

## PHILADELPHIA (UPS)

The last writer in the history of literature to make a living from short fiction was placed on display at the Philadelphia Zoological Gardens today. Martin Swanwick was installed in a cage in the gorilla house, surrounded by the paraphernalia of his arcane craft - reference books, drifts of paper, and an outdated etower 333cs. He immediately began writing.

Reaction from zoo-goers was mixed.

"I didn't know there were any of these left," said Imelda Greene, a buyer for Au Bon Marche. "So of course it's an enormous privilege to be able to see [a living short fiction writer]."

Tony Hazlethwaite, aged thirteen, however, was less thrilled. "Why doesn't he do anything?" the teenager asked. "I must have spent fifteen minutes rapping on the glass and making faces, and he didn't look up once. It was like he was in his own little world or something."

Stanwick later explained that in order to make ends meet, every minute of his working day had to count. "I'm a family man," he said. "On the positive side, over the years my wife and I managed to save up enough to pay for our son's college. But just about the time we got that taken care of, Omni went out of business. So it all evens out." The science magazine Omni was at one time the top-paying market for science fiction in the world.

In recent years, Swannick has been forced to not only maximize his output but to engage in increasingly bizarre fictive stunts in order to create a market for his work. A good example of this is "Michael Swanwick's Periodic Table of Science Fiction," currently running on Sci Fiction, an online magazine attached to SciFi.Com. For it, he is writing a short story every week, one for each element of the periodic table in order of appearance. Another is the fact that, in lieu of giving money to charity, he writes stories which exist in only one single copy, seals them in old wine bottles, and offers them up for auction. "You've got to give back," Swanberg says. "This is my way of doing so."

But why does he allow himself to be displayed in a zoo?

"It only made sense," Swanstein said, taking a brief pause from "The Sleep of Reason," a weekly series of short stories he write for the science fiction webzine, The Infinite Matrix. "With the supplementary income I receive from my appearance here, I ought to be able to just squeak by."