, I did.

Goatley: I brought that up about *Razored Saddles*. I stopped counting at about 40 [typos], and that was just misspelled words, words that were repeated, and words that were missing.

Lansdale: Yeah, here's the deal. They sent the stuff to me to proof, and I did proof it, and still some of the errors that I proofed appeared. I probably missed some, but they shouldn't send it to me to proof it by myself; they should have a proofreader first, and then me. Because you've got to remember, I've looked at this stuff no telling how many times. They get it to me, and I have to have it back almost overnight—you know, 2, 3 days; I did the best I could, but....

McCammon: You can look at something and miss ... you could be checking one thing and miss something else.

Lansdale: There were errors in the final edition that weren't there in the stuff they gave me, and how can that happen when they're doing this on computers? I can't figure that!

Goatley: A decent spelling checker would've caught a lot of the problems with *Razored Saddles*. You know, a spelling checker is never going to be able to replace a proofreader, a person doing it, but still....

McCammon: See, that kind of thing just drives me crazy. It drives me crazy in a regular edition anyway. Typos drive me absolutely crazy; when there are typos

like that in what's supposed to be a limited edition....

Lansdale: One or two don't bother me, but something that is just riddled with them, like you said, a limited edition....

McCammon: It's probably hard to keep out all of them, I guess.

Lansdale: I've never read a book that didn't have some, but it's worse....

Goatley: I've seen some that are real close.

Lansdale: Yeah, I guess I've read some where I didn't notice any, but they probably had some. The thing is that proofreading on the whole, not just Dark Harvest, but on the whole in the industry, has declined incredibly. I'm not a good proofreader....

McCammon: It's declining beyond the specialized markets; it's in New York....

Lansdale: That's what I'm saying; I'm not a great proofreader, I'll tell you right up. I think I'm a good editor, in the sense that I know what a good story is, most of the time. That doesn't mean everyone's going to agree with my choices, but I know how to get good stories out of people, how to put together an anthology and do something that I think's unique. But that doesn't mean that I necessarily know how to spell. And the other thing, too, is that by the time I get [the proofs], I've probably read [those stories] four or five times apiece, for a variety of different reasons. I don't see a lot of those mistakes. I would see them more if I didn't have to do them in two or three days. I'm saying they ought to have a proofreader to eliminate that. A proofreader then could quiz the stuff out before, just like the New York houses do; when you get it, you can make your decisions as to whether they made the right choice.

McCammon: Something I noticed that's kind of interesting: I got a pamphlet in the mail recently that said there was a copy of the original "Nightcrawlers" script, with my original corrections on it, for sale. And [it has] an editor's letter verifying that it was the real thing, for like $450. A guy in Los Angeles was selling it. I don't know how in the world he got that, or who did it, but I wonder if we're not gonna start seeing more stuff like that popping up.

Lansdale: My manuscripts have already been selling.

McCammon: I mean not coming from us, coming from our editors, from people we work with....

Lansdale: Well, that's what I'm saying: I've heard of manuscripts of mine, photocopies of them, that are floating around and being sold. I think in today's market it's harder for people to tell a photocopy from an original.

McCammon: Yeah. I think that's kind of bizarre; that's kind of a step beyond the signed, limited editions into something else.

Lansdale: Yeah. It's up to us to choose to sell our own manuscripts, if we want. But it's not up to somebody else to choose to sell them.

McCammon: If somebody somewhere is taking this stuff out of their files and saying, "Well, I'm gonna sell this to somebody, a dealer, and we're going to make *X* amount of money on it."

Lansdale: And say it belongs to them.

McCammon: Yeah.

Lansdale: I guess technically it does, but.... Well, I don't know. I don't think they've got that....

McCammon: No, no, I don't think they really do.

Lansdale: Seems like to me it shouldn't belong to the publisher, instead of the individual. Usually I get my manuscripts back after the thing has been printed....

McCammon: Yeah, I don't know, I guess I lost track

> I always assumed the true collector was also a reader.... JOE R. LANSDALE

of what happened to the manuscript. I don't know who had it, or.... You know, I thought I had the original, that the original came back to me, so I'm not really sure what happened to it.

