

Grad student authors 'hot' novel

by Sue Pettet
Nebraska Staff Writer

The first shipment arrived at a local news stand on Sept. 20. Three days later the book was sold out. Even many of the author's friends cannot find a copy to buy.

The book hot off the presses is "The Warlock In Spite of Himself," a science-fiction novel by University grad student Christopher Stasheff.

Stasheff outlined possibility as the chief determinant of whether a work is science fiction or fantasy.

"In science fiction, the plot is based on scientific principle, while in science fantasy, it just couldn't happen," he said. "It's impossible. In science fantasy, the writer creates his own world."

Science fantasy has inherent logic in its universe and goes according to a set of laws which are usually not stated, he continued. Magic is usually one of those laws,

as it is in Stasheff's story. "I have witches, but I explain why they have powers," he said. "The powers are sex-linked, which means that while warlocks can levitate things, witches cannot. Witches are telekinetic. They can make objects move, and thus they must ride broomsticks because they cannot levitate themselves."

The hero of the novel is Rod Gallowglass, secret agent for SCENT (Society for the Conversion of Extraterrestrial Nacient Totalitarianisms). His job is to convert governments to democracies, or according to Stasheff, he is "a democratic subversive."

Gallowglass has no magical powers, but does possess a large technological bag of tricks. He cannot convince aliens who are amazed by his stunts that he is not a male witch, and thus he is a "Warlock In Spite of Himself."

His sidekicks include Fess,

a robot horse who is an epileptic resulting from a faulty capacitor, and Big Tom, who is "big, dumb and not terribly honest."

The cast of characters includes Catherine Plantagenet, the teen-age queen of the Isle of Gramarye where the story takes place. Baren, who is two feet by two feet in dimension and serves as the queen's privy counselor "although he doesn't have anything to do with the toilet system," Gwendylion, the most powerful witch in the kingdom, Tuan McReady, the handsome young leader of the socialist movement, and numerous choruses of elves; ghosts; thieves, cutthroats and the dregs of society.

The author explained the main conflict in the story as that of trying to subvert a monarchy to a democracy, and combatting the forces of totalitarianism and anarchists who have the same goal.

"There is a little sex and a

lot of violence," Stasheff added.

Stasheff began writing scripts for his puppet group when he was in eighth grade. In 1961 he began his version of "the great American novel," which is not finished yet.

His early short story attempts came back with the stock rejection slips, but Stasheff received some consolation from the fact that they were usually accompanied by a note explaining "Too lengthy," or "Very good, but not our style."

He completed "The Warlock" in 1968. The first publishers to read the book bought the rights to it.

"Needless to say, I was high, without booze or pot or anything," Stasheff said.

A sequel to "The Warlock In Spite of Himself" has already been finished and is now being rewritten. The third and fourth books are half complete.

"Books five through twelve are outlined and I have some loose ideas for number 13," Stasheff added. "I also have an idea for another series which would loosely relate to this one."

Stasheff is a doctoral theater student attending the University as the Shubert Playwriting Fellow of the year, an award he won for his play, "The Three-Legged

Man." He has two plays currently in the works.

He has taught puppetry at the Lincoln Community Playhouse, and will conduct a Free University course with Dr. Richard Boohar about science fiction.

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WIDE WORLD OF ENTERTAINMENT

Sheldon to purchase garden sculptures

"Willie," "Birth of Venus," "The Floating Woman" and "Superstructure on Four" will all be appearing on the Nebraska campus sometime next fall.

They are not rock groups. They are sculptures which are being purchased for display in the new Sheldon Sculpture Garden now under construction to the west and south of the present Art Gallery.

The Garden is being funded by the remainder of the original Sheldon grant, according to Sheldon Art Gallery Director Norman Geske. Its dedication had been planned for next spring but recent strikes and poor weather have delayed completion until at least September, 1970.

Geske noted that the garden has been designed with three purposes in mind. It will serve as an exhibition area for art works, both new pieces and some now displayed in the gallery.

Secondly, the area is meant to coordinate the entire fine arts complex, which includes Sheldon, Westbrook Music Building, Kimball Recital Hall and Woods Art Building. Extensive landscaping is planned for the garden area, and new trees will replace those which were removed last year.

Geske admits there is a certain risk in constructing an outdoor art gallery. Exhibits are limited to art pieces which will not be affected by the weather. The Sheldon Director also thinks there will be a certain amount of vandalism, even though the area will be amply-lighted all night.

"All the sculpture can be damaged," Geske commented. "But for the most part, people will respect them, even if they won't appreciate them."

Geske believes the result will be worth the risk. "There are only two other gardens of any comparable scope to ours," he noted.

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