

Vignettes: Conversational Gambits

New Year's Day 1988 found me seated in a lounge at Los Angeles International Airport, waiting for an incoming passenger. Academic that I am, I had brought along some research to pass the time: a paperback entitled *How to Recognize the Antichrist*. At the bar a middle-aged man and woman laughed and talked, seemingly oblivious to my presence. But as the man left, he stopped at my table and demanded, "Well, do you think you'll recognize him?" Caught off guard, I mumbled that I wasn't sure, since I hadn't yet finished the book. "I think he exists now," said the man earnestly. "Actually, I'm kind of pleased, because the sooner the better."

—Paul Boyer, in *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture* (Harvard University Press)

Once a graduate student offered to explain why MIT types tended to hang together at parties. If you just wander around at random, he said, "People come up and ask questions like 'How do you like Boston?' . . . What does *that* mean? How am I supposed to answer a question like *that*?"

—Fred Hapgood, in *Up the Infinite Corridor: MIT and the Technical Imagination* (Addison-Wesley)

theoretical computations. The material on star formation—one of the most active fields in astronomy today—is not current, and the description of the evolution of low-mass binary stars is incomplete. Finally, a discussion of solar neutrino measurements—the most controversial test of standard evolutionary models for the sun—would have illustrated the uncertainties in the elementary physics used in modern calculations.

I think this volume would be a reasonable choice as the main textbook for an introductory graduate course on stellar structure and evolution. It presents the main aspects of the theory very nicely, but it does not provide students with a good picture of the most active areas of current research.

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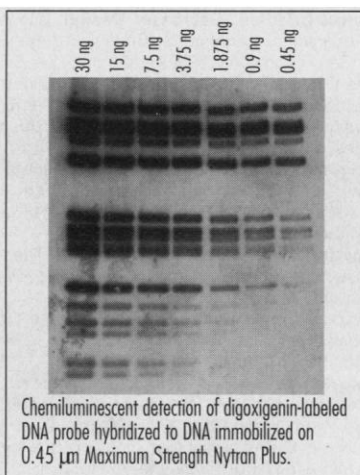
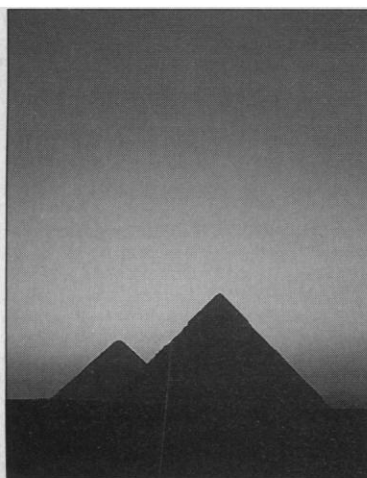
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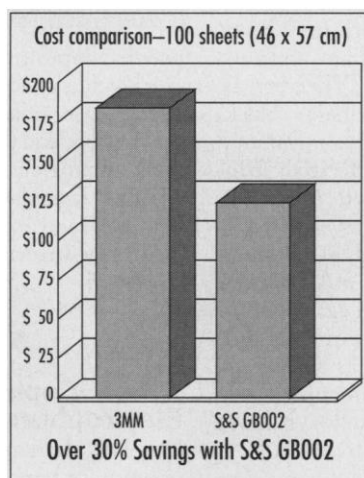
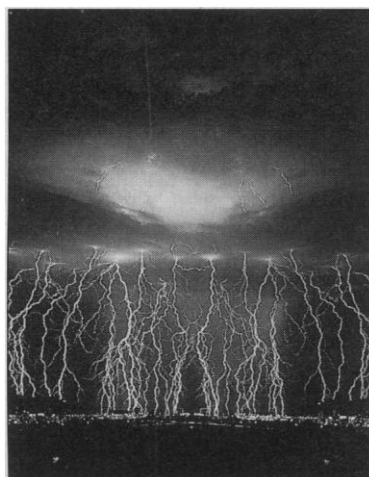
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