Lansdale: Maybe a photocopy.

McCammon: But supposedly it's an original that has my corrections on it and a letter.... But the weird thing about it is that, it says in the ad—it has a letter from my editor, whoever that is, because I had no editor; I don't know what editor they're talking about—verifying that this is an original manuscript. That's just kind of a different thing, you know?

Lansdale: Yeah.

Goatley: I don't know if you guys even saw it, but upstairs they've got *AB Bookman's Weekly* magazine.

Lansdale: Yeah, I saw it.

McCammon: Yeah.

Goatley: There was an article in there by Barry Levin on the controversy over PC copies [*presentation* or *publisher's copies*]. I thought he had a lot of really good

things to say, but he was talking about how completists collecting stuff have to have every state of a book, and he said that it used to be that there was the trade edition and a limited edition. Then they started getting into the PCs, and now there are presentation copies for "Friends of the Press," copies for "Friends of the Author," copies for "Relatives of the Author," and in this little scenario, he came up with 8 states of the book. And that seems to be happening more and more....

McCammon: And there are some people who would want all of those books?

Goatley: Yeah.

Lansdale: [unbelievingly] What the hell for? Why would anyone want all those books? It's the same book!

McCammon: I guess if you're a completist....

Joe "Big Dog" Lansdale and Robert R. McCammon

Lansdale: I guess so. The thing on the PC copies is, it's a way you can print unlimited copies. And that's bothersome. I don't think there ought to be PC copies, personally. I think there ought to be two things: I think there ought to be a limited, and there ought to be a trade. We ought to get our limited and trade editions for doing our work, just like we get PC copies. In one sense, I always feel slighted by getting a PC copy—I mean, I'm really not a collector, I don't really care, I don't really give a shit—but if I'm gonna get 'em and I wrote 'em, I feel like the others should be worth more somehow, the numbered copies. What they ought to have is maybe review copies or something—I guess that's what the PC copies are for—but maybe have those as bound galleys, or whatever.

Goatley: See, that's becoming.... Well, two things: Barry Levin suggested that what he thinks they ought to do is go back to the two states, limited and trade....

Lansdale: I do, too.

Goatley: ... and you guys, instead of getting PC copies, would get the first ten numbered copies, so all of the early ones would be the PC copies.

Lansdale: The others would be bound galleys, just like they send out for review.

Goatley: The other thing I was gonna say is that that seems to be happening more and more, too. There are more advance reading copies of books that collectors *have* to have.

Lansdale: Well, the advance reading copies have to happen; that's where you get your reviews and where you sell them to paperbacks.

Goatley: Right. No, I understand the purpose for them....

McCammon: You know, I think you can step back and look at this in a different light: the excitement is that there are so many different types of books that collectors can buy, and hoard, and it's like the story is almost incidental.

Goatley: Yeah.

Lansdale: There are people who don't care at all; they find out who's collectible. But that's always been that way; I've always thought that was odd. I think that's why I never got the collecting bug, because I was always a reader—you know, that's why I got books; to read them.

McCammon: What appeals to me is the story, not necessarily the book.

Lansdale: Yeah. Which is not to say that I don't try to get the best edition of something I can, but I just won't go out and spend hundreds of dollars so I can say I've got the first edition. I want it to read. I'm not knocking collectors—I don't mean that in any way—but I always assumed the true collector was also a reader, but I find that isn't always true.

McCammon: No, it's not true. And that's kind of bizarre.

Lansdale: What do you do, just look at these things? I mean, what's the worth to it? It's like having tires in your garage.

McCammon: I was gonna say, it's like an investment maybe.

Lansdale: Yeah, but they stuff them in the attic or something; they usually don't sell them as an investment. It's like stocks and bonds: it may not be worth

shit; nobody might want a McCammon or a Lansdale five years from now.

McCammon: [laughs] I guess it is kind of like stocks and bonds. . . .

