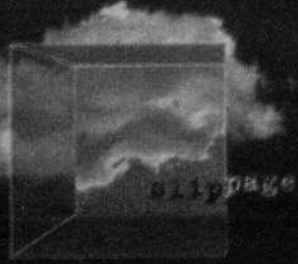


Book reviews

Next week
BREAK
open a
BOOK

HARLAN ELLISON



PREVIOUSLY UNCOLLECTED, PRECARIOUSLY POISED STORIES

Thom
JONES

SONNY
LISTON
WAS A
FRIEND
OF
MINE



By Sara Jarrett
Oregon Daily Emerald

Thom Jones' latest collection of short stories, "Sonny Liston was a Friend of Mine," serves up a delicious array of 12 colorful, raw, razor sharp tales of people hanging onto the fringes of society. Or maybe Jones is just daring enough to expose existence as it really is.

The book is not a pick-me-up, feel-good encounter but an experiential read guaranteed to invoke every sense; each snapshot of life is a jewel. It is obvious why his byline has graced the publications of The New Yorker, Playboy, Esquire, GQ and Harpers.

Jones proves himself in "Sonny Liston was a Friend of Mine" as an atmospheric master. His concise, crisp sentence structure and well-crafted word selections bring whole scenarios to life in just a few phrases. Before the physical attributes of characters such as "Kid Dynamite" and "Cancer Frank" are mentioned, their personalities are already defined by the names Jones gives them.

While most writers' stories wind up at the end, offering a complete package of introduction-climax-resolution, Jones' style is much more obscure. "40, Still at Home" is a perfect example of Jones begging the readers to think — to finish the story for themselves if they dare.

"40, Still at Home" closes as the main character, Matthew, stuffs his dead mother in the freezer. At this point the reader must make a decision: Perhaps Matthew drives to town and tries to redeem his mother's prescription for morphine; perhaps he climbs back into bed; or perhaps you turn the page and let the closing image of a still-warm body stuffed inside a Boy Scout sleeping bag, gathering frostbite while nestled between frozen chicken breasts and juice, fester for awhile.

Such vivid detail runs so rampant in every story, that the reader is able to sense what the characters smell, see, feel and hear. Your legs will ache when an unknown assailant takes a baseball bat to John Harold Hammermeister's shins in "Tarantula."

From war to childhood boxing matches, Jones' range of storytelling is clearly well-represented in "Sonny Liston was a Friend of Mine."

By Jack Clifford
Oregon Daily Emerald

Carl Hiaasen was born and raised in Florida, a fact that readers should know before diving into "Sick Puppy," the author's eighth novel set in the slowly disintegrating Sunshine State. In fact, Hiaasen loves Florida as much as he hates the lawmakers who are allowing it to be auctioned off piece by piece to its sleaziest bidders and the developers who are carrying out the systematic destruction with gusto.

Similar to his other seven books, Hiaasen slices and dices the southern buffoons he accuses of ruining what was once a pristine and charming part of the country. Hiaasen throws a lot of craziness and chaos into his books, and this latest effort is no different.

In "Sick Puppy," the isolated Toad Island sits serenely off the Gulf of Mexico coastline but not for long if big-time condominium/resort builder Robert Clapley, who has a Barbie doll fetish, gets his way. Working hard behind the scenes to push through the appropriate legislation is lobbyist Palmer Stoa.

Stoa, however, is an unconscionable litterbug, a witless trait that drives eco-terrorist Twilly Spree crazy. Spree's attempts at curing Stoa of his boorish behavior — dumping an entire truck full of garbage into the lobbyist's red BMW convertible, for instance — go unheeded.

Figuring he has nothing to lose, Twilly kidnaps both Stoa's wife Desie and the Stoats' black Labrador retriever named Boodle, which is another word for bribe. Once in Twilly's possession, however, the dog is renamed McGuinn, after Roger, the former guitarist for the Byrds.

Throw in ex-Florida governor, Clinton Tyree, who lives in the woods and survives on road kill, along with several other wacked-out characters, and you have a Hiaasen smorgasbord.

Too silly to be true, of course, the storyline wobbles around until its fairy-tale ending — another prime piece of Gulf coast property is saved from the crazed developers. The real-life ending is quite interesting, a fact that Hiaasen drives home when explaining why the fictional Tyree is an ex-governor:

"It was one thing to recite the standard gospel of environmentalism — for heaven's sake, even the Republicans had learned to rhapsodize about the Everglades! — but to rail so vituperatively against growth in a state owned and operated by banks, builders and real-estate developers ...

"Political suicide ... the man would've had more success trying to legalize LSD."