Goatley: I wonder now with the Stephen King stuff that's bringing so much, and your stuff that's starting to. Five years from now, is that King stuff people are paying hundreds of dollars for now, is it gonna be worth half that?

McCammon: That's why people should be buying the work, I think—for the book.

Goatley: Yeah.

Lansdale: Because it may not be [worth what they're paying].

McCammon: Yeah, it may not be.

Lansdale: I saw stuff like—I think it was the galleys of *The Nightrunners*—for a couple hundred bucks! It's ridiculous! You know, I'm not knocking myself, but I haven't been around long enough for something to be that collectible. You know, I can see somebody paying maybe 50 dollars because it's rare, but a couple hundred bucks?

Goatley: And that seems to be happening more and more with brand new writers.

Lansdale: Yeah. I mean, hell! I'm not *brand* new, but in a sense I'm new.

McCammon: But it's happening to people who have been working in this field a lot less than you have.

Lansdale: I know. It's amazing!

Goatley: A lot of it seems to be just certain dealers who decide. They get the advance reading copy, or galleys, or whatever, and they start selling it. Everybody's gotta have it after that.

McCammon: Yeah. Is that because it's a good book, or because it's simply a collectible title to put on the shelf and look at? It's almost like the story is incidental; it doesn't mean much anymore.

Goatley: Yeah, they're just trying to get this rare thing.

Lansdale: On the other hand, though, I'm really enjoying getting to work with some of [the small press] guys, because it gives me a chance to do some odd things that I wouldn't get to do before, like *Razored Saddles* and the thing I'm doing for Mark Ziesing, my short story collection. I'm probably not at a stage right now where I could sell a short story collection in hardback—paperback, yeah, probably, *maybe*, let's say *maybe*—and that's good. Mark Ziesing does work that I think is equal to the professionals in New York, in both proofreading and in the appearance of the books; this guy's gonna go real far. So there is that. And Mark, too, I think, is the kind of guy that if you said, "Look, these things ought to be a little bit different or special," I think he would go do something about it. And I think that we've gotta make them aware that we won't be happy with [inferior quality].

David Hinchberger I like very much; I really consider David a friend. But they've been putting the little pages in the books that come out. I didn't mind doing that, because I'm not a collector; I didn't know. To me, numbered didn't mean dick to me; I didn't know, I just signed it. I thought the number was just how you kept up with it; I had no idea it meant anything. So Dean Koontz told me about it, he explained it to me, and I said, "Fine, I don't want to do that." I will sign the pages, tipped in, as long as they're not numbered, because that implies that it's a limited edition. Which I don't think Hinchberger was doing just to make a buck; I think he really thought that he was doing something special for the people who wanted it. I thought it was marked up a little high, but I will sign them as long as they're not numbered. What I'd rather do is that they have some kind of bookplate that you just stick in. Because I don't want to mislead people; I never thought that anyone would consider it a special edition—I thought it was just a special thing from [the Overlook Connection]—but people do [consider it a special edition].

McCammon: This number thing is kind of indicative of a deeper level of collecting. It's, again, beyond the story. We've got to have a certain number, we've got to have a certain print run, that sort of thing.

[The discussion evolved into the Joe Lansdale interview published in *Lights Out!* issue 3.]

Joe Lansdale's new novel, *Savage Season*, will be published this fall by Bantam (paperback) and Mark V. Ziesing (hardcover). Joe recently completed the screenplay for a movie adaptation of his 1989 novel *Cold in July*; his short stories "On the Far Side of the Cadillac Desert with Dead Folks" and "The Pit" have both been optioned for translation to the big screen. ■

Recommended Reading List

Compiled by Hunter Goatley

From Michael Sellard, Hollywood, FL:

- *Fade*, by Robert Cormier. Nominated for Best Novel, World Fantasy Award 1989.
- *Time and Again*, by Jack Finney. Possibly the best time-travel novel ever written (in my humble opinion).

From David L. Bailey, Tacoma, WA:

- *Red Dragon* and *The Silence of the Lambs*, by Thomas Harris. Probably the best at the serial killer thing.
- *By Bizarre Hands*, by Joe R. Lansdale (Ziesing, 1989). An absolutely superb collection of short fiction.
- *Dune*, by Frank Herbert. One of the most complete science fiction novels ever written.

From Michael Yates, Bolton, England:

- *It*, by Stephen King (Viking, 1986). A mammoth nostalgic read that takes you back to your first shot of Four Roses.
- *Whispers*, by Dean R. Koontz (Putnam, 1980). More thriller than horror. Koontz at his best.
- *Silver Scream*, edited by David J. Schow (Dark Harvest, 1988; TOR 1988). Best horror anthology of the last few years. Joe Lansdale's "Night They Missed the Horror Show" is a classic.
- *The Fog*, by James Herbert (NEL, 1975; Signet, 1975). Vintage Herbert. The UK's top horror writer—forget Clive Barker.
- *Testament*, by David Morrell (Evans, 1975). A relentless pursuit story by the USA's most underrated writer.
- *Shadowfires*, by Leigh Nichols (Dean R. Koontz). A spine-freezer. There's somebody out there and he's *BAD!*

From Paul Schulz, Casper, WY:

- *Bone*, by George C. Chesbro. My personal choice for best novel of 1989. Any plot summary of this novel would not do it justice. The novel is filled with tremendous empathy and compassion for the plight of the homeless in America.
- *The Tower of Fear*, by Glen Cook. A heroic fantasy that has a realistic setting, complex plotting, and a focus on the ordinary inhabitants of the world. This novel, set in an eastern city of an empire roughly paralleling Rome's, serves as an excellent introduction to Cook's writings.
- *Impact*, by Stephen Greenleaf. A fascinating examination of airline crash litigation that might make you think twice before flying again.
- *Vespers*, by Ed McBain. The 42nd 87th Precint novel. An excellent addition to one of the finest series in crime fiction.
- *Ghoul*, by Michael Slade. The second novel by a trio of Vancouver attorneys. H.P. Lovecraft, serial murders, rock 'n' roll, and split personalities combined into one of the most graphic horror/suspense novels I've ever read. The descriptions of violence rise so far beyond even splatterpunk stylings that parts of the novel read like autopsy reports. Slightly flawed by the authors reprising a plot device from their first work, *Headhunter*. The truly frightening thing about this book is that the authors probably got some of their ideas from actual cases they have been exposed to.

From Keith Hamrick, Bonifay, FL:

- *Nemesis*, by Shaun Hutson (W.H. Allen, 1989)
- *Moon Dance*, by S.P. Somtow (Tor, 1989)
- *The Girl Next Door*, by Jack Ketchum (Warner, 1989)
- *Off Season*, by Jack Ketchum (Ballantine, 1980)
- *The Great and Secret Show*, by Clive Barker (Harper & Row, 1990)
- *Nightblood*, by T. Chris Martindale (Warner, 1990)
- *Funland*, by Richard Laymon (W.H. Allen, 1989)
- *Flesh*, by Richard Laymon (Tor, 1988)
- *Mystery*, by Peter Straub (Dutton, 1990)

All of these should be required reading for the horror fan. They are *all* evil, wicked, mean, and nasty.

From John Fredericks, Derby, CT:

- *Manstopper*, by Douglas Borton (Onyx, 1988). It's about four attack dogs on the loose; the leader, Razor, makes Cujo seem like Lassie! An excellent "first" novel.
- *The Day Before Midnight*, by Stephen Hunter (Bantam, 1989). I was drawn to this book first by the money-back guarantee it came with. Once I started it, I couldn't stop. It's an intense, exciting thriller. I highly recommend this book.
- *Jericho Falls*, by Christopher Hyde (Avon, 1986). Concerns the accidental release of a government-developed disease (which the author states is genuine). Back cover compares this to Michael Crichton's *The Andromeda Strain* and Koontz's *Strangers*. If it's as real as the author's note says it is—well, just read it for yourself.