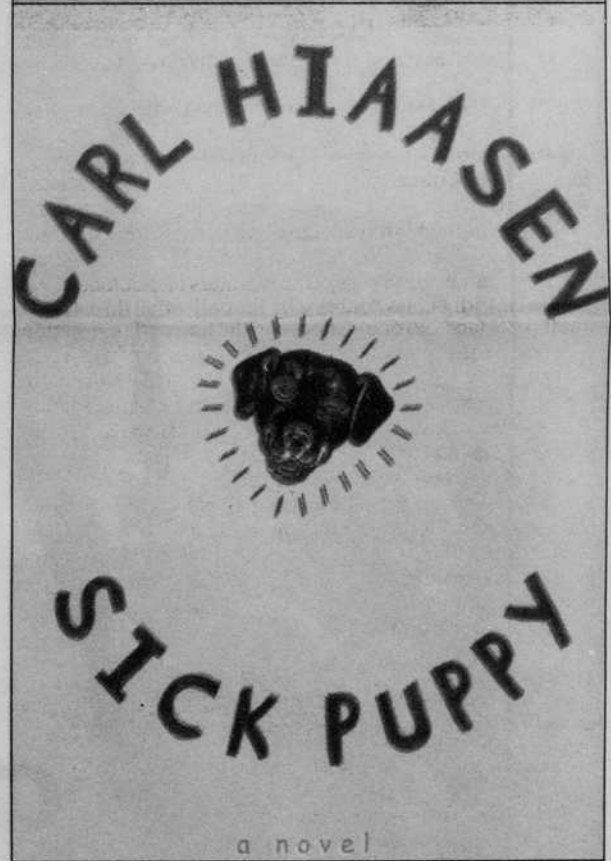
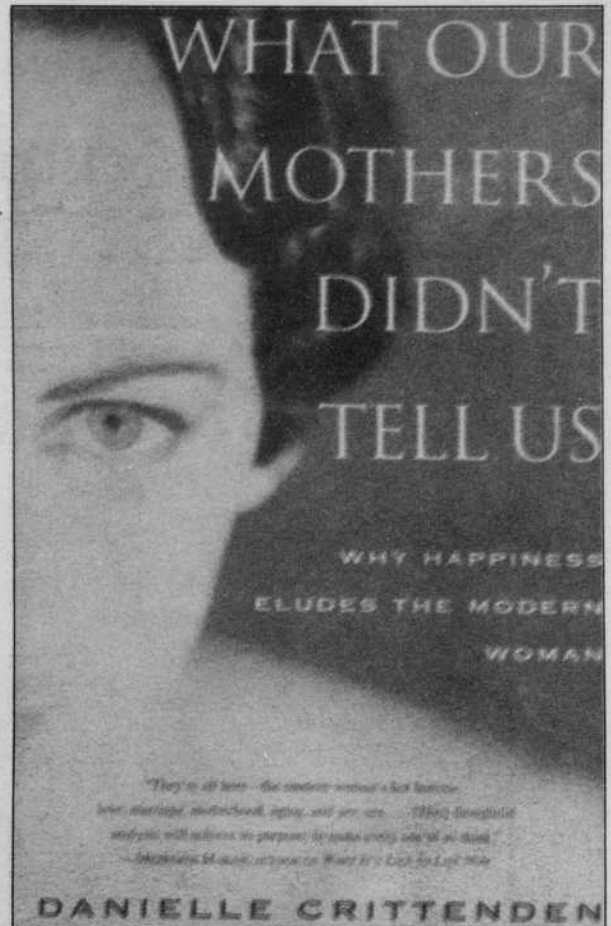
Take a trip with Hiaasen in "Sick Puppy." The ride, as always, is dizzying.

By Eric Pfeiffer
Oregon Daily Emerald

Sometimes called the greatest living writer in the world, sometimes called a yahoo, Harlan Ellison makes an impact everywhere he goes, with just about everyone he meets.

His impact has been felt across the board, inspiring movies such as "Terminator," producing cult classics such as "A Boy and His Dog" and producing one of the ten most printed stories in the English language, "I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream."

"Slippage" is Ellison's first all-new collection of written material since "Mind Fields," a collection of short stories and artwork released in 1994, and "Angry Candy," out in



Creative Writing Program Spring Reading Series

Gary Snyder, March 9, 150 Columbia, 8 p.m.

One of the most-acclaimed Beat poets of the 1960s, Snyder has 16 books of poetry and prose, including "Mountains," "Rivers Without End" and "Turtle Island," which won the Pulitzer Prize for poetry in 1975. The Los Angeles Times has called Snyder "the greatest of living nature poets." In conjunction with Snyder's visit the Bijou is reopening "The Source," a documentary that examines the Beat Generation. Call 686-2458 for more information.

Charles Wright, April 5, Gerlinger Hall Alumni, 8 p.m.

Wright is the author of "Black Zodiac," for which he won a Pulitzer Prize, and 12 volumes of poetry.

Chang-Rae Lee, April 27, Agate Hall Auditorium, 8 p.m.

Lee is the author of "A Gesture Life" and the earlier "Native Speaker," which won an American Book Award. Lee, a former University associate professor, now directs the creative writing program at Hunter College in New York City. His latest novel has been praised by the New York Times Book Review as a "beautiful, solitary, remarkably tender book that reveals the shadows that fall constantly from the past."

Barry Lopez, May 18, Gerlinger Hall Alumni, 8 p.m.

Lopez is the author of 13 books, including the National Book Award-winning "Arctic Dreams." Praised by critics as one of the best landscape writers of his time, he has published "Winter Court," "River Notes," "About This Life" and "Field Notes."