From Nancy A. Collins, Author of *Sunglasses After Dark*:

- *High Rise*, by J.G. Ballard. An unflinching look at the breakdown of civilization within a luxury apartment complex. Chillingly plausible.
- *Geek Love*, by Katherine Dunn (Knopf, 1989). Weird tale of a family of carnival performers elevated to epic Greek tragedy. What more can I say about a book that offers freakshow messiahs, promiscuous Siamese twins, a cult based on obligatory amputation, and a female, albino, hunchbacked dwarf as the narrator?
- *The Night Man*, by K.W. Jeter (Onyx, 1989). A hard, cold, unsentimental story about a sensitive child suffering at the hands of bullies and his own hateful family. Ignore the copy on the back. This is far from being another *Carrie*/*Friday the 13th* revenge-fest. Compelling reading for anyone who was tormented in childhood.
- *The Nightrunners*, by Joe R. Lansdale (TOR, 1989). A slam-bang revenge novel that reads like a supernatural cross between *Straw Dogs* and *Clockwork Orange*. Strong medicine for sick puppies.
- *Child of God*, by Cormac McArthur (Ecco, 1982). A weird hybrid of Flannery O'Connor and *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. An alienated white-trash hillbilly goes quietly berserk and turns into a cave-dwelling, necrophilic, mass-murdering cannibal. Yow!
- *In Darkness Waiting*, by John Shirley (Onyx, 1988). A disturbing tour-de-force concerning a town plagued by a supernaturally-spawned "disease" that negates human empathy. Genuinely creepy.

From Hunter Goatley, Knoxville, TN:

- *Nightblood*, by T. Chris Martindale (Warner, 1990). Wow! This tale of vampires taking over a small town is a very exciting read. Many people have described this book as "Rambo in 'Salem's Lot," a description that is, in a way, very accurate, but the book is much, much better than that sounds. The hero is a Vietnam vet who, along with his brother's ghost, hunts down and dispatches all manner of creatures, looking for the Enemy. This novel follows in the tradition of *They Thirst* and *The Light at the End*: an action-filled, scary tale.
- *Mark of the Werewolf*, by Jeffrey Sackett (Bantam, 1990). Another Wow! I've never cared much for werewolf novels, but in the past year or so I've read Robert R. McCammon's *The Wolf's Hour*, Al Sarrantonio's *Moonbane*, and Steve Vance's *The Hyde Effect*; now add *Mark of the Werewolf* to that list of incredible werewolf tales. This story is much more than just a horror tale; it is an intricately written historical fantasy novel too—which doesn't dilute the horror at all. Sackett fits his immortal werewolf into *many* historical events that couldn't have happened that way—but maybe they did! A ton of fun.
- *Trade Secrets*, by Ray Garton (Ziesing, 1990). A suspense thriller from the author of *Live Girls*; wait until you find about Burgess Hill for Women. A slick read that compares favorably with Lansdale's best thrillers.
- *The Tery*, by F. Paul Wilson (Baen, 1990). A science fiction/fantasy novel featuring Steven Dalt, the main character of Wilson's *Healer*. As with all of Wilson's books, this novel has some wonderful characters and an interesting look at theology.
- *The Cartoonist*, by Sean Costello (Pocket Books, April 1990). Twenty years after he's involved in a hit-and-run accident that killed a ten-year old child, Scott Bowman encounters The Cartoonist, an insane old man whose drawings cause real-life events—and Scott's wife and ten-year-old daughter are in mortal danger. Costello has a pleasing style that makes this book a lot better than it might sound.
- *Mandrake*, by J. Edward Lord (Ballantine, 1990). An interesting story set in the South from the Civil War to the present. Though the plot isn't exactly new, the author flip-flops back and forth from the past to the present to tell the story; this makes the book fairly exciting.

By the way, all of the review comments were made by the respective submitters. If you want to recommend a book or books that others may have missed, send the titles, authors, publishers, and dates to *Lights Out!*

■

Coming Attractions

The October issue of *Lights Out!* will feature new fiction by Robert R. McCammon, a report on the 1990 HWA Bram Stoker Awards Banquet, a report on NECON X, and, as always, the latest news and